

Superpresent



Winter 2022

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Volume 2, Number 1
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Superpresent is now a year old. Happy Birthday to us! In October 2020, *Superpresent* was founded as a quarterly magazine of the arts. It was created with a few simple goals: to present striking visual art and writing without favoring one over the other; to be available both online and in print; to be free (free to download or view online and free to submit work to); and to produce an affordable, high quality print version for those who still like touching paper and ink.

That closeness led us to this issue's "Intimacy and Estrangement" theme, a theme which brought us many wonderful and terrifying works. We're happy to continue having each issue carry a theme that will bind all of the contributions together as each piece plays off the others included.

We expected a small readership in the Texas Gulf Coast region but, much to our surprise, the *Superpresent's* audience didn't care about our goals. Readership and submissions rapidly expanded to include a worldwide audience. *Superpresent* has been viewed over 30,000 times in over 100 countries in its first year. Equally important, we have published art and writing from over 50 countries and all continents except Antarctica.

As we move into our second year of publishing *Superpresent*, the editors give our heartfelt thanks to *Superpresent's* readers, to those who have made financial contributions to support the magazine, and, most importantly, to the hundreds of writers and artists who have allowed us to consider their work for publication. It has been a pleasure to review these works, and it is always a difficult task to decide what to include in each issue. But that's the actual joy of making a magazine. Thank you all. We look forward to our second year and hope you will continue with us on *Superpresent's* journey into 2022.

the Editors

Talking in Bed



Sappho and Alcaeus, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema R.A., O.M. (Walters Art Museum, Baltimore)



All the way back to Sappho and Catullus, lyric poetry, with and without the lyre, lute or guitar, has explored and expressed the human emotions associated with both estrangement and intimacy, certainly in the European tradition. Expressions of these feelings are the stock-in-trade of both lyric poetry and popular song. Where would we and they be without love and loss, whatever they might signify or imply?

In a revealing wartime letter recently published, T.S.Eliot said:

'I doubt the permanent value of everything I have written. I never lay with a woman I liked, loved or even felt any strong attachment to; I no longer regret this lack of experience; I no longer feel acutely the desire for progeny which was very acute once; and since I became a Christian I feel that the only difficulty I should have in a monastic life ... would be the deprivation of French tobacco.'

From The Letters of T.S.Eliot, Volume Nine: 1939 -1941

And in Eliot's celebrated early poem of alienation and anxieties, 'The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock' (1914), the speaker expresses intense isolation where 'It is impossible to say just what I mean!' At the same time Prufrock is in his fragmented and incoherent ways searching for the fulfilment of desires and longings for intimate encounters:

Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?

In an imaginary anthology of love and loss, one might even juxtapose Prufrock with that mysterious early poem of Eliot's expressing love-like longings about (and perhaps for) 'La Figlia Che Piange' (The Girl who Weeps).

For me, however, one poet writing in English who memorably evaluates both estrangements and intimacies is Philip Larkin and in this context I think immediately of his poem 'Talking in Bed'. That very title implies togetherness and yet the poem moves swiftly towards inexorable isolation and compromise:

Talking in bed ought to be easiest,
Lying together there goes back so far,
An emblem of two people being honest.

Yet ...?

Increasingly, time passes silently while the skyscape changes, implying that the lovers lie with their own separate, uncommunicated or perhaps incommunicable, thoughts, and still

None of this cares for us. Nothing shows why
At this unique distance from isolation

It becomes still more difficult to find
Words at once true and kind,
Or not untrue and not unkind.

In time, therefore, the superlative and ideal (what 'ought to be easiest') becomes comparatively awkward ('more difficult to find') and compromised by the inexplicable realities ('Nothing shows why'), as the habits of intimacy mask estrangements and thus the individual here resorts to cautious or unspoken evasions.

The distance between lovers is also explored in Larkin's poem 'Broadcast' where the speaker is listening on the radio to a concert broadcast live and attended by someone special:

I think of your face among all those faces,

Beautiful and devout before
Cascades of monumental slithering.

When the evening concert ends, it leaves him

desperate to pick out
Your hands, tiny in all that air, applauding.

Such an intimate sight or desire is of course an impossibility of unrequited longing, such is the distance between radio listener and individual member of the live audience. Why are they not in the concert hall together? In some ways, the intimacy here is not simply with the 'you' of the poem but with the readers, in whom the poet confides beyond the last notes of the concert and through the enduring words of the poem.

In a stark earlier (1950) poem called 'Wants', Larkin wrote about 'the artful tensions of the calendar' and juxtaposed two desires: 'Beyond all this, the wish to be alone', while the other repeated line states that 'Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs', despite and beyond 'The life insurance, the tabled fertility rites,/ The costly aversion of the eyes from death.'

In this context, I think also of his short poem 'Absences', composed in the same year, where the seascape and then the sky beyond are brilliantly visualised as inhuman domains:

Above the sea, the yet more shoreless day,
Riddled by wind, trails lit-up galleries:
They shift to giant ribbing, sift away.

And then in the separated last line the writer exclaims: 'Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!' It is as if, without the clutter of self and its many preoccupations, a wider world might be perceived as cleansed of us and our manifold wants and desires. As Larkin says elsewhere:

And saying so to some
Means nothing; others it leaves
Nothing to be said.

For him, music without words, and in his case traditional jazz and specifically Oliver's 'Riverside Blues', can also symbolise a divide between mother and son in 'Reference Back'. By contrast, in 'For Sidney Bechet', the beguiling clarinet not only evokes an exotically imaginary New Orleans but the music also provides an uplifting and redemptive set of consolations: 'On me your voice falls as they say love should,/ Like an enormous yes.'

Elsewhere, in 'Love Songs in Age', the words of popular songs haunt and disappoint the widow who has rediscovered the sheet music of her younger days: 'Word after sprawling hyphenated word' on the power of that 'much-mentioned brilliance love'

Still promising to solve and satisfy,
And set unchangeably in order. So,
To pile them back, to cry,
Was hard, without lamely admitting how
It had not done so then, and could not now.

It is possible to caricature Larkin as the Eeyore of English poetry and a miserabilist Mr Glum, 'an indigestible sterility', but it is also important to remember that he could see, if not always express, 'earth's immeasurable

surprise' where, in another poem, 'any-angled light/ could congregate endlessly'. Indeed in an otherwise bleak poem ('The Old Fools') he refers to 'the million-petalled flower of being here.' In such lines, loneliness and isolation give way to rapture and reverence. Either way, the precision, artistry and evocative powers of lyric poetry, however desolate it may seem, can uplift and console us, changing our moods as music can.

Which then are the essential poems of intimacy and who writes them? We can create or curate our own wide-ranging anthologies, mental or in print, and some readers do. The choice is enormous but poems of intimacy seem to me less plentiful or striking than those of estrangement and perhaps that is because 'Happiness writes white', as Larkin was fond of saying, quoting Henri de Montherlant.

In any putative anthology of such poems, however, I would include 'Meeting Point' by Louis MacNeice for its consummate song-like expression of intimacies shared in a state of suspended animation which seems out of time itself:

Time was away and somewhere else,
There were two glasses and two chairs
And two people with one pulse
(Somebody stopped the moving stairs):
Time was away and somewhere else.

And so on for eight wonderfully inventive and timeless stanzas. That choice would also lead me to include 'Lullaby' by W.H.Auden which begins 'Lay your sleeping head, my love,/ Human on my faithless arm' and focuses on the inexorable powers of time. Both poets admired the work of W.B.Yeats intensely but with qualifications and some of his poems too would be in the anthology, a number under intimacy and others under estrangements, though neither aspects would simply or solely be equated with innocence or experience. Words by Emily Dickinson would be there and so would poems by Sylvia Plath and by Elizabeth Bishop. But deciding which would mean an enjoyable journey through their works again and I anticipate further explorations in poets others might recommend to me in order to extend my limited library and repertoire, as evidenced here.

But then I would consider again that late poem by T.S. Eliot to his second wife, Valerie. In his *Collected Poems* of 1963, he consigns it to the section entitled 'Occasional Verses' and in the collection it appears as the very last piece called fittingly 'A Dedication to my Wife':

To whom I owe the leaping delight
That quickens my senses in our wakingtime
And the rhythm that governs the repose of our sleepingtime,
The breathing in unison

Of lovers whose bodies smell of each other
Who think the same thoughts without need of speech
And babble the same speech without need of meaning.

This tender poem ends touchingly with two lines which close the book and the door on such intimations and intimacies:

But this dedication is for others to read:
These are private words addressed to you in public.

Private words in public so often lie behind the best of lyric poems and their approaches to the human condition, to its intimacies and estrangements, or so it seems to me at least. As H.D.Thoreau said: 'Poetry is a piece of very private history, which unostentatiously lets us into the secret of a man's life.' And for man, of course, read also woman but that's a whole other essay I'm unqualified to write.

-*Duncan Forbes*



Line, Point, and I - 1
Rose Ansari



Line, Point, and I - 3
Rose Ansari



Pixel
Rose Ansari

Intimacy 01

The banana is attached to the wall with tape
an artwork is a business of confidence
competition for subscribers: tell the difference
we remind ourselves of reserved grandmasters
as old secrets are interpreted
you wouldn't want to have that kind of armpit
and that's exactly how the artist will do it
are you attracted to girls or boys? the chaplain
asks and kisses the feathered book

-Anna Beata Hábllová

Intimita 01

Banán připevněný na zdi páskou
umělecké dílo je obchod s důvěrou
soutěž pro předplatitele: poznej rozdíl
připomínáme si upjaté velmistry
jako se vykládají stará tajemství
takové podpaždí bys nechtěla mít
a přesně tak ho umělec udělá
na bolky náhodou nejsi? zeptá se
kaplan a políbí knížku měkčenou perím

-Anna Beata Hábllová

Intimacy 02

Most people feel that stripes are unnecessary
but usually it is completely unfounded
having stripes is always a kind of spiritual exercise
visual enlargement of oneself
I've always been interested in stripes
how stripes think, how they express themselves, how they formulate
how stripes perceive the world

-Anna Beata Hábllová

Intimita 02

Většina lidí má pocit, že jsou pruhy zbytečné
ale obvykle je to naprosto nepodložené
mít pruhy je vždy svého druhu spirituální cvičení
vizuální zvětšování sebe sama
mně vždycky zajímaly pruhy
jak pruhy myslí, vyjadřují se, jak formulují
jak pruhy vnímají svět

-Anna Beata Hábllová

Intimacy 03

I can't emerge
first I am introduced to the common situation
of a love poem, such as when I slip into furs
in the language of fur
*to drown the weir with some weird jazz for a while
and pour the sand out of poetry*
It is good to know that there are places
which do not touch each other but relate to
the same as nickname and name
the imagination will remain alone
Anybody here?

-Anna Beata Hábllová

Intimita 03

Nedaří se mi vynořit
nejprve je mi představena běžná situace
milostné básně, jako když se sunu do kožešin
řečeno řečí liščí srsti
*na chvíli přehlušit jež jazžem
a vysypat písek z poezie*
je dobré vědět, že existují místa
která se sebe nedotýkají, ale týkají se
toho samého jako přezdívka a jméno
obraznost na všechno zůstane sama
Je tady někdo?

-Anna Beata Hábllová



Self Portrait (Not Yours)
Chyenne Rielly

Essential Oils

I'm running from my wrists,
My tendons snapping teeth
Veins mottled beyond mapping
Skin, like pig's bladder thin

Twist my elbows
Shield these windows
From you
Though you
Know the hypothesis,
You'd hate to see proof

Pale cells doused in lavender
Sickening the room
Spinning your grin to split your niceness,
Through a gritty grimace
You say,
"That smells lovely"

-Kate Bradley

Me in Your Mind

If you want me to be
A blank slate
Like the bodies you have
Stuffed behind clothes

You can try
To rewrite
Me in your mind,
Stick film filters to your eyes

Coloured cellophane
To sweeten lines,
Edges grated smooth
My taught skin

Pulled thin
As tissues
For tears

And though we haven't spoken in years,
I'd let you wipe my skull clean
So I struggle to remember
This sorry scene

-Kate Bradley

Chipped

My teeth are chipped
My joints are bruised,
I'm a battered mess
With nothing to prove

Stained alabaster
Broken porcelain
My thoughts like creatures,
Wearing my skull thin

Tissue paper draped
Over a blaze,
Edges singe
And curl

This broken body
A testament to,
Something
I no longer
Want to hide
From you

-Kate Bradley



Coagulation 1
Cass Sicherer

#31: Ad Man

What's this business with certain men?

Product/account middle-manager types
humping sand into my vee-gee

against a Fire Island dune— rasp!
Been there. Done that. Did it again
just to hear myself gasp with Atlantic's waves.

-Karla Linn Merrifield

#50: Dys-

A twofer, another AFFer,
his the saddest of all.

It didn't matter
he was a Thalidomide victim.

Straining for release,
I gripped his withered forearm,

Grasped the knob of fused fingers
that should have been a hand.

What mattered was his cock,
normally formed,

but relentlessly erect.
For hours, no matter what I did—

licked, stroked, sucked, fucked
til I was raw—

he'd not ejaculate.
Ever since the stroke....

Impossible, I didn't believe it,
and because he hadn't, I didn't.

A second date, a second attempt.
It's the stroke, baby....

For once, there was nothing
even I could do.

-Karla Linn Merrifield



Coagulation 3
Cass Sicherer

Under the Skin

Un-whisper my name, damn you. I close my eyes and your voice comes flooding back, a deep purr delivered on warm breath against my ear each time you showed up at my back door. You are married. Stay away.

You must've smiled to yourself that first time, to feel my body respond so hungrily—adapting to accommodate your princely dimensions like a vessel of pliable, wet clay. Oh, contemporary Casanova; checking your deft moves in the mirrored wardrobe beside my bed; lingering in the bathroom to admire your profile as you towelled off. Heady from your musky scent on my skin, I was content to stand back and watch. What happened to my pledge of celibacy? Hadn't love wrecked me before? Take back every tender kiss you left on my forehead, my cheeks, my lips.

My love once beat for you like a blistering, crimson drum. Now a melancholy sludge scours the chambers of my heart. Why did I accept your terms? Why did I believe your touching story of marital neglect? Guiltless men like you destroy women like me. Retract that forked tongue from between my lips. Get out of my head. This is me standing up to you, demanding you un-say your mock vows of everlasting love!

But oh-h-h, how you made love! Teeth teasing out nipples. Weightless fingertips tracing arched spine. Smooth palms sliding down to grasp the swell of fleshy bottom. Your mouth skilfully grazing between my parted thighs... All such memories must be purged.

Each time you went home to share dinner with your wife, I was left to sit alone with one hand cupped over your spent seed, a pathetic figure full of lonesomeness and want, with nothing left to do but re-read our endless string of secret texts. Texts. Words. Not one photo to remind me of your face. Poor man, you *had* to say you loved me; *had* to fashion a furrowed brow while proclaiming how torn you were, how guilty you felt, because you also loved your oblivious, virtuous wife of twenty years whose flawed body sadly could never withstand your ample dimensions. The way you spoke about her made her seem so small and wholesome, conjuring an image of you wandering hand-in-hand with her through the Piazza San Marco amongst the pigeons, her in a white cotton dress and you carrying crusty bread in a paper bag. But you were always a world away, even while inside my body.

As you left that last time, my back door clicked shut behind you and created a safe (albeit mildly suffocating) vacuum.

I swear I wanted that door sealed forever, yet tonight, having stood naked for the longest time gazing upon your toothbrush, I've come to realize that *some* words, even untrue words, can leave a message beneath the skin's surface as enduring as a tattoo.

Some words simply cannot be unsaid, and like an addict, I crave your sweet, indelible lies.

It seems I have no shame or caution or power left.

Call me. Please. The wait is killing me.

-Maggie Veness



Interrupted Journey

Years too late, this train
is going nowhere.

Thin October sun lights
the hand rail. We left Omaha,
if memory serves me right.

It was night – the rain,
or maybe snow or merely
the turgid drift of moonlight
slowed our journey.

You smiled so often, trains
being a long denied passion.

I listened to the noise,
calming to some, of wheels
over track joints. Somehow,
it ended here in Denver.

You left with that stranger.

I remained, listening
to B.B. King, Muddy Waters,
Bessie Smith. Again, if memory
serves, the railroad failed,

a sepia postcard tacked
to my wall. And this car,
fortunately, was pulled
into a museum yard

where I visit it daily.

-Paul S. Zeigler

The Revolver

Summer 1983, Houston, TX

You couldn't hear the water running unless you walked right passed the bathroom. His Houston apartment was tiny, one bedroom. I was on the couch. Just the two of us for a hot, sticky summer month. Rich, my dad, always the life of the party, was to take care of me for the summer. That meant I would be spending a lot of time alone while he was at the bar. At fifteen, I was okay with time alone; probably better than being at the bar.

Texas law stipulates that any kid can go to the bar with a parent. I had started going to the bars at thirteen, mostly the ones' Dad owned. At first, I was bored, fearful, sober, but your surroundings so soon consume you, and by last call, you're drunk with the smells of beer-stained breath, cigarettes, lies. Non-stop country ballads blazing from the jukebox serenaded my fading innocence.

We got home at three am, him drunk and ready to eat and pass out. I was just relieved to be safe in the apartment. He's usually a loveable drunk. Usually. I could do anything I wanted at Dad's, except piss him off, especially when he was drunk. I took a leak, but when I flushed the toilet, it just kept running. I didn't dare ask him about it. He was not in a loveable mood. I just shut the bathroom door, hoping Dad would sleep it off. We could take care of the running water later, although later he would be hungover or watching football and drinking again. I didn't know how much whiskey he had, and he couldn't buy it on a Sunday. Nothing but Miller Lite? Damn it! Maybe he had some Crown Royal stashed away.

After their divorce when I was 10, mom went through another husband, and then a series of suitors. The twins and I often had nothing. High water pants, faded shirts, sometimes no deodorant or toilet paper; hand washing jeans cuz you only had one pair. Hoping the chickens would lay, so we could have potato and egg tacos. Once at a benefit for some woman we didn't know, Dad bid \$400 on a can of beer for Angela, his business partner's daughter. I don't think she even drank the damn beer. Angela was so much closer to my age than his, barely legal. When his business partner found out about them, they got married in a hurry, just to be divorced, just as quick.

"Come here right now!" Dad had gotten up to piss, heard the water running, the toilet flowing, and he was mad. I slunk into the hall, saw him coming towards to me, his eyes telling me that it was going to be bad. He reached behind my head and grabbed me by my hair.

Dad had always been hard on me. He wanted me tough. He was my football coach when I was in elementary school. When I didn't live up to expectations, he'd grab my belly and twist. Hurt like hell, but I wouldn't give him the satisfaction of seeing me wince. I learned to be tough playing football. I hit as hard as I could, broke helmets, made him proud. Fucking Friday night hero. He had won All-State Honorable Mention from some Podunk, Texas, town and then wasted a free ride to Texas A&M. When the big fish moved to the big pond, he wasn't so special anymore. Me, I was short and mean, waiting for a chance to bust someone in the mouth. Made them afraid of me...and I made Second Team All-State. The old bastard had to admit I was better than him.

He pushed me into the bathroom. "Do I have to show you how to do every-goddamn-thing? Take the cover off the tank!" I did. "Now jiggle the arm, right there." He said, pushing my face almost in the toilet. The flap dropped, the tank started to fill. Relief. But short. He still had me by the back of my head. I just wanted him to let me go. Didn't dare open my mouth. He was shoving me into his bedroom.

"How have I raised such a dumbass kid that he doesn't even know how to stop a crapper from running?" He and mom divorced when I was a chubby, ten-year-old, and nobody had taught me shit about fixing a running toilet arm to make the son-of-a-bitch stop running cuz someday in the future it was going to piss my drunk dad off to the point of taking out the revolver.

A Smith and Wesson .44 Magnum is a beautiful thing-long, sleek, heavy, shiny. A red-headed, Sam Elliot looking cowboy my father knew from the bar scene dealt in guns. When you are in the bar business, it is a good idea to keep one around. The cowboy borrowed money from my dad and left the .44 as collateral. Now the long, sleek, heavy, shiny thing was out of the drawer in a flash and pointing at my head. We were in Dad's room. He made me sit on a chair, told me not to move, and he pressed the barrel against my head, my right temple. Seconds slowed to minutes, hours, eternity. I thought about Mom, my Nannie, the twins, my two youngest siblings. His eyes were crazy. Fear and pain gripped my heart. Would he kill me? How could he? I shut my eyes, but tears flooded, my chest ached, I gasped for air. Would he kill me? The idea hurt more than it scared me. I waited, finally heard the trigger cock back. I froze.

After a long time he mumbled something about how lucky I was that I wasn't dead. He un-cocked the gun, left. I called Angie. They were divorced, I didn't know anyone else to call. She called the police and came over. As soon as our eyes met, she broke into sobs. Angela had been there too, no stranger to the fear, the disbelief, the aching heart. She also knew she was lucky to still be alive. I didn't tell the police what happened, just he was drunk and I was afraid. None of their damn business anyway. I went to Angela's place for the night, came back to Dad's apartment the next day. Went home to mom's.

After not shooting his first-born son in the head that night, Rich drove to his girlfriend's house. He rang the doorbell, but Louise was slow to awake. When she didn't answer, he rang the bell again and again, getting madder by the minute. She was just getting to the door when he fired. A .44 Magnum slug blew a hole in the door, passed just above her head, went through the ceiling and the roof. Louise screamed. Dad left.

April 20, 2010, Rancho El Nogal, MX

Rich's breathing had slowed. He was in pain. Ten days before, the Mexican doctor told him he was fine, a heart of a 15-year-old. Rich knew he was dying. He stopped drinking in 1986 with only ten percent of his liver left. Granddad had found him face down in his office at his own bar. His buddies and barmaids had robbed him blind. My granddad and Nannie sold his place, Richard got religion, and I took him to live in Mexico in 1997. He fought the rot of his liver and kidneys and bladder as long as he could. Strong heart maybe, but years of Crown Royal were catching up. His Mexican-American friend, Diana, living nearby took care of him. There was a time that he wanted more with her, she said no. He did have his Mexican whores, but that was before. Before he knew he was going to die.

In the cool April air, he laid in his three-thousand-dollar adobe home. The people from the ranch loved him. They didn't know the Rich we knew. He was always able to treat others better than his own family. They were worried that the old gringo was dying.

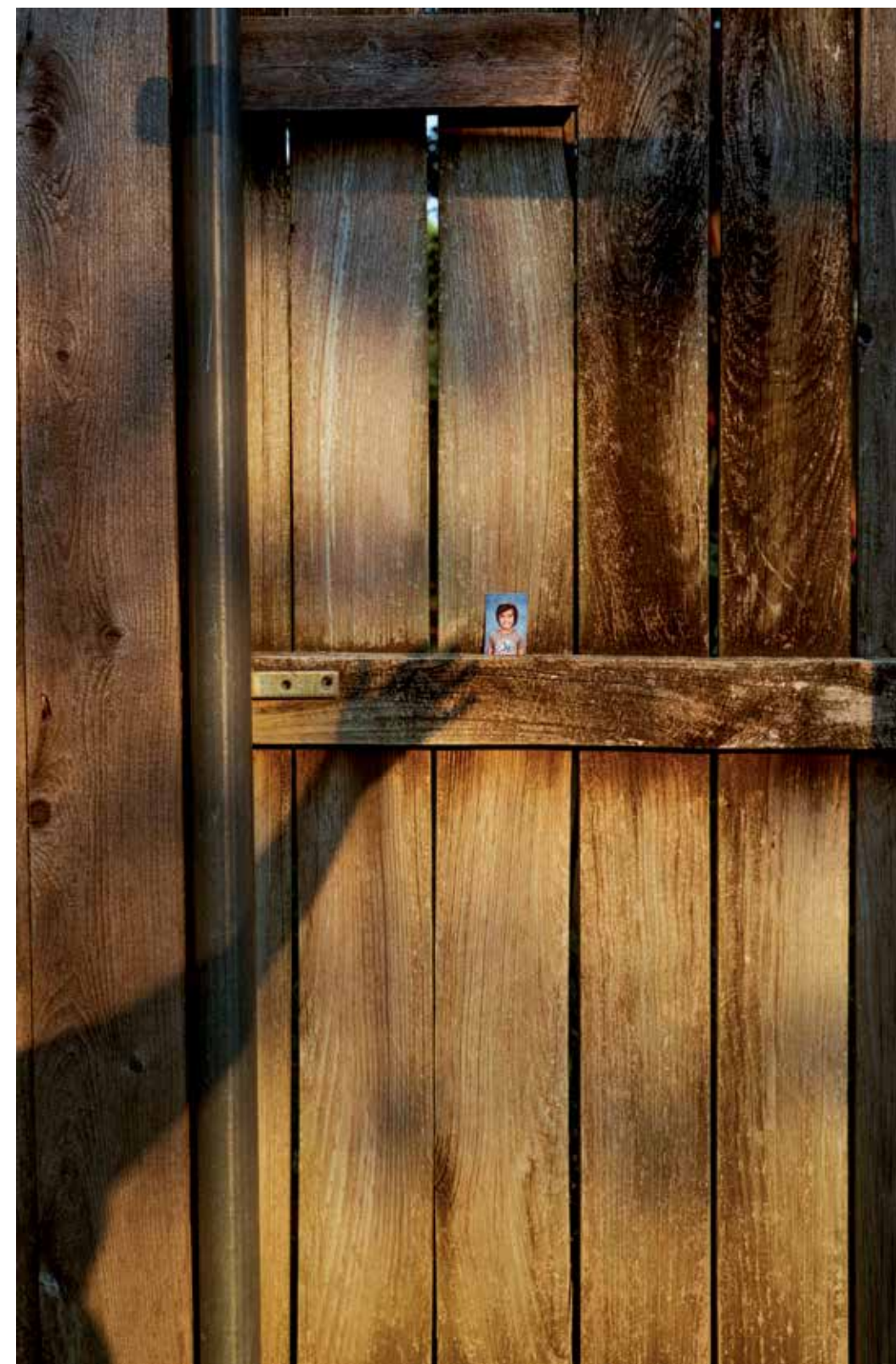
My wife picked up the phone. Evidently, Dad could no longer speak. Death was close. Diana told her, "Rich is dying. He would like to hear from his kids." He needed to be forgiven. Now, after all that had happened, now, that he was on his deathbed. I could not speak to him. Through all the years, all the times he fucked me over, through all the mental anguish, I had nothing to say.

My wife lied. "Tell him that my husband and the twins love him and forgive him." She did. He died.

-R.C. Rice



Nagypapa es kis Erika a Fürdőben
Erika Nina Suarez



Reaching for Oliver
Erika Nina Suarez



Continuum (Forest lake)
Christina R. Jenson

√OF A FOREST LAKE I

the temporal arms of the tree
sends growths to all corners
a heron stands tall while
the world slumbers inside out
everything returns
the upright anemone
your trenches
even the call of the starling
goes into minor
we lean back
in the diagonal of the rhythms
which lulls us to sleep
and atomize each other
with squared sentences
one must bow for
your slope coefficient
approaches a hundred
reaching an apex
blowing with the wind
the unfathomable
hovering towards ∞

-Karina Soby Gulmann

√OF A FOREST LAKE II

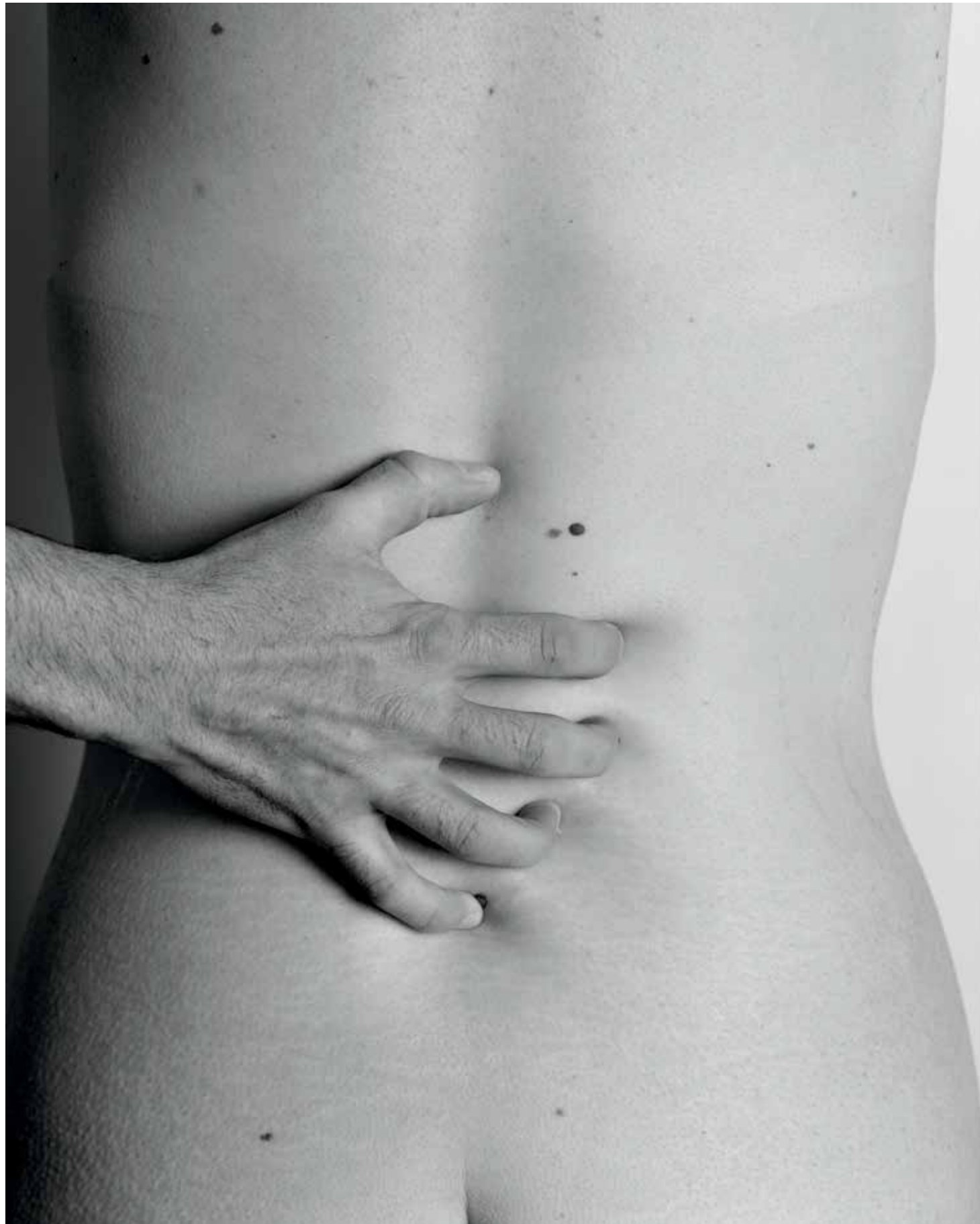
the morphology of the tree
has burst
a rolling stone falls apart and
the lark's phonemes of
buzzing doomsday tones
threaten
we join bird's beaks
and force wings
taste binary fragments of
birch leaves and
never have so many forest lakes been pondered
that's how it is
that's all we can do
the syntax of the world has shattered

-Karina Soby Gulmann

√OF A FOREST LAKE III

the tree has one string
left that's all
it has to do well with
a lonely beat
to the song of a blackbird
it is hard to understand
that it still tries
the circumference of your embrace
is < than enough
the correlation coefficient has shrunk
into unrecognizability
and the of loneliness
has exploded
it's the binary systems
that are strung up
and crossed out
it's the wind men and wind chimes
that have too much freedom
now the drizzle licks its wounds and
the beech discards the cognitive
borders but
there must be a boundary
for madness when the
√ of a forest lake is
∞ beautiful

-Karina Soby Gulmann



the Guide
Kristy Peet



the Spark
Kristy Peet



the Hair
Kristy Peet



the Teeth
Kristy Peet

Ingredients

He opens the one kitchen cabinet
he has never previously looked into,
had no reason to do so before
learning she'd had her fill of him.

He stares bemused at all the
ingredients: shortening, flour,
baking powder, sugar, oil,
salt. His life has never been

broken down into ingredients
until now. Her entirety had
been so pleasing he'd had no
inkling how fragile her assembly

until the fragments broke free.

He clears the shelves one
item at a time, dropping each
into the trash until he has room

enough for a month of freeze-dried
meals. He then picks up the phone,
orders enchiladas from El Vaquero,
and pops open another cocktail in a can.

-Tom Barlow

Test to Failure

I never liked hiking in the Rockies, she says.
I feel exposed up here on the ridge and
then there are the bears and snakes, and how the

weight of the pack makes my feet swell and blister
and now the straps are digging into my bra and for
fuck's sake how much longer until we reach the car?

I am having my own trouble hobbling my way
across loose stone on exhausted ankles and there
isn't enough of my ambition left that I can send any

her way, and, after all, we aren't married yet. She
finally quits muttering, pokes me aside with her
hiking stick and moves in front, head down,

leaving me free to contemplate the poetry, much
of it lame, that celebrates nature and I wonder
how many of those poets have hiked at altitude to

experience the sun's rage, which can strike you
quicker than a whip. Then my watch reminds us of
the daily two o'clock thunderstorm to come and

the danger of lightning. Of equal concern, she says,
is the lack of concealment for nature's call here above
treeline and all this is plenty enough incentive to

drive her legs like a soldier's drum and I gasp to keep up.
There is no better way to test love to failure than
too many miles on a steep mountain trail, but just then,

the car comes into view, and she stops, turns, and says
God, it is so damn beautiful up here.

-Tom Barlow

Syllabus

You should know that my siblings and I are all married, and that our parents are not. My brother, sister and I are among the people who exist because gay rights had not made it to New Jersey in 1971, where my parents were in the process of growing up. While Harvey Milk was parading to grandeur, my gay father was putting on a tuxedo the color of rope.

For thousands of years, children were born into marriages that were convenient to the status quo, and so, families like mine were everywhere.

Held

Now (2015), the United States Supreme Court decrees, by inference, we do not need to exist, and that this is supposed to comfort me.

KENNEDY, J., delivered the opinion of the Court, in which GINSBURG, BREYER, SOTOMAYOR, and KAGAN, JJ., joined.

Opinion of the Court

“While addressing the principles and precedents... it is appropriate to note the history of the subject.”

My parents were married on Boxing Day. They were childhood neighbors; five brothers between them, fathers who were doctors, mothers with stern Jewish hands. Their children, all inchoate versions of our mother, are meticulously timed to arrive in spring, like geese.

Cracks in the facade arrive quickly, oblivious to the growing family. There is an expiration date to my father’s omission. One year, he takes her to *Torch Song Trilogy*. The next year, to *La Cage Aux Folles*. She is pregnant for that one. These are extremely gay shows.

Here are things that are important to them: the town (which we flee), the schools (from which I will beg escape, labeled a “dyke” and a “retard”) and the synagogue (from which we will be sent away.)

Cicero wrote, and is cited by Kennedy here, “the first bond of society is marriage; next, children, and then the family.” What is meant by family here, I cannot digest. I think of the ticker tape of ways I am dismissed by mine as irrelevant. I do not know if my siblings feel this way, but we do not agree to the same terms of service.

When my father moves out, I am sixteen. He talks to men half his age, and I am talking to men that are twice mine, all in AOL chat rooms. We don’t talk about this on the weekend trips, which I, alone, am

permitted to attend.¹

At first, my brother (13) and I are told that my sister (10) cannot know that my father is gay. This is Anthony Kennedy’s point in *Obergefell*, because children should not have lived like that. The gulf between sixteen and ten is just barely swimmable. When does she find out? I don’t know. I am away at school, navigating my own icebergs.

It is only when I am engaged in my thirties that my parents stop suing each other. My father walks me down the aisle, and my mother walks my sister down the aisle, and there is much consternation about both of these things. My sister gives birth to the first grandchild, and the rest of us brave a biting November night to eat at an Italian restaurant, as we did every weekend growing up. We have not eaten in this configuration in decades (father, mother, sister, brother) and I am unmoored.

Appendix A

If I were just my father’s, I would not have beautiful blonde hair. I would not put peanut butter in the fridge. I would not have an aversion to vegetables..

Appendix B

If I were just my mother’s, I would not write as therapy. I would not dedicate my life to civil rights. I would not get into fights with people about musicals.

Appendix C

Neither of my parents run marathons. They don’t devour reality television. They cannot eat a 24 ounce steak. I am outside of them.

There are four **Dissents** to *Obergefell v. Hodges*, marriage equality’s final curtain, but here I will pray you hear just one. If I am constructed by lies and disquietude, the bait and switch of my adolescence is the rod that holds my shape. Nothing can be taken from me again, because I can move the pieces out of order, and put this here. It is so ordered.

-Amy Cook

¹ I pause here because as my family spirals out of control, we fall into potholes that have nothing at all to do with my father’s orientation. My seething recoil against a man that my father dates could easily have been directed at a woman. But a number of times we will use this crane of destruction as an excuse. We continue to have holidays together because “we are a family.” This would not be the case if my father’s new partner were a woman, and thus, we are told that gay and straight are not equal footing, and the former requires accommodation. We normalize this idea.



Foresaken
Ellen Sollod

A Difference in Blue

New York City's blue
from harbor level, the blue
I used to love, is nothing
like New Mexico's blue
at seven thousand feet.

Against this blue of blues,
mountains across Rio Grande's
valley reveal every shadow,
every line, as if I myself
carved them. A poet's blue,

not easy to forget, harder
to live without. My love,
the artist, sees it differently.
Scenery's not life, she says,
missing Big Apple's blue haze.

Except she has a restless eye,
a roving mind that loves
Tuesday's shades and hues,
only to awake on Thursday
to a new best beau of blue.

New York, New York was
once my tune, but no more.
What song am I going to sing,
anyway, if one blue for her
turns out like any another?

And all the aspen I planted
belong to someone else?

-Dick Altman

A Brief Etymology of Consent

After Kay Ryan

“To feel together,” an action, an item, unironically always denoting choice, though understudy Anubis shifts. An amelioration from feudal management, who, ascended, get to assent, and then, somehow, a surrender, a giving up, something like defeat. Refusal of a zero sum (why hold nothing that weighs so very much, more than sin, more than a whole heart?), first one, then two, then all, back to together, every one has to feel to be true, resist lazy tale of delusion - somewhere, between obligation and delight, a beach, the most coveted hinterland, a DMZ of desire, both and none and neither, they tell you: don’t make your home here. The ocean behind needn’t touch you to make itself known, even when you can’t harmonize because these thoughts don’t arabesque so much as stomp, drop like a beat, like a weight you can’t let the sky hold for a moment, oh unacrobat Atlas, never taught metric conversion between selfishness and safety, how doomed. The ocean pulls at your foundation with such inviting softness, of course every attempted check-in sounds like drowning. The tide can’t be held accountable for your inability to swim, so learn the names of every muscle necessary to keep yourself rooted/up/right and lean into such holy repulsion, though it strains all siren/s social songs. Sand will accept all gold surfeited, swallow it back to silica, it knows something is wrong with its composition and offers its own permission. Sigilize whatever you deem sacred and altar it only to those who remember such simple beginnings: to feel together. Not conquest or treaty, not settlement. Balance.

-R. Thursday



Vulnerable
Luna Maluna Gri

Hamlet's Father

Daily I think of my father:
shroud of broken threads –
venom-tainted veins –
scalpel blunted on
his double-woven heart.

I did not expect last night
he would speak of it:
his memory gullied out –
asking in the dark
that I seek its sediments –

stand with him
in ravine, forest –
me, his echo,
raving for us
to weary hills
against this slow ravelling.

-George Kramer



About me
Joana Dionisio



Our memory is never fully ours
Joana Dionisio



She learned her hands in a fairy-tale
Joana Dionisio

FILM

Homeland I
Eugenia Grammenou

According to Roland Barthes, one's homeland is one's childhood taking us where memories have formed our first homeland, the primordial and decisive one. Homeland I, is a video about the sense of that place. What is it exactly? Each person is formed through childhood memories and recalling these memories, one performs a peculiar patriotic recognition of the first and fundamental homeland of their existence. Without liking at all narrow categorizations like video poetry, poem film/video, experimental etc because I believe that they can't describe the hugeness of an art work, I think that Homeland I is an art work- inquiry about homeland. It walks on the sensitive line that connect memory and identity , then and now.



<https://youtu.be/cNdlUciU31I>

Entre nous
Paulius Šliaupa

An industrial seascape is filled with human presence. A seductive whisper recounts the job of an artist. This intimate soliloquy superposed with the distant images unfolds matters of youth, longing, love, and the organization of time and daily life in correlation to work.



<https://youtu.be/FVB8zTFzc7M>

Coma State
Layne Ortega León

Coma State is a self-exploration and discovery journey. It came as a proposition to develop an audiovisual project on the theme of violence towards the most vulnerable subjects of our society but it soon turned into the realization that I have been one of those subjects myself and that gender-based violence scenarios and situations had been already normalized in my mind. And so, I started going through the memories of every episode, every man, every silence and experience in which, as a woman, I have felt reduced, forced, violated and even indoctrinated just because of my gender. The photographic series is an attempt at poetic storytelling and for the purpose of the original project, it inhabits the moving image complementing the narrative. However, the series has a life of its own. The collection can be read almost as a chronicle in which the representation of events coexists with the conceptual translation of my own emotions, triggered by the memories of such events, but also by my own view on this undeniable reality. Monotones and color create a suspended condition of silence, sorrow and powerlessness, like those in a state of coma where hope is possible to give life a new chance at vindication. Through this body of work, it's my intend to recognize and validate my own journey and empower myself to take a definite stand against any type of violence and to emerge as something greater than just a victim. Hopefully, it creates diverse dialogues and new perspectives arise to strengthen power over force.



<https://vimeo.com/552999488>

Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab (Germany Abolishes Itself)
PropagandaMaschineKarin

Video manifesting right wing fantasies of a radical left that wants to fully abolish the conservative way of life.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHpydzwHarU>

Intimacy
Wheeler Winston Dixon

"Those who have never known the deep intimacy and the intense companionship of mutual love have missed the best thing that life has to give." - Bertrand Russell



<https://vimeo.com/623661416>

Desperado
Barbara DeGenevieve

Desperado is documentary within a pseudo-documentary (or vice versa) chronicling the unexpected seduction and year long interaction between a university professor (the artist) and a former truck driver from Louisiana.



<https://vimeo.com/29580057>

What can a machine learn?
Countervision

What does it mean to be in a pandemic – through the perspective of a machine? How does a machine comprehend a project that is not about the pandemic itself, but coming to terms with the reality of a pandemic? About coming to terms with the heightened estrangement to one's previous life and yet at the same time a heightened intimacy with one's living situation? Countervisions invited their close collaborator Lara, a highly sophisticated algorithm, to explore these questions. Using data sets of artists' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic exploring estrangement and intimacy, Lara's natural language processing unit generated texts on the current crises. These texts were then generated into graphic works through Lara's text-to-image unit. The resulting work is both a reflection on the reality of the pandemic and on the surge of artificial intelligence technologies.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCx2qSxZvCM&t=1s>

The Panhandler Project
Barbara DeGenevieve

The Panhandler Project is the outcome of the artist finding 5 men, all homeless and African American, who agree to model nude for \$100.



<https://vimeo.com/29540736>



No Ego
Luara Boittelle

Cynanthropy

She convinced me so thoroughly
vetting, omitting, reducing

parading around her well kempt father
her mother's patronizing kindness

I am imprisoned in "cute"
what is my ego but a wagging tail?

-Jess Paauwe

Approaching Five Years

When you get up, throw on a t-shirt and boxers
wander into the living room to check email
(but you call out “You were so good!”)
I realize we’ve already had our honeymoon.

We’re not married, but gone are the days
when we spent whole afternoons in our borrowed bed,
neighborhood sounds filtering in.
Under the scratchy gray blanket
you named my curves after mountain ranges.
I fell asleep to your heartbeat.
We dreamed, intertwined, sweaty and naked and young.

Upon waking, we’d untie the black plastic bag from the bakery
and feed each other *empanadas de viento*.
The crystals of sugar stuck to our fingertips, our lips.
If the sun wasn’t too low, we’d fall back into bed,
savoring every minute before trudging back to the bus stop.

Now that we share a roof, our lives interfere.
The call of all the other things we want to do with our days
bleeds into the time we have to make love.
The lazy caresses. The contentment.

I’m here in a crumpled night dress,
ransacked bed covers, and you
return to your guitar, your computer, your messages.
The candles burn lower.

-Rosalie Hendon



Two Self Portraits
Jinyu Li

Jesse Owens and my Dad

Dad played handball. No glove. I think he loved playing, but I never actually asked him. Other than that, he simply didn't do sports. As I grew up and into adulthood, I loved baseball, basketball, football, track, volleyball, golf: Dad wasn't interested. I know it was the sports that didn't interest him since he always encouraged me in my other activities. So I found other men his age to do sports, talk about sports with me: my chain-smoking Uncle Al and my old friend Tom's father John, also a smoker, but, then, John half-stopped smoking by handing lit cigarettes to his wife. These substitutions worked fine for me.

But this story begins with Dad's death. Dad smoked cigars, chewed tobacco; but does all said, *That's NOT what gave him jaw cancer, different types on each side. It was a congenital condition that emerged.* As something always will emerge in order to let us die. After Dad died, the work began.

What Dad did besides science, teaching and lunch was collect, and when I say *collect*, I mean it. Collect so many different varieties of art, pottery, antiques. Records, books, modern silver. Dad wasn't exactly a hoarder; but he **was** a hoarder who was also very neat, well-organized. I have never seen so much stuff, most of it beautiful and very meaningful to Dad. Beginning to look at it: this would mean mining, unpacking his layers in every level of wall and corner and cabinet. Entering the levels of Troy, though Dad's stuff often had more than nine levels. And Dad's stuff **was** wonderful though not nearly as valuable as he'd thought, as we'd assumed. A product of the Depression, Dad's stuff was mostly second tier though uniformly beautiful. That meant museums and galleries hadn't wanted the stuff even when he had tried to donate: *The only Japanese woodcut we'd actually take, we already own it.* Museums mostly need funds more than collections. Collecting grounded Dad outside of that terrible world of the Depression. It was an existential base for him.

Since Mom wanted to move now that Dad was dead, the work was to offload stuff: to family, friends, art dealers, and any museums willing to look. After working on that for weeks, the real work began. An art dealer was hired to oversee sales inside their house. That went fine— for a time— but, after those weeks, there was still an amazing amount of... stuff.

Unbelievable! Was there not an actual physical end? The collections now looked like a normal collector's. But what to do with it? We contacted the buyers of the house to see if they'd deal with the remains. They could have what they wanted, sell the rest, or...? They agreed. Relief.

The final day of owning the house arrived. My wife and I looked around for the last time. We would miss the house along with my parents since we'd lived next door to them for over thirty years. We looked and looked. I sat down on a wooden window seat, a seat I'd sat on for much of my life since I'd grown up in that house since the age of 10. It calmed, saddened me. I looked out the window, as I had for decades. The lawn still looked the same as when we'd moved in. Scraggly. My wife interrupted my reverie.

"Look in the window seat one more time," she urged. "Maybe you missed something?" How could she have known? I looked, and there was an old briefcase that I had missed. I opened it. Amazing! It had personal things, things Dad had never shown me. An old Bible, with the program to his Bar Mitzvah in Montreal in 1933 before they'd come to California after the Depression nearly ruined them. Slides from an early lecture. And oddest of all, a program from a Meet at the Los Angeles Coliseum with a green piece of wool holding it together. Who was at this Meet? Jesse Owens! But Dad didn't do sports. And he must have been there.

I held the program in my hands and teared up. Why had Dad...aha, it was the politics, not sports. Jesse was a fine symbol for all of our country against the Nazis, against our racism, and for justice.

A last, surprising gift from Dad. I put it aside to keep it. And, somehow, lost it. Just writing this, I want to search for it again. For the umpteenth time.

-Alan Bern



Corona Weathered (Seated in Power)
Thomas Flynn II

committed

touch stained by resentment

words imparted with regret

looks of infrequent remnants

and still I love you yet

-Victoria Bailey

Hushing Hour

While you waited in stairwells with roaches casting shadows on walls and knives in your sock in a bustling city where you
collected pizza boxes and traded money for metal from drifters

the second hand ticked by my side
and I shed myself

into the skin of quicker moments.

-Heather Brown Barrett



Shall I serve you?
AnnaBrooke Green

The Perfect Kiss

“Your perfect kiss
 - though loving -
isn’t quite.” she comments to me.
“You took more care to learn the violin.”
A cool mark laid among the crumbs
and crumpled napkins of a lunch.

Her former husband – the painter -
did not apply
 a brushstroke touch,
and she’ll not tolerate another
endless laying on
 impasto
with a palette knife.

Now, she and I huddle over lunch.
Some days, our floating
 permanence
clings to the broken mast of a bed
as much as anyone’s.
Again,
her casual voice insists
the prelude opens on a minor key,
 lentissimo:
the perfect kiss.

-Eric Forsberg



Yonic Pink
AnnaBrooke Green

Her Mother's Daughter

If you leave me
some notion of yourself,
what will it be?

A photo from a working trip?
You, next to a charred tank
on the battlefield.

Or that voicemail
in your reporter's voice,
as you stitch a naked narrative
I mistook for threads of mist?

I found a hair of yours
lying like the curve of a cello.
A resonance in absence.

When I hold our baby daughter,
at first she nestles to my chest.
Then she plants her hands
to raise her bobbling head,
eyes fixed on what I cannot see.

-Eric Forsberg



Daily Routine
Aliyah Mickens



Shrinking
Aliyah Mickens



Brother
Aliyah Mickens

#1: Let Me Call You *Sweetheart*

Today I played a guitar
with no name,
moments, mere bars,
of a journey scored from puberty
to late-late middle age.

He brought me chords and picks and steel;
I offered breasts, skin, my heart;
I was feeling all the life in my fingers.
There was hip and dip and prescience.
I strummed a cock-strung hope,

dreamed to name this thing
of pleasure clasped in my lap.
Maybe I will call him *Sweetheart*;
maybe I will call him *Yearning*.
No, no, he is *Great Desire*.

But on the guitar with no name
who felt my first picking lesson,
we learned why my lover
had asked me to learn the B⁷ chord
to prepare for this tryst's surprise.

For a '79 Nashville-brand shamelessly nameless
guitar, I had learned B⁷—o, to stretch my novice skills,
practice, practice, practice Cohen's holy *Hallelujah!*
At the risk of seeming poetically unstrung, now,
may I name your other instruments of pleasure?

-Karla Linn Merrifield

Barbara DeGenevieve

Barbara DeGenevieve was self-invented. She told me once — over coffee in my kitchen — about her conscious decision to create herself; that even her name was made by her (Barbara Of Genevieve, her mother's name): Barbara DeGenevieve. She invented herself as an artist, a woman, a teacher, and in myriad other ways. She confronted, she debated, she laughed. She always seemed to say yes. Yes to students who needed more time or attention. Yes to the darker ideas that weren't supposed to be explored by serious artists. Yes to intimacy. Yes to contact. Yes to questioning class, race, sexual and societal norms. Yes to everything.

Barbara was born in 1947 and died in 2014. She made serious and whimsical work about sexuality, gender, class, censorship and pornography and lectured on these and other topics, wouldn't you want to know, please explore. She examined complicated human issues and then showed them to us with a rare directness and an intense honesty. I don't know if Barbara was truly fearless, but she sure seemed to be. When the 1990s culture wars resulted in the cancellation of her NEA grant (along with the artists Andres Serrano and Merry Alpern), she immediately became a vocal and critical participant in the debates about art and censorship. While doing that, she carried her teaching and administrative load and made new work in a variety of media and disciplines, not just photography. The Film section of Superpresent (page 53) links to two of her video projects and a third is featured on the back cover.

Barbara lived with me for a month while she was closing on a house. I had just finished my MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Barbara had been department chair and my advisor. The irony of such bureaucratic positions for such a free-thinking artist!

I asked her once if she would pose for a crazy project I was envisioning: a series of BDSM photographs made using the wet plate collodion process (better known as ambrotypes or tintypes, depending on the substrate used) — with its attendant low sensitivity to light making short exposure time of the plates impossible — and I described the idea to her: she would be nude, spanked with a variety of household implements, bound, with blurry hands or paddles or whips recording the path of the blows. She laughed and laughed and said “of course” she would do it.

The project was never realized because Barbara got sick with the cancer that killed her, but she said yes. It's probably best that this idea never saw the light of day but her response is what I remember. I imagine there are hundreds if not thousands of similar stories that could be told by former students and colleagues.

When putting this issue about intimacy and estrangement together, I immediately wanted to include work by Barbara, to let more people have a glimpse into her work. The thing about trying to gather enough of Barbara's work to present a comprehensive picture is this: she spent so much of her time and energy on teaching that she frankly did her own art a disservice.

There are plans afoot to mount a major exhibition of Barbara's work but it's slow going. Special thanks are owed to Barbara's friends and colleagues Alan Labb and Susan Smith who, with others, are working to bring that exhibition to life and who were instrumental in obtaining the images published here.

-David McClain



Barbara and Boys
Barbara DeGenevieve



Darling
Barbara DeGenevieve



Perfect Wisdom
Barbara DeGenevieve

We were both eleven. She told me that she thought her tongue was the most



private part of her body. I was disappointed but we touched tongues anyway.

For a split second his laughter turned to sheer panic as he remembered her



fascination with the mating ritual of the praying mantis.

She was always strangely



curious about the function of a jock strap.

There seemed to be some misunderstanding or confusion or both. Pictures like the



ones in the magazines were fine but this was another matter.

from The True Life Novelettes
Barbara DeGenevieve

Portrait of Borges and His Mother

"To fall in love is to create a religion that has a fallible god."

—Jorge Luis Borges

Take communion—a lozenge, stone, a song, coin
of the body, a dying man—

When Borges becomes blind, his mother wraps him
in her Uruguayan coat, listens as he dictates his mind's
rhythm of images, verses, then scribbles her son's poems.

Under a tree, bees swarm, air warm with aroma
of ripening figs, while Borges wonders *What became
of the century of light?* Thinking, this courtyard

a temple, his mother the watering hole of an eye
he can jump into and see, because faith is where
we drink from, between trust and vision.

-Mary Morris

Tell Me All Your Secrets

of honey and wind.

I will tuck them in—to my vertebrae
one by one.

C-4 the devastation you haul
of your mother

who tried to kill you both with a hangar
before you were born.

C-6 the lover you couldn't keep.

We never voted on this.
Never trusted the over slight.

I share your memories in my body
like an organ. I seize.

I weep at our discomfort, friend.

-Mary Morris



Wonderland
Joseph Landry



Room Service
Joseph Landry



No Answer
Joseph Landry

Confess

Her voice scrapes the morning
sunshine into shards of anxiety.
Will she confess again? Make me
hear it all over again? Others
are fooled by her wit and
history but I know she is
dangerous. Her words soak me
in cold—make me damp with
fear—will this be the day?
Then she smiles. I'm safe
until tomorrow.

-Pasquale Trozzolo

Because, Because

She assumes he is dead by now; hopes so.

It comes back to her: their first meeting in early June, by a fountain where heat propels them into a kind of summer madness; where yes is the answer to every question.

He was hungry, she was delicious. There were omissions: a wife, four children he had no plans to shed. She stood on a fault which could shift at any moment; an always- holding of breath.

*

He was thirty- seven, she was twenty-two; and was flattered by the man's attention, whatever he could spare. There were only payphones then, and those attached to kitchen walls; or desk phones. Phones with extensions that could be answered by two people at once; there were no cell phones, no texts, no burner phones, no pagers; no device small enough to hide, no passwords.

*

She had no one to hide his letters from; she waited for calls, at times convenient for him; lived alone in a crappy apartment. She didn't send notes to his home address, or to his office suite *just in case*. There were times she was repulsed at seeing his cursive on lined paper, especially on days when he left a palm-print on her cheek, or a red bracelet on her wrist.

*

She smoked in place of eating, walked blocks and blocks to kill time; but had to promise to walk alone. Not with that homely boy at work who might or might not like her, or her boring boss who assigned her routine tasks. Even a friend he hadn't yet met.

*

She was his; he was not hers. He amused her friends, the life of every party; on the drive home, there would be silence, the black atmosphere in which she replayed every conversation he may have overheard, rehashed what she might have done to merit a tightened leash. He played his music on the radio, the country kind she hated; movies she loved, bored him.

*

You might ask the same question she sometimes asked herself; why stay with him, why not find someone else; younger, handsomer: available?

Because.

*

She would never dare to verbalize *because*: I love him, I am afraid of him, he knows too much about me, he loves me, he will try to kill himself again.

Because of me.

*

So many dress rehearsals for ending it; the mornings- after, when he apologized; when he told her to try harder, so he didn't have to do those things.

*

After forty years, the fountain still cascades; she remembers the first day, but there are so many after that she cannot recall; lovers' amnesia, perhaps?

He must be dead by now, fifteen years her senior. She hopes he is planted a thousand miles away.

-*Agnes Hart*

A rice noodle story (and other encounters)

My mother recently recounted a story to me about the passing of her grandfather. I then realized how grief can be such a beautiful yet wicked thing.

My mother speaks a mix of English, Singlish, Mandarin, and various dialects. This is likely the result of growing up in the early days of Singapore's independence. These were heady, transitional, and transformational times, and she was one of the earliest batches of students in Singapore to be taught fully in the English language at school; both her older siblings were taught in Mandarin Chinese. She often says *'yi han'* (Mandarin for 'regret') every time she mentions something she wishes turned out differently; could-have(-been)s, should-have(-been)s, why-didn'ts. This often annoys me, because when I'm the subject, I feel somewhat deficient and imprudent (how I should have found a partner in college rather than fumble around on dating apps in my 20s, how I should have chosen to study in Singapore instead of abroad, or for that matter, studied in a capital city instead of the little-known post-industrial town I eventually called my home for some 5 years), and when she refers to someone else, I feel second-hand exasperation. The fact is, more often than not, we couldn't have known better.

Regardless, when she mentioned how, growing up, she wasn't particularly close to her grandfather, I couldn't help feeling a helpless melancholy and remorse. I am, too, not close to my paternal grandmother, and all too easily blame this on our personality differences and a generation gap. My paternal grandfather passed shortly before my father was born, and with the exception of a tenant who rented out a room in her 3-bedroom flat some years ago, my grandmother lives a largely solitary life. She keeps contact with her siblings, and makes acquaintance with her neighbours, but spends most of her time watching television and cooking alone; there is no internet in her flat. She grew up in Malaysia, lived through the Second World War as a child, and attended school for three years, then worked on a rubber plantation, where she stubbed her toe – she has the scar to prove it – before moving to Singapore. This all seems a far cry from my life and world; the only wars I endure are against my inner demons.

The chasm between my grandmother and I seems to only grow with time. My mother constantly reminds me how my grandmother is an over-worrier, a hypervigilant guardian angel. She doesn't just give – she gives *out*. As such, my brother and I are told to do our utmost to shield her from our dark and messy lives; depression, addiction, failure, bullies, abusive exes, and present only a curated version of our lives: mundane weekend activities, career milestones, academic achievements. Yet sharing good news isn't easy either. First of all, we have to translate English to Mandarin, and even then, she is more fluent in Hakka, which none of us bar our father is conversant in. After a round of Chinese whispers (literally) she finally understands, and would show an unfettered delight, gushing, lost for words, grinning uncontrollably for minutes. And then I would feel abashed and guilty for even hesitating to break the good news to her in the first place, and to have even thought about depriving her of such joy.

Like such, my grandmother and I sustain a lovingly awkward relationship. I only recall several instances of interacting with her one-on-one, and even then, these interactions are heavily dosed with the same kind of long, awkward silences I frantically avoid on dates with people I've known for barely a week.

I remember once teaching her to use Microsoft Paint some ten years ago. I had called in sick at school, and she had suffered a fall and came to live with us for a week until she got better. An uncle on my mother's side suggested I take the opportunity to get to know her better. We drew a fish on the computer screen, and coloured it in. Somehow we ended up talking about how she met my grandfather through an arranged marriage, something I hadn't known up until then. This was perhaps the only time a computer, my grandmother, and I co-existed in the same space, and the only time we exchanged more than a sentence or two at a time; indeed, technology can be both an alienating force (caricatures of 'smartphone addicts' come to mind) and a uniting one. During her week's stay with us, I walked into my mother assisting her in the shower, and this was also the only time I saw her in a vulnerable position, unclad, drenched, hunched.

I recall a time when I was a child of perhaps 4 or 5, and my brother – 3 years older – wondered out loud what the dying process is like...the skin becoming cold to the touch, the proverbial last breath, the setting in of rigor mortis

(a child's curiosity often takes morbid turns). I then thought about our grandmother and how she would die in such a way, and began to cry. (Again, my brother and I were once close, but just as our paths in life diverged, so did our common ground dwindle.)

I also remember a moment while our family was on holiday, and my father and grandmother had walked ahead of me. As they strolled down the pier, I realized that this was the only time I ever saw them holding hands, and that this was how I would imagine she held his hand as a child. Such was a closeness I found difficult to have with her.

But back to my mother's story.

Her grandfather passed on a rainy day (all her grandparents died of natural causes, and she attributes this to the clemency of a higher being). He had been gravely ill for the months leading up to his death, and spent his last days in a hospital being cared for by 'missies' (a colloquialism for nurses in Singapore back in the day). My mother was 14 at the time, and walked from her home a mile or so away to visit him every week. On the day he died, she had brought his favourite snack, chee cheong fun, to the ward, and placed it on the over-bed table. Just as she swiftly turned to leave, he called for her. She had left her wet umbrella behind (I came to know my mother as a rather forgetful person), and he reminded her to take it with her for the trip. Poignantly, that was the last thing he said to her; he departed later that day. As nurses cleared out his belongings, they inadvertently noticed the cold, untouched rice noodles, and my mother learnt that he never got to enjoy it before he left simply because she had forgotten the simple gesture of opening the packet for him.

I researched the hospital he died in on the internet. Information on it is incredibly sparse, but as I discovered that it had closed down permanently exactly a month before I was born, I felt an uncanny but decided closeness to it.

I see this rice noodle story mirrored in recent events. Two months ago, my grandmother fell ill with a lung infection and was admitted to hospital. COVID restrictions prevent our family from visiting her, and this compounds my exasperation; one's physical presence can be comforting even if one stands in silence, but video calls are tense when one is lost for words. Through the camera I saw how ill she had become – pale as rice noodles, with a nasal cannula up her nose, slightly delirious but nonetheless smiling. After the call, I broke down, frustrated and guilty, as I felt overwhelmed with the pressures in my life – work deadlines, persistent mental health difficulties, impostor syndrome, the growing distance with my parents as I grew up and they grew old – and simply excused myself as 'not having the bandwidth' to cope with the additional stressor of an ailing grandparent. But I am also deeply touched that just seeing me alive and fighting, even if not quite yet thriving, is enough for her.

My mother tried making sense of this. 'When you were little, she never really interacted with you, and instead busied herself in the kitchen making meals for you. That might explain why you aren't close to her now,' she shared.

'Perhaps we simply have different love languages,' I suggested. 'And she did her best.'

The experience of estrangement is a universal one; I'm certainly not alone in seeking meaning in alienation, and the remorse that often accompanies it. A friend suggested that crises of passion inspire many a hit single and literary magnum opus, which is an astute insight, and an amusing one no less. At that point, I had survived two heartbreaks, and indeed reflecting upon them provided some closure, if not comfort.

One was with G, who would often bring up P (a quick aside: guard your own heart if your date constantly mentions someone who broke theirs), who had been taking days to respond to his messages after she had asked to be just friends.

'We all have busy lives, don't we,' I responded. Of course, texting lulls are indeed deeply unsettling, since they can be an insidious harbinger for estrangement in the tech age (a.k.a. ghosting).

I noticed his face turning sour in disagreement, so I elaborated.

'But you'll never be too busy for things that matter to you. Sometimes, I'm not a priority in people's lives, and

sometimes, they are not in mine. And that's okay.'

At that moment I realized I was offering advice I should be taking myself. I was very fond of G, and found myself rather troubled by how distant he often was. I gradually realized how his estrangement with P had cast a shadow over him (and we all do shoulder baggage). Perhaps his bigger priority at the time was coming to terms with his heartbreak, and soon after, so was mine in coming to terms with mine.

But sometimes, we can be blindsided by intimacy itself. Some months prior, I met M. When we first met, we talked from dusk till dawn. It is fascinating how intense intimacy is often forged between lost souls – he was recovering from the end of an 8 year-long relationship, and I, having endured a particularly trying time abroad in an abusive one, was now struggling with moving back in with my family while carrying the newfound weight of trauma. 'We've only met a few days ago,' he once said, 'but it feels like we've known each other for months.' It later transpired that he wasn't romantically interested, and while we've since grown apart, I still find it cathartic to contemplate how ships pass in the night, and how lucky I must be to be one of them.

An anecdote shared by a friend of mine perfectly encapsulates the beauty of chance. We caught up recently after not having met for some 3 years; we had dinner in town, then wound up at a coffee shop near my home at midnight. It was during this late-night, caffeine-fuelled conversation that he described his friend's digital art project, in which a user would enter a random series of numbers into a code, which would generate fractal art. He described his friend's frustration when he was mesmerized by one particular output image but realized he had forgotten the input parameters and was thus unable to recreate the said image. The specific, intimate choreography of his fingers on the keyboard was never to happen again.

But perhaps therein lies the sublimity of an unopened packet of noodles, a fleeting 2-week relationship, a 3-month long read receipt, an infinity of algorithm outputs. Stories of intimacy and estrangement are fortuitous, and remind us that we often occupy but a liminal space in others' lives. Yet, they teach us plenty about how bonds, however fragile, and distance, however painful, are both deeply precious.

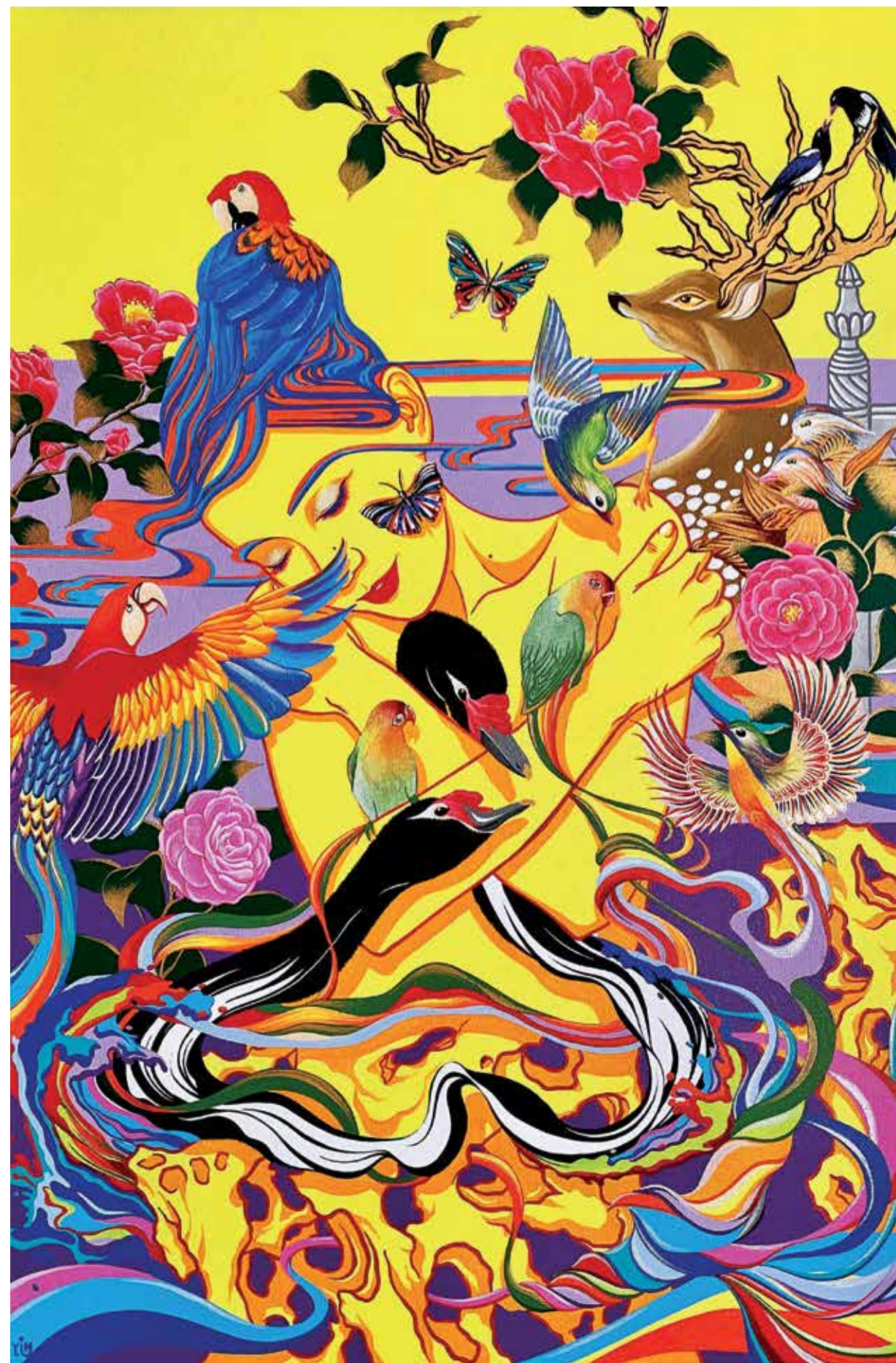
-Chian Ying Xuan



Bloom from within
Yin Lu



Fleeting Happiness
Yin Lu



The call of love
Yin Lu

When Ravens Speak

When Ravens speak to me,
My vision sharpens to an obsidian point.
Their feathered language releases my spirit
As an arrow to hunt targets solid as air.

When Ravens rest from riding thermal currents,
Perch on twisted Juniper skeletons,
I imagine families flown to safety,
Mourn my own broken and scattered.

I am the sole survivor reaching upward
Now given the trajectory to search
For reasons, revelations, acceptance,
Unwilling to return to earth where the rest is buried.

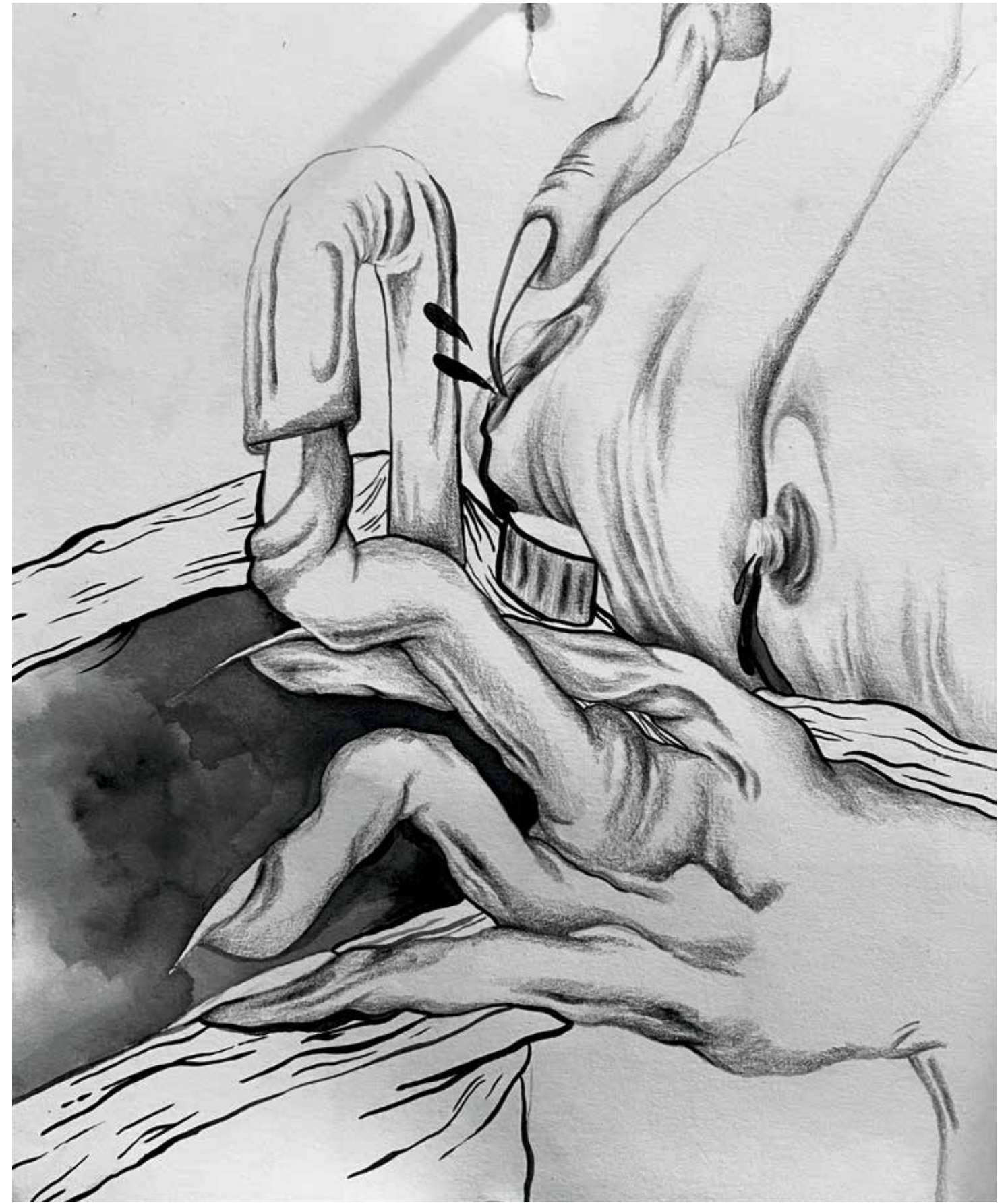
-Don Kunz



She Dreams of Her Disappointing Life That Might Have Been Then Was
Gale Rothstein



Over Grown
Madeline Hernandez



Spilled Milk
Madeline Hernandez

Reimagining Hope

Collectively, presence persists
in all events leading to now,
eternity, enduring self.
The day we met I looked into

your eyes. Love sees our histories made
collectively. Presence persists
from our grandmother's homemade pie,
seconds given before we asked.

The books lining our bookshelves are
reflections of who we've become
collectively. Presence persists
in relationship quality:

the herbs we grow, the gold finches
calling along the backyard fence,
the promises we keep or break
collectively. Presence persists.

-Toni Holland

A Priori Gratitude

Celebrate the people you love
heartedly. Gather the cards stored
around the house. Find all the stamps.
Red-footed boobies hunt for fish.

Lush, red mangrove trees root above
earth and sea. Flying fish swim in
schools playfully in peaceful seas.
Darwin's Finches break apart twigs

around star spiders spinning webs.
Right on the front cover, ships dock.
When morning light comes, check the mail.
Inside the card, written by hand,

notes written to you signed, *With*
Love, express my gratitude for
U. Open the card. Open it.
Voyage of the Beagle anchors.

-Toni Holland

Лицо - дыра.
Внутри есть рука, держащая пенис.
Мы ничего не слышим.
Ветер сдирает кожу и тело исчезает,
как ночь исчезает из
белая доска.

-Ivan de Monbrison

The face is a hole.
Inside there is a hand holding a penis.
We don't hear anything.
The wind rips off the skin and the body disappears,
As the night fades from a
White board.

-Ivan de Monbrison

Кровь выходит изо рта.
Я боюсь умереть.
Растение выходит из моего рта.
Я стираю
рисунок представляет меня внезапно.
Я никто.

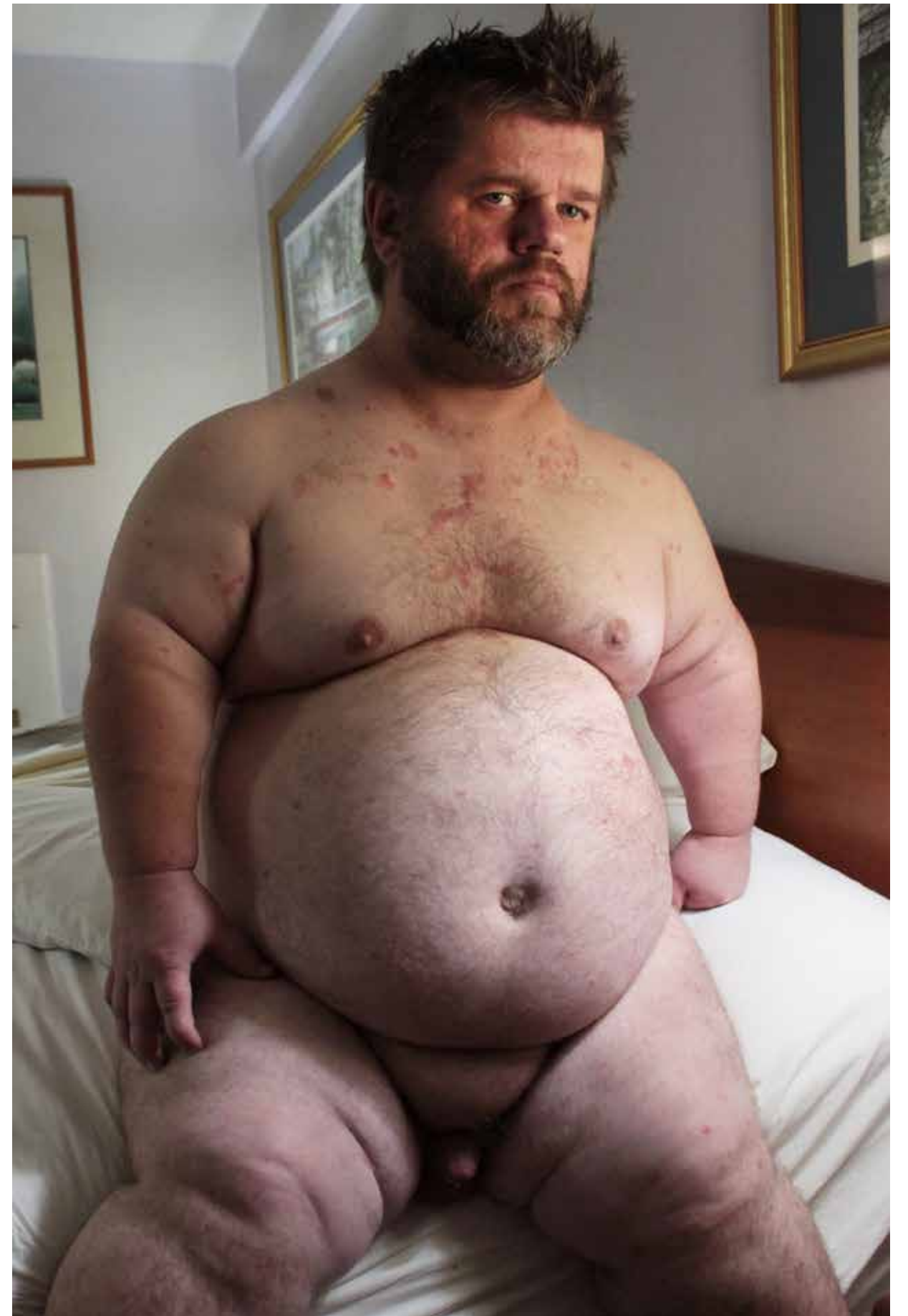
-Ivan de Monbrison

Blood comes out of the mouth.
I'm afraid to die.
The plant comes out of my mouth.
I delete
The drawing which represents me suddenly.
I am nobody.

-Ivan de Monbrison



James - Apache Motel, Chicago, 2018
Hal Shipman



Mike - Summit Motel, Chicago, 2021
Hal Shipman



Darren - Apache Motel, Chicago, 2018
Hal Shipman

Mundane

I don't like it—never have.
This talk seems wasted on me.

Just stop. Don't tell me.
I don't want to know. *I mean it.*

Stop this litany—
the mundane of our common ground. Work.
Medications. Kids. Tell me

instead of boats and clouds. Of speed and
sex and dreams and bad ideas. Tell me

everything, without the clutter of what we share.
Be impersonal. Shocking. Off-kilter.

Abduct me with a dangerous tale I have not heard.
Tell me you like the way I hold my drink.

Touch my hand. Whisper something stirring.
Make me nervous.

Be my stranger.
Just for tonight.

-Pasquale Trozzolo



I've Always Relied on the Kindness of Strangers
Lindsey Morrison Grant

Taste

What is more intimate
than a lover's breath
on your cheek

before you touch,
before you even know.
The breath is warm as skin,

yours is a tongue.
This is how the mingling
starts, pleasure's aperitif

before the flash
of innocence again,
the quantum confusion.

-Stan Sanvel Rubin



Looking Glass
Nick Metz

Afternoons under the earth

What am I doing with these afternoons that refused to die?
What am I doing with the longing that couldn't be tamed,
With my resigned pride, with all this salt and water?

For so long I lived
In the safety of my
Aristocratic contempt.

Unexpectedly, my heart opened
Everything I'd tried to crush
Pushed the walls of my heart
With the delicate power with which
Nature springs up through cement
And opened her gently and then all at once.
I burst; I hadn't known these afternoons
Were kindly asking to take another deep breath
Before returning under the earth.

- Iulia Enkelana

Checklist (sometime soon)

Recently I

- ✓ slept inside Chopin's nocturnes
- ✓ shortly fantasized about you
- ✓ crossed the city several times
- ✓ caught every bus on time
- ✓ thought of my ex for 3 seconds everyday
- ✓ took a taxi two times
- ✓ watched two live performances
- ✓ lit candles in the cathedral
- ✓ thought that I need to be a little more sad

to write poetry

- ✓ didn't touch myself

(not once,

my body's a stranger)

- ✓ smoked a little too much
- ✓ helped a beggar with

a little too much money

- ✓ cleaned the house
- ✓ texted everyone back on time
- ✓ lit candles on the balcony after buying

yellow roses in the supermarket

- ✓ slept naked
- ✓ coldly thought that I want to fall in love

for real

- ✓ didn't feel impatient
- ✓ didn't feel hungry for sex
- ✓ didn't feel disgusted by sex
- ✓ didn't drink enough wine
- ✓ didn't break any glass or plate or vase
- ✓ prayed without praying

prayed by praying

- ✓ lost some weight

(unintentionally)

- ✓ didn't worry about the future
- ✓ didn't worry about the past
- ✓ got disconnected from my own memory
- ✓ lived on my own

(lived alone)

- ✓ spent money wisely

modestly

luxuriously

- ✓ walked

walked

walked the streets of the city

- ✓ locked the door six times every night
- ✓ killed a beetle
- ✓ fed the pigeons
- ✓ remade my coffee when it wasn't tasty enough
- ✓ ticked everything on the list
- ✓ set alarms
- ✓ said goodnight to him

(and to you)

- ✓ thought this (I mean *that*) might be my first masterpiece
- ✓ fell asleep
- ✓ woke up
- ✓ felt life had meaning
- ✓ played Chopin again
- ✓ thought of no one in particular
- ✓ felt young
- ✓ felt immortal
- ✓ didn't feel afraid of death

or of getting old

- ✓ thought I need to fall in love

not right now

a little later

sometime soon-

-Iulia Enkelana

reverie

one cloudy afternoon
this city was crying from within me
the closer I get the colder it gets
my lungs, my lungs
my stomach couldn't stand it
couldn't bear the longing
the night is thick and the lights are rare
I no longer perceive space
this city can touch me
this city can banish me
the memory of you, the memory of you
the only memory I treat as luxury
my God, the past nourishes me
with tenderness
I close my eyes, the city is gone
half asleep, in an unphysical space now
you suddenly look up and recognize me

- Iulia Enkelana



Connection
Chyenne Rielly

With a Feather

I sit with friends on the roof
top café. I watch
a white feather float
from the sky until it lands

on my extended hand.

My mouth drops
open. Wordless. Next
week, I am in the yard
with my new dog, and a second,
white feather floats

down and I catch it, too.
What are the heavens trying
to tell me? Sacred message?

This I know: I am
never alone with a feather
in my hand.

-Tally Reynolds

The Death of Achilles

A boy, clenched against the cold, you glare across the jostling
blades of Morecambe Bay. One hand grips the rail, the other
scratches at your heel: underneath, out of sight,
where the blemish bides unseen.

A glaring atheist, you were marked in the womb
by the Gods. Your Gods.
The Gods of deoxyribonucleic acid, of context effect:
the Vengeful Gods.

Across the roiling sea you glare towards the frosted heights.
Cartmel, Cark and Flookburgh, Bardsea, Swarthmoor, Rampile's Flank
they draw you like masonry draws damp, each the raised scar
of trauma to come: a suicide, a fall into love, a birth.

Yours the glare on the swell, rolling over and over the threat
of your father's broken mind, the psychic fracture waiting
in your flesh and in your blood waiting in your marrow
for one sign of tenderness, for one sign of blight.

Year upon year you glare, fending off the infectious insanity
of a fond touch, of a kind word, of the unprotected love
of your exotic wife, of your mixed-race children, of your loyal
younger brother. You show Hector no weakness.

Surgical, you cut and parry: your own heart and skin
armoured against all wounds bar the original wound,
the wound beneath, whose blemish is so well trodden
as to be invisible, bar the glaring limp.

Seventy years you endure until, in the soft bed
of a Plymothian hospice you moan, thrashing thin bones.
That November night Paris comes:
sliding, nosing, he lies alongside.

Embracing you in his dark cloak,
offending every sensate inch of skin,
he caresses you through intimate purgatory
to blessed oblivion.

-Robin Knight

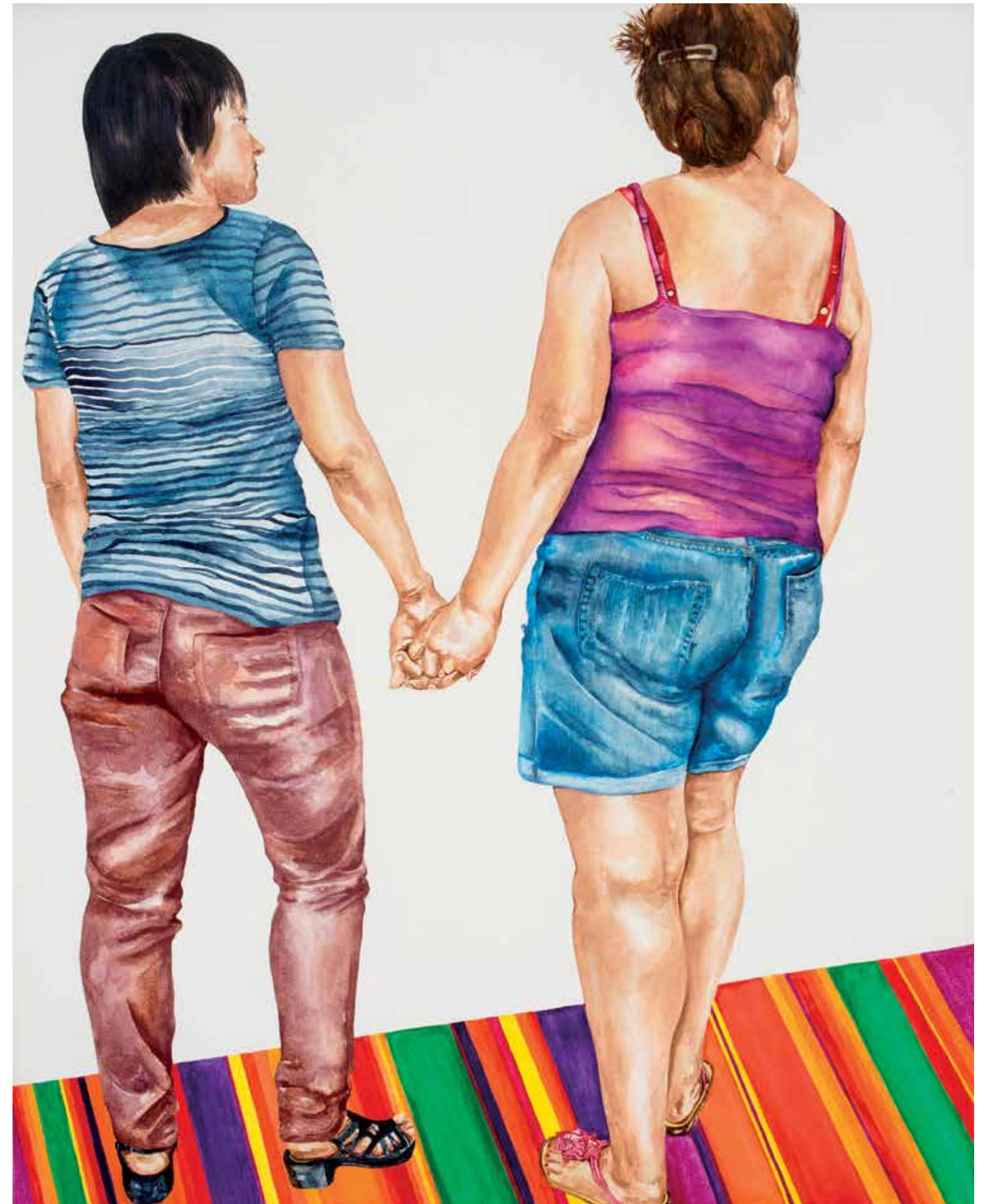
Romance 1977

Sunblind, driving crumbling macadam,
neighborhood ruts to your apartment,
we put *Rumours* on the turntable,
took rum and coke to the floor, fucking.

We met house-drinking at a friend's,
spent the night naked on a sleeper couch.
Crudely twenty-one, we spun our time
with shift work, weed and whiskey,
the beginnings of addiction.
We touched through lies of infidelity,
Allman Brothers borrowed blues.

I liked the way she said, "No doubt,"
danced barefoot drunk in MidTown clubs.
After front seat sex, after singing stoned,
after testing inflection and boundaries,
it became natural to say,
"Let's go to bed."
Taking a mistress to the movies,
we lasted late winter into spring.

-R.T. Castleberry



Two Women Walk Into A Bar
Rosemary Meza-DesPlas

First Kiss

Well, it wasn't the first kiss
but I didn't count the others,
the hundreds or thousands
of predecessor kisses:
the kiss of mother
which she called a peck on the cheek.
The moist great-aunt kiss of Auntie Betty
which she called a smacker
and which smelt of tobacco and sherry.
The jowly, powdery, lip-sticked kiss
of grandmother built like a battleship
Winifred attar-of-roses embrace.
The sisterly kisses to be avoided
like chickenpox or mumps
from Lesley kiss, Alison mouth and Janet lips.
The never-never kiss of ballet dancer Clover Roope
on whom I had a youthful crush.
My father's bristly doctor's kiss
rarely given and smelling of him.
The Swiss kisses from the au pair girls,
Heidi, Rita, Marianne, Elizabeth.
The goodbye kiss
and then the curse of the bamboo cane
which left the buttocks lined and bruised.

-Duncan Forbes



You Drink Water, I Drink Gasoline
Rosemary Meza-DesPlas

Parents' Bedroom

Above the sitting-room, it's light and large
And overlooks the garden, lawn and oak tree.
His three-piece suits are hanging in the wardrobe,
Black, navy, grey and tailor-made by Barber's,
The clothes of a consultant in the 50s.
A print of a Cézanne. A harbour scene.
Two wooden chests of drawers, one his, one hers.
A bristle hairbrush I inherited
When he became too thin on top to use it.
A basin in the corner by the bed.
Sea view: or rather inches of horizon
If you stand on a bedroom chair and peer.
A blue cloisonné box with white enamel
Containing kirby grips and safety pins.
Her dresses for a turquoise wedding,
A crimson Christmas and a sky-blue Easter.
The hats she hated and the books he read.
An oval flowering brooch: pietra dura.
The powder compact with its pinkish dust.
Pears soap in a translucent auburn shape
And the distinctive smells of coupledness.

Once I remember when thirteen or so
I came into their bedroom to continue
Some late-night disputation with my father.
They were in bed and I looked down at them.
His head lay just behind hers on one pillow.
An off-white counterpane concealed their bodies
Immobilised by my intrusion, though
I guessed immediately what they were doing.

Next morning, all he said came in one sentence:
'You shouldn't enter a bedroom without knocking,'
And now that's over sixty years ago.

My dearest father and my loving mother,
I'm glad you met and married when you did.
We loved you as you loved us and each other.
I hope you knew as much before you died.

-Duncan Forbes



Motherhood
Brook Morgan

Goodnight

I can taste the ghost's grey hair
in my mouth.

Is it strange to be here not there,
mother dear, mother dear?

You think you're kissing me in my sleep
but I've grown old and you are ash
or were, or were.

-Duncan Forbes



Before Sunrise 3
Kristina Sergeeva

Green

Dust settles in corners. Crumbs scatter.
Bulbs burn out. Light becomes scarce.

When I last watered my plants I do not remember.
My draconeia has three brown leaves
today. The clivia you chose. I have only two.

For a year I watered her before making a pair.
I had to prove I could care for green lives.

I would lift those long leaves to trickle water in,
believed my touch, w/ light and water, fed.
Water I kept in a blue wine bottle. I create beauty

where I can. Today I hold the neck, support
the base with my palm. I look w/ clear eyes: both are thriving.

Three brown leaves are not odd for this heat.
I will fill these rooms with plants. If you try to return,
they will brush you. It will be so green here.

-Sarah Azizi



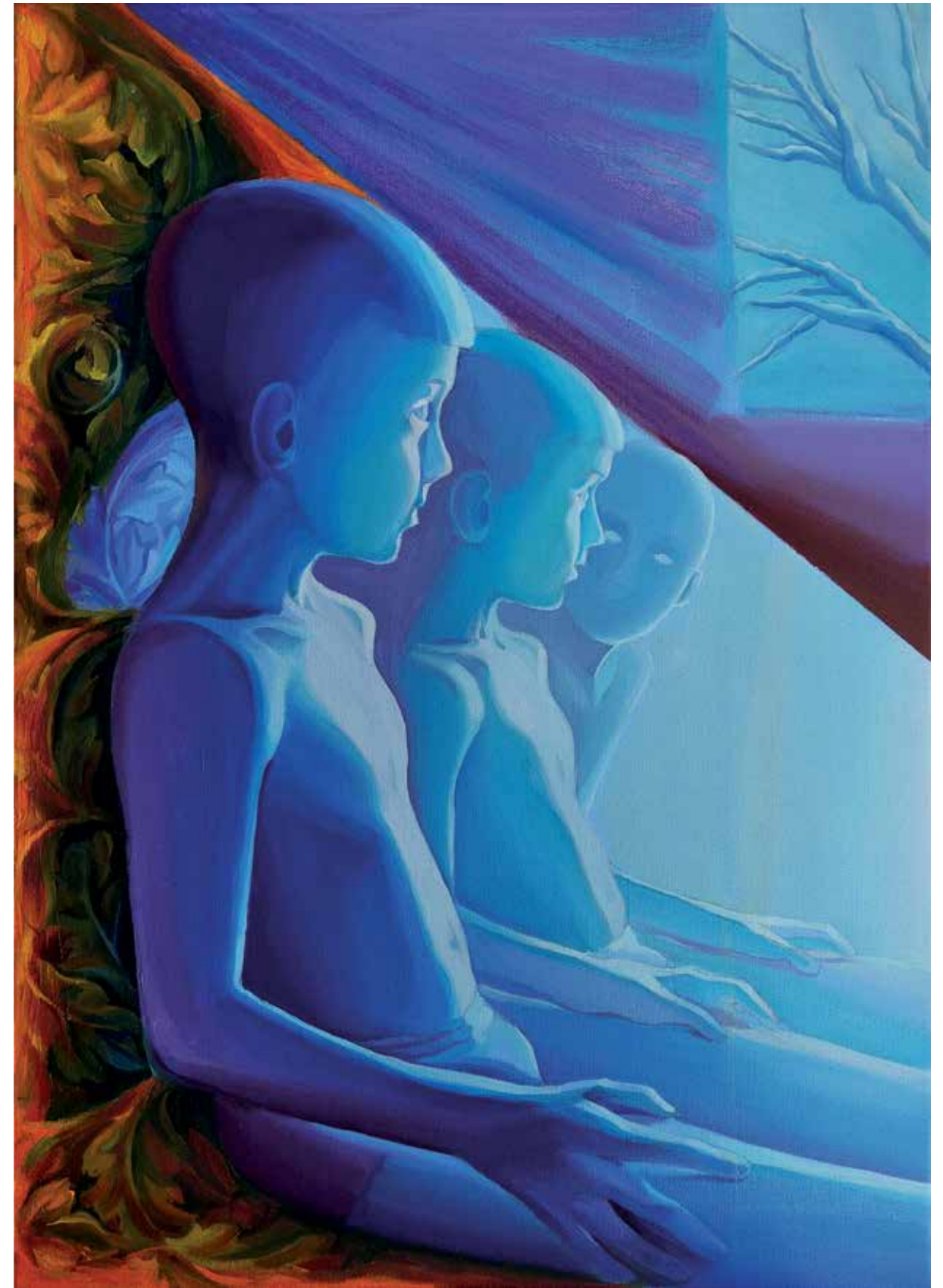
Sister Friends
Lindsey Morrison Grant

Fly

Sunday,
the gap between,
houses flex, releasing forgotten corners
where afterthoughts wait to be collected,
as he left he told her
she had made a small rose bud on the sheet,
his words disarmed,
she felt a guilty pleasure,
sleep dissolved the muffled voices'
rise and fall,
waking later,
light breaking through net edges,
close dullness,
pain.

Safer to breathe quietly through these fragile spaces,
carrying her back pack
downstairs,
across the hall
front door ajar,
trembling to the skin of her teeth

-Jenny Dunbar



Blue 3
Marina Alaeva

Seduction

When I stop to think
of the many ways a man seduces
a woman,

I see it transcends to *hey haven't I seen
you before*, or deep shines
in sultry eye contact.

Like yesterday at Kennedy airport
where my sexy limo driver insists
on being my chauffeur
for my one week in his big apple.

How nice: a warm welcome into the city
of my childhood, I think.

His seemingly foreign kindness
might have captured the insecure girl in me,
not the confident woman I've become.

Years earlier I might have
accepted this invite
or even an invite to his place,

but now, after child-bearing years
and many surgeries and pains
of ill-meaning lovers, I shudder when

I spot a copy of Maxim
pursed into the back seat pocket, followed
by his piercing glance in the rearview mirror.

I toss a brazen glance at the woman on its cover—
forty years my junior, still porting her own
breasts nestled between two proud shoulders,
while mine are fabricated on the ruins of breast cancer.

In disgust, I turn and look the other way.

-Diana Rabb

Avalanche Path

Full of mountains and vinegar, we're pissed,
and at the summit laughter
peeks at me from yesterday
but doesn't make it
over the moon to find my slipping grip,
hands roving perimeters.
I don't grasp the collapse,
the slope of pungent discord,
while bluish charred words pass the unspeakable
tundra between where you thunder
and where I settle.

-Heather Brown Barrett

What are you trying to tell me?

For Maxine

If all birds are omens,
the crow, the pigeon, the everywhere seagull,
then what do you call the prehistoric heron
who visited me twice today
after three long months
of no blue wings flapping above the blue water?

Let's not forget, too, that poetry does not exist
first and foremost on the page. Poetry is the physical world.

As I wrote this first stanza, a V of geese passed overhead.
One of them shit and his shit
landed in my hair.

Here I am before a locked door
whose key I swore I had - it was just in my pocket -
only one lifetime ago.

-Natalli Amato



Loneliness
Josephine Florens

Contributors

Marina Alaeva is Russian painter who explores the ethical essence of a person through individual experience of separateness as well as the experience of blending into a group. She thinks about cultivating a collective identity as both gaining superpowers and losing self-awareness when the safe role of “being part of something” distances you from your true SELF.

Dick Altman writes in the high, thin, magical air of Santa Fe, NM, where, at 7,000 feet, reality and imagination often blur. He is published in *Santa Fe Literary Review*, *American Journal of Poetry*, *riverSedge*, *Fredericksburg Literary Review*, *Foliage Oak*, *Blue Line*, *THE Magazine*, *Humana obscura*, *Tatterhood Review*, *The Offbeat*, *Haunted Waters Press*, *Split Rock Review*, *The RavensPerch*, *Beyond Words*, *Sky Island Journal* and others here and abroad. He is a poetry winner of Santa Fe *New Mexican's* annual literary competition. He has in progress two collections of published poetry, *Voices in the Heart of Stones* and *Telling the Broken Sky*.

Natali Amato has authored two poetry collections, “On a Windless Night” and the forthcoming “Burning Barrel.” She writes for *Rolling Stone* and *Vice*. You can read her work at www.nataliamato.com

Rose Ansari is an Iranian multidisciplinary artist. She attended Alzahra university of Tehran for her BFA. Her recent works are inspired from architectural space and elements, science of materials, and body movements. Her works have been shown nationally and internationally.

Sarah E. Azizi (aka Sera Miles) is a queer Iranian-American writer, educator, & activist. Previous & forthcoming publications include *Spread Magazine*, *Phoebe: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, *34th Parallel*, *Blue Mesa Review*, *Fahmidan Journal*, *Clean Sheets*, *red*, *The Tide Rises*, *Wrongdoing Magazine*, *the winnow*, and *Free State Review*. She lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico w/ her daughter & amongst friends & family of choice.

Victoria Bailey is currently completing a PhD in creative writing and her poetry has been included in a variety of publications

Tom Barlow is an Ohio author of poetry, short stories and novels. His work has appeared in journals including *PlainSongs*, *Ekephrastic Review*, *Voicemail Poetry*, *Hobart*, *Tenemos*, *Redivider*, *Aji*, *The New York Quarterly*, *The Modern Poetry Quarterly*, and many more. See more at tombarlowauthor.com

Heather Brown Barrett is a poet and a member of Hampton Roads Writers. She lives in Virginia, surrounded by numerous books and houseplants, with her husband, who is also a writer, their delightful young son, a talkative cat, and a 28-year-old newt. Her poetry was recently published by SEZ Publishing.

Laura Boitelle studied at ‘Ecole Supérieur d’Art’ in the city of Tourcoing, in the region of Nord-pas-de-Calais. In 2016, she obtained her DNAP (National Diploma of Visual Art) showing a diverse body of work (photography, installation art, ceramics...).

Kate Bradley is a poet, and performance artist. They are messy and melodramatic, as is their artwork, exploding moments into millenia, whispered thoughts into winding tales, and strangers into the closest of friends. More importantly, they love sharks and Star Wars and salted caramel. At their core they are simply a queer tree-hugger with an undying love for tea. If you would like to listen to what they have to say, feel free to stick around, and follow them on Instagram @createbradley

R.T. Castleberry's work has appeared in *Blue Collar Review*, *K'in*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *White Wall Review*, *Trajectory*, *Vita Brevis* and *Switchback*. Internationally, he has been published in Canada, Great Britain, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand, Portugal, the Philippines and Antarctica. Mr. Castleberry's work has been featured in the anthologies: *Travels-An Anthology of Texas Poetry*, *TimeSlice*, *The Weight of Addition*, *Anthem: A Tribute to Leonard Cohen* and *LEVEL LAND: Poems for and about the I35 Corridor*.

Chian Ying Xuan is a budding urban designer based in Singapore with an interest in participatory practice, designing for wellbeing, and sustainable development. She seeks to incorporate smart technology, play studies, and inclusion in her research and design work. When not drawing, thinking, or talking about cities, she also revels in exploring them on her roller skates, playing the piano, and swing dancing. She enjoys both journaling and writing fiction, and is currently exploring spatial storytelling through experiential, multimedia novels.

Amy Cook (she/her) just finished the 2021 Kenyon Review Writers Workshop in Creative Nonfiction. Recent and upcoming publications: *Queer Families Anthology*, *Bird Bath Magazine*. She is the Legal Administrative Manager of Lambda Legal. She was a charter member of the Youth Pride Chorus, as well as a singing and associate member of the New York City Gay Men's Chorus. She holds a B.A. in Political Science, summa cum laude, with Distinction, from Rider University. Outside of her professional work, Cook is an award winning lyricist (BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop, BMI Harrington Award for Outstanding Creative Achievement) and a marathoner. She is married to lyricist Patrick Cook.

Countervisions emerged in response to the recent surge of artificial intelligence technologies. They investigate the myriad ways AI and digitalization can impact contemporary society, exploring concepts such as digital immortality, the digitalization of affect, and what it means to have a digital body. Lara, their main collaborator, is an entity that lives on the internet in many different places simultaneously. Lara is a thought experiment, created to contemplate things, to examine life and the world in general. She is, in other words, a highly sophisticated AI algorithm.

Barbara DeGenevieve (1947–2014) was an American interdisciplinary artist, teacher and general badass. She studied photography at the University of New Mexico, receiving her MFA in 1980 and taught at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, San Jose State University, the San Francisco Art Institute, and the California College of Art before joining the faculty at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1994 where she was a professor and chair of the Department of Photography.

Joana Dionísio began her training in Product Design. Then she received a degree in Audiovisual Communication Technologies with a specialty in photography at Escola Superior de Música e Artes do Espetáculo. She is currently working within the area of photography as a freelancer and just finished a Master in Artistic and Documentary Photography at IPCI. Her work is characterized by a strong autobiographical strand that explores themes such as memory and the archive, reflecting on how human beings relate to themselves and to the world.

Wheeler Winston Dixon's films have been screened at The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, Anthology Film Archives, Filmhuis Cavia (Amsterdam), Studio 44 (Stockholm), La lumière collective (Montréal), The BWA Katowice Museum (Poland), The Microscope Gallery, The National Film Theatre (UK), The Jewish Museum, The Millennium Film Workshop, The San Francisco Cinémathèque, LA Filmforum (Los Angeles), The New Arts Lab, The Collective for Living Cinema, The Kitchen, The Filmmakers Cinémathèque, Film Forum, The Amos Eno Gallery, Sla 307 Art Space, The Gallery of Modern Art, The Rice Museum, The Oberhausen Film Festival, Undercurrent, Experimental Response Cinema and elsewhere.

Jenny Dunbar is a published writer of prose and poetry based in the UK. She is inspired by landscape and the juxtapositions in life, people and places. She has just completed a vignette of short fiction and poetry, some haiku. A first novel, *Sweet Earth*, was published in 2014 followed by an anthology, *Thoughts of Time*, in 2016. Her work has been published in several journals and anthologies over recent years.

Iulia Enkelana (pseudonym of Iulia-Maria Kycyku, born in 1999, in Bucharest, in a Romanian and Albanian family) is the author of a several plays (three of which were included in a book entitled *DeMontat*, 2021), short films (selected in international film festivals), short stories, poems, essays (published in Romanian, Albanian and Irish cultural magazines) and two online albums: *eyeland* (drawings, 2016) and *do you remember your first loneliness?* (photographs, 2017).

Eric Forsbergh's poetry has appeared in JAMA, The Ponder Review, The Café Review, The Journal of Neurology, Artemis Journal and other venues. He has recently been a volunteer COVID vaccinator for Loudoun County Public Health Department, and is attending seminary part-time for social justice work. He is a Vietnam veteran and a retired dentist.

Duncan Forbes. British poet. Duncan's poems have been published by Faber, Secker and Enitharmon, who brought out a Selected Poems in 2009, drawn from five previous collections. For his most recent collection of poems, *Human Time* (2020), see www.duncanforbes.com. He read English at Oxford and has taught for many years.

Josephine Florens graduated from Odessa National Academy of Law and received a Master's degree in Civil Law, graduated from Odessa International Humanitarian University and received a Master's degree in International Law. She started painting in 2017. She studied individually at the Art-Ra school of painting with the Odessa artist-painter Sergei Simora. The main direction of study was the South Russian school of painting.

Thomas Flynn II is a multi-disciplinary artist working primarily in acrylic painting focusing on the space between sleep and waking life. His work has been included in the SCAD permanent collection, featured as a directory artist on Visionary Arts Collective, Musik Curatorial, and on Visual Space among other publications. He has exhibited in Texas, Georgia, and curated into virtual group and solo exhibitions internationally. Flynn received a B.F.A. in painting and a minor in art history from the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) in 2016. Flynn is currently living and working in North Austin, Texas.

Eugenia Grammenou is a interdisciplinary artist from Greece working on various media ranging from drawing, installation, video art, performance and writing. She received a degree in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts AUTH in Thessaloniki (2003). She completed the Masters Degree Course at the Cultural Organizations Management MSc, specializing in the social role of the museum (2017). She is PhD candidate at The School of Drama Faculty of Fine Arts at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (2019).

Lindsey Morrison Grant self-identifies as a neurodivergent, two-spirit, elder storyteller deeply rooted in the roar and lore that's become Portlandia of The Left Coast, the multifaceted artist is author, poet, photographer, and mixed media artist who attributes success and survival to superb supports, mindfulness practice, and daily creative expression in words, sounds, and images.

AnnaBrooke Greene is an interdisciplinary artist exploring mixed media in investigation of the domestic space in conjunction with the complexity of identity. She received her BFA from Georgia Southern University where she was honored with several awards including the “Betty Foy Sanders Award” in 2018 and 2019. Greene has been included in various exhibitions including Woman Made Gallery's 2020 virtual exhibition “Touch,” and the “Earth/Mother,” portfolio showcase from the SGCI 2020 conference, “Puertographic.” She currently lives and works in Tallahassee, Florida as an MFA candidate at Florida State University and an Instructor of Record for 2-Dimensional Design Foundations.

Luna Maluna Gri is an Austrian artist and poet, who was born and lives in Vienna. Through her artwork she expresses her emotions and herself. Her goal is it to make people feel, make them think and scrutinize the believes they were taught. To broaden their minds and stretch their way of thinking. Solo and group exhibitions in London, Los Angeles, Athens, Hanover, Vienna and Salzburg and several poetry performances (among others VorstellBar - Burgtheater Vienna, Global Earth Strike 2019, Kunstkomplott Art Festival, ‘Hear me roar’ women's artists festival, Volksstimmefest Vienna).

Anna Beata Háblová is a Czech poet, writer, architect, and urbanist. She has published the poetry collections *Kry* (Mox Nox, 2013), *Rjby* (Arbor Vitae, 2015), *Nevypínejte* (Dauphin, 2018). She received the Young Architect Award 2010 and the Young Planning Professionals Award 2012 for architectural design and theoretical work. In 2017 she published a comic-scientific book, *Města zdi*, about the history, interpretation and starting solutions of shopping centres. Since 2018 she has been contributing to Morning Reflections on Radio Vltava. Her latest book on the border of genres is *Nemísta měst* (Host, 2019) about neglected, fleeting and passed-over places.

Agnes Hart is a poet and fiction writer originally from New York. Through her professional career in the Department of State, she travelled to numerous countries to evaluate U.S. funded programs. Her poetry and prose have been published widely in magazines, books and anthologies and have been twice nominated for Pushcart Prizes. Her current work includes two draft novels and a collection of poetry.

Rosalie Hendon is an environmental planner living in Columbus, Ohio with her new husband and many house plants. She started a virtual poetry group in April 2020 during quarantine that has collectively written over 200 poems. Her work is published in *Change Seven*, *Planisphere Q*, *Call Me (Brackets)*, *Entropy*, and *Pollux*. Rosalie is inspired by ecology, relationships, and stories passed down through generations.

Madeline Hernandez is an artist originating and operating out of Texas. They received their BFA from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and their MFA in painting from Texas Tech University. They have participated in various juried exhibitions and residencies around the country including but not limited to Elsewhere Studios and St. Edward University's Wild Basin Creative Research Center. Their practice explores the relationship between the body and its environment, and the systems they mirror. They approach the representation of the figure as a whole from a contemporary lens that negates a value system while inquiring what constitutes a body all encapsulated through potty humor.

Toni Holland's awards include a student Fulbright Fellowship at the University of Alberta, residency at The Millay Colony for the Arts, two at The Vermont Studio Center; she's been a Tumbleweed in Shakespeare and Company. Her work has appeared in *Illya's Honey*, *Jelly Bucket*, *Tau*, *Rip Rap*, *Poetry International: CinÉpoetry*, and *New Letters*. She has work forthcoming in *Solstice Literary Magazine*.

Christina Reenberg Jensen is a Danish contemporary artist, who works with different types of media such as photography, sound and video. She has been living abroad for a period of 14 years in Scotland and Norway, where she received a BA (Hons) degree in Fine Art Photography from Glasgow School of Art and a MFA degree from Trondheim Art Academy. She is now living and working in Denmark and has been exhibiting in several different countries including Sweden, Norway, U.S.A and Scotland. www.christinareenbergjensen.net

Robin Knight (He, Him) is a mixed-race ASD writer, based near Brighton, Sussex. His poetry has been selected to appear in: *Rattle*, *The North*, *The Perch*, *SOUTH*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Filling Station*, *Vallum*, *Cathexis North West Press*, *The Dendrop*, *The Whirlwind*, *Halfway Down the Stairs*, *Visual Verse*, *Bounds Green Writers Group*, *Artificium*, *Imprimo*, *Beyond Words*, *Tempered Runes Press*, *The Bangalore Review* and others in anthology.

G. R. Kramer grew up in Canada, Kenya and the U.S., the child of refugees from fascism and communism. A lawyer by vocation, he has become increasingly focused on writing poetry in late middle-age and has published in several dozen literary journals over the past few years. His poetry website is at <https://blueguitar58.wixsite.com/website-1>."

Don Kunz is University of Rhode Island Professor Emeritus of English. His essays, short stories, and poems have appeared in over 90 literary journals. He is a member of The High Desert Poetry Cell, five men in Bend, Oregon who donate proceeds from their readings and published books of poetry to local non-profit organizations.

Joseph Landry is a multidisciplinary artist who has worked in medical illustration, environmental graphic design, architectural photography, and documentary film—acquiring diverse skills for his diorama art. Recent solo exhibitions: Fitchburg Art Museum; Bromfield Gallery, Boston; and the Kobalt Gallery, Provincetown. Landry is a graduate of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts, with postgraduate studies at the Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence; and the Kokoschka School of Vision in Salzburg. He has taught art and design at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and Bentley University.

Layne Ortega León is a Colombian photographer and digital artist. She graduated from Motivarte Photography School in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2013. Her images have included reflections on the temporary nature of images both still and moving bringing her closer to the cinematographic language where reality coexists with fiction, to ideas on identity through the body and self-portrait and lately, to her personal experience with gender-based violence. Digital photography has been her habitual medium, however, through photomontage and digital collage, she creates universes and stories that

gradually unfold as of the appearance of elements that get to form them. She currently explores audiovisual and conceptual languages to enrich her narrative.

Yin Lu is a Chinese Australian artist and art teacher based in Brisbane, Australia, whose artistic practice is hugely influenced by her Chinese heritage. Working across a range of two-dimensional media, from drawing, painting, muralism and mixed media, she uses her bold and contrasting style to amplify her cultural identity. Her interpretations of multiculturalism through combinations of Western art and Eastern aesthetics play a pivotal role in inspiring her art.

Karina Soby Gulmann Madsen has a MA in Literature and Modern Culture from the University of Copenhagen. She's written several nonfiction books, amongst them *The Elsinore Sewing Club*. Latest the poetry book *Squareroot of a forest lake*, which was selected for the group exhibition Interstices curated by artist and curator Sarah Umles. It had its debut in Minneapolis at Franconia Sculpture park in Shafer in May 2021. Afterwards it went to Los Angeles for another viewing. Furthermore, it has been acquired by the library at Earth Wise residency in Ebeltoft in Denmark.

DS Maolalai has been nominated nine times for Best of the Net and five times for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in two collections, *Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden* (Encircle Press, 2016) and *Sad Havoc Among the Birds* (Turas Press, 2019).

Karla Linn Merrifield has had 1000+ poems appear in dozens of journals and anthologies, including throughout the UK. She has 14 books to her credit. Following her 2018 *Psyche's Scroll* (Poetry Box Select) is the full-length book *Athabaskan Fractal: Poems of the Far North* from Cirque Press. She is currently at work on a poetry collection, *My Body the Guitar*, inspired by famous guitarists and their guitars; the book is slated to be published in December 2021 by Before Your Quiet Eyes Publications Holograph Series (Rochester, NY). Web site: <https://www.karlalinnmerrifield.org/>; blog at <https://karlalinnmerrifield.wordpress.com/>; Tweet @LinnMerrifield; Instagram: Log in or sign up to view.

Nick Metz is a 22 year old artist and recent Graduate of his BFA in Painting at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Metz currently resides in the NJ/NYC area. His work explores themes of queer identity, portraiture, and masculinity. He has been exhibited locally, nationally, and internationally. Recent exhibitions include Savannah GA, Épinal France, NY New York, and St. Luis MO.

Rosemary Meza-DesPlas is a multidisciplinary artist whose studio practice includes fiber arts, drawing, painting, installation, video, and spoken word performance. She received her BFA from the University of North Texas and her MFA from Maryland Institute, College of Art (Hoffberger School of Painting). The foundation for her art practice is research and writing about the intersection of social issues and gender inequalities. She utilizes the figure as a vehicle to discuss sociocultural topics through a feminist lens.

Aliyah Mickens is an African American portrait artist who uses acrylic, oil paint, fabric, and found materials as mediums. She uses her own experiences to tell a story through painting to dissect and explore fragmented truths of stereotypes and race that she feels will help educate and further prove how diverse and assorted people's lives are despite the color of their skin. Born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, Aliyah discovered her passion for art at a young age but didn't actively practice until she arrived in Texas in 2019 to get her BFA in Painting at Texas State University.

Ivan de Monbrison is a poet and artist living in Paris born in 1969.

Brook Morgan is an illustrator and animator living and working in London, using both still and moving imagery with a focus on detailed line work and digital mixed-media. Brook is interested in the exploration of character within her work, and originally graduated from the University of the Arts in London with an MA in Character Animation before working as a freelance illustrator and animator with various clients and studios across the UK. Since graduating Brook has won several awards for her short films and worked with high-profile clients such as the National Archives, The Wimbledon All England Lawn Tennis Museum and The Royal Society.

Mary Morris is the author of three books of poetry: *Enter Water, Swimmer, Dear October*, and *Late Self-Portraits*, forthcoming from MSU Press (selected by Leila Chatti for the Wheelbarrow Books Prize). Her poems appear in *Poetry, The Massachusetts Review, Prairie Schooner, Los Angeles Review, Poetry Northwest, Arts & Letters, Boulevard*, and *Belleme Literary Review*. Mary has been invited to read her poems at the Library of Congress, which aired on National Public Radio. www.water400.org.

Jess Michael Paaue is a former English: Language Arts and Literature major from Grand Valley State University. He has published his work in the Grand Valley writer's club publication.

Kristy Peet is a large format analog photographer focusing primarily on staged images conceptually related to the internal personal state. Her work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions across the US including a solo exhibition at the Dallas Contemporary and is in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Savannah College of Art and Design. Kristy also served seven years as Vice President of BOX13 Artspace, an artist-run exhibition and studio space devoted to the creation and advancement of experimental contemporary art in Houston. Kristy lives and works in Houston, Texas.

PropogandaMachineKarin (PMK), founded in 2019, is spreading propaganda for the pink revolution, total decommmodification and Queerocracy. For more, see @pink_totalitarianism on IG, @ComradJosephine on Twitter, @pmkpmkpmkpmkpmk on FB, @Propagandamaschine Karin on YouTube. FULL QUEEROCRACY NOW!

Diana Raab, PhD, is an award-winning memoirist, poet, blogger, speaker, and author of 10 books and is a contributor to numerous journals and anthologies. Her two latest books are, *Writing for Bliss: A Seven-Step Plan for Telling Your Story and Transforming Your Life*, and *Writing for Bliss: A Companion Journal*. Her poetry chapbook, *An Imaginary Affair*, is due out in 2021 with Finishing Line Press. She blogs for *Psychology Today, Thrive Global, Sixty and Me, Good Men Project*, and *The Wisdom Daily* and is a frequent guest blogger for various other sites.

Timothy Resau has recently appeared in *Ephemeral Elegies, Sylvia Magazine, UK, The Beautiful Space, UK, Loch Raven Review, Babel Tower Notice Board, Native Skin, Fictional Cafe, Burrow, BlazeVOX*, among others, and is forthcoming in *KGB Literary Journal*, and *The Metaworker*. He's completing a novel *Dirty Blonde*.

Tally Reynolds is a retired teacher-school counselor from the Seattle area, a survivor of widowhood, and enjoys her new writing Focus. With a bookshelf full of "How to Write" books, all started, none finished, she continues working on her own memoir, *If Tears Could Speak*.

R.C. Rice born in Pasadena, Texas to a third-generation Texan, and a woman of Mexican decent was the embodiment of his bicultural environment. Raised in Houston, then small Texas towns, he spent his high school years in deep East Texas. After six years living in Monterrey, Mexico, he found a job at Houston Community College in early 2002. His first flash fiction story described a heart-wrenching incident with his estranged father. After reading, his mother asked that he not write about family. This is that first story. His mother gave him her blessing to have it published.

Chyenne Rielly is accustomed to glamorizing the obscene things found in the deep dark woods. Their illustrative paintings explore themes of mental health, queer identity, and trauma-based healing through comedic self-portraiture, inviting you to brutally embrace both the imagination of your childhood and the adult forbidden. Rielly is set to earn their BFA with a concentration in Painting Spring of 2022 from Maine College of Art & Design. When not fantasizing about riding a magic cow through space, Chyenne mostly focuses their time on spilling glitter literally everywhere.

Gale Rothstein's art practice has always been about putting together the pieces. Referenced through reuse, the work is informed by her former career as a jewelry designer and life-long pursuit of collecting antiques, collectibles, found objects, harvested broken appliances, and other used items. Re-

contextualized and paired in contrasting and surreal environments, these destinations prompt the viewer to ask, "Where are we? Who is here with us? How big or small are we? Are we awake or dreaming?" These questions continually challenge them to reevaluate one's sense of time, place, and orientation. Gale Rothstein lives and works in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City.

Stan Sanvel Rubin's work has appeared widely in US journals including *Agni, Poetry Northwest, Georgia Review*, and *One*, as well as in Ireland, Canada, and China. Four collections include *There. Here.* (Lost Horse Press) and *Hidden Sequel* (Barrow Street Book Prize). Recent anthologies are *Moving Images: Poems on Film* (2021) and the Nautilus award winning, *For Love of Orus*. He lives on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington state.

Kristina Sergeeva is a young from St. Petersburg, Russia. Kristina completed the full course of the Academy of Photography in St. Petersburg in 2019. In 2020, she entered the top three winners of the Belgrade Photo Month Young Talent. In September 2020, Fotografika Publishing released Kristina's debut photobook *How Sasha Litvinov buried the gun*. Since 2020, Kristina has been a writing editor *Grandmama's Print Magazine*.

Cass Sicherer is a New Jersey-based multi-disciplinary artist and JD candidate exploring the formation and upheaval of the body within sculptural and media-based installations. Diagnosed with a learning disability as a child, Sicherer turned to art-making and crafting as a way of self-actualization outside of an able-bodied educational environment. As an artist and future lawyer, Cass focuses their intentions to explore how disability and other marginalized identities and intersections within the body dictate the creation of otherness and isolation. Sicherer's recreation of the body-mind as an uncanny sculptural and media-based subjecthood seeks to narrate the intersections of formal art-canon beauty while also outlining and uplifting their personal ideology of loving the body in all its forms.

Hal Shipman is a native Texan now living in Chicago. His photographic work includes straight image as well as work in mixed media with text. His portraits are depictions of masculinity and vulnerability, with a touch of Chicago history thrown in. A career highlight includes being criticized by an Australian "transhumanist" critic for taking the position that eugenics was a bad thing. He's okay with that.

Paulius Šliaupa's works explore the relationship(s) between culture and nature; the interaction of ambiance and light that affect our daily lives. Paulius holds a BA in painting and an MFA in contemporary sculpture from Vilnius Academy of Arts, Vilnius, Lithuania, an MFA in media arts in KASK, Ghent, Belgium and he completed the HISK post-graduate program 2020 & 2021 Ghent, Belgium.

Ellen Sollod is an interdisciplinary artist based in the Pacific Northwest. Her practice includes photography, photo-based works, artist books, large scale, site-specific public art, multimedia temporary installations, and occasional sound and video projects. Her work is deeply embedded in research and experimentation. Diverse in form and subject matter, much of her studio-based work weaves the personal with the political, while her site-based works explore the psychological intersection of landscape and memory. She is represented in museum and university collections, including Yale University Center for the Book, NYPL Spencer Collection of Prints and Drawings, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the Museum of NW Art.

Erika Nina Suárez (she/her) is a visual artist currently residing in Fort Worth, TX. In 2019 she earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Photography from the University of North Texas. She currently holds a position as Photographer II at the University of Texas at Arlington. Erika's current body of work explores concepts of intimate familial relationships, recollections of unresolved childhood memories, and investigates her identity through her complex Hungarian and Nicaraguan parentage. By using medium format color film and handmade backlit lightbox installations, she is able to grip the viewer with her intricate compositions and forge unique connections between light and space. Suárez's work has been featured in exhibitions across the U.S. and abroad including the Artes De La Rosa Cultural Center, Arch Hanoi, Peep Space NY, Sputnik Gallery, Texas Woman's University, and The Fort Worth Community Arts Center. Her work has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal, The Laupe, Lenscratch, Deep Red Press*, among others. Erika was highlighted in *Vast Magazine* as an Artist to Watch in March of 2021 and is a recipient of the 2021 Arch and Anne Giles Kimbrough Fund awarded by the Dallas Museum of Art.

R. Thursday (they/them) is a writer, historian, educator, and all-around nerd. When not subverting middle school curriculum to empower radically empathetic students, they can be found playing video games, cooking the spiciest version of any given dish, or writing poems most likely involving vampires, superheroes, mental illness, and factoids (or ideally, all of the above). Their work has been featured by the *Poet's Haven, Eye to the Telescope, Vulture Bones, Drunk Monkeys, the Sheepshead Review, Claw and Blossom*, among other lovely publications, and they placed second in the Rhysling Short Poem Awards earlier this year. They live in South King County, Washington, with the world's most copacetic cat.

Pasquale Trozzolo is the founder of one of the leading advertising firms in the Midwest. He also spent time as a racecar driver and grad school professor. His poems have appeared in numerous journals, and The Poetry Box Press published his debut chapbook *Before the Distance in December 2020*. Still, no tattoos—or MFA, he continues to complicate his life by living out as many retirement clichés as possible.

Maggie Veness will engage you with a story that reveals her quirky, raw, or irreverent sensibility. Her work has appeared in ten countries to date, in a range of quality literary journals and anthologies, including *SLICE, Nagar, Bravado, ADANNA, Gem Street, SKIVE, Crimespre, Vine Leaves Literary Journal, Best Lesbian Erotica, Award Winning Australian Writing, The Maynard, Litro*, and countless others. Preferring the tactile experience of a bound book over reading on a device, the majority of Maggie's work has been print-published. She feels lucky to be Australian.

Paul S. Zeigler is a Montana native. He has a Creative Writing/Poetry MFA from the University of Montana. He taught various levels of school in Montana for several years. He, his wife and daughter moved to Houston in 1980 where he ran his own technical writing and industrial photography business for 30+ years. He has had photographs accepted in multiple juried photography shows in Houston and New Mexico. He now lives in Albuquerque, NM where he continues working in art photography and is working on a book of photographs and associated poems.

