

THE GALLATIN REVIEW



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REVIEW

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Sonnet about that pigeon

LISA COOLEY

To try to describe what is so poetic about
 This rat of the sky, this pest, this pathetic pantaloons of a bird
 This greasy, gray, and graceless goon, poised
 perfectly in the light of some glorious midday sun

To try to describe what is so poignant about
 This beaked beast, this slick-feathered beggar, this plain, pitiful pecker

Is to see him, in all his witless triumphance, at his platform post
 as a passenger, a picknicker, a passive people-watcher
 of the commuting passersby
 Who could learn a thing or two from this pesky pilgrim

Maybe it is to see him as a poet — a purveyor of passing trains
 Of thought, pausing, pondering in the October J train air
 Before continuing his arrhythmic plod and peck
 It's all perspective, really

2

Short Play for the Couple on the Subway

EMMA CALLAHAN

(Lights up. A young couple on the subway.)

Leaning in, A tries to capture B's hand, or maybe her cheek against his mouth. She side steps, but he sways left with her for a moment. A soft partner dance. This could last forever, always moving left together. But she evades him, their mouths only inches apart. She smiles. He smiles. She puts her fingertips in his pocket, softly, like touching the petals of a flower.

(Blackout.)

Bittersweet

SYDNEY MIEDE

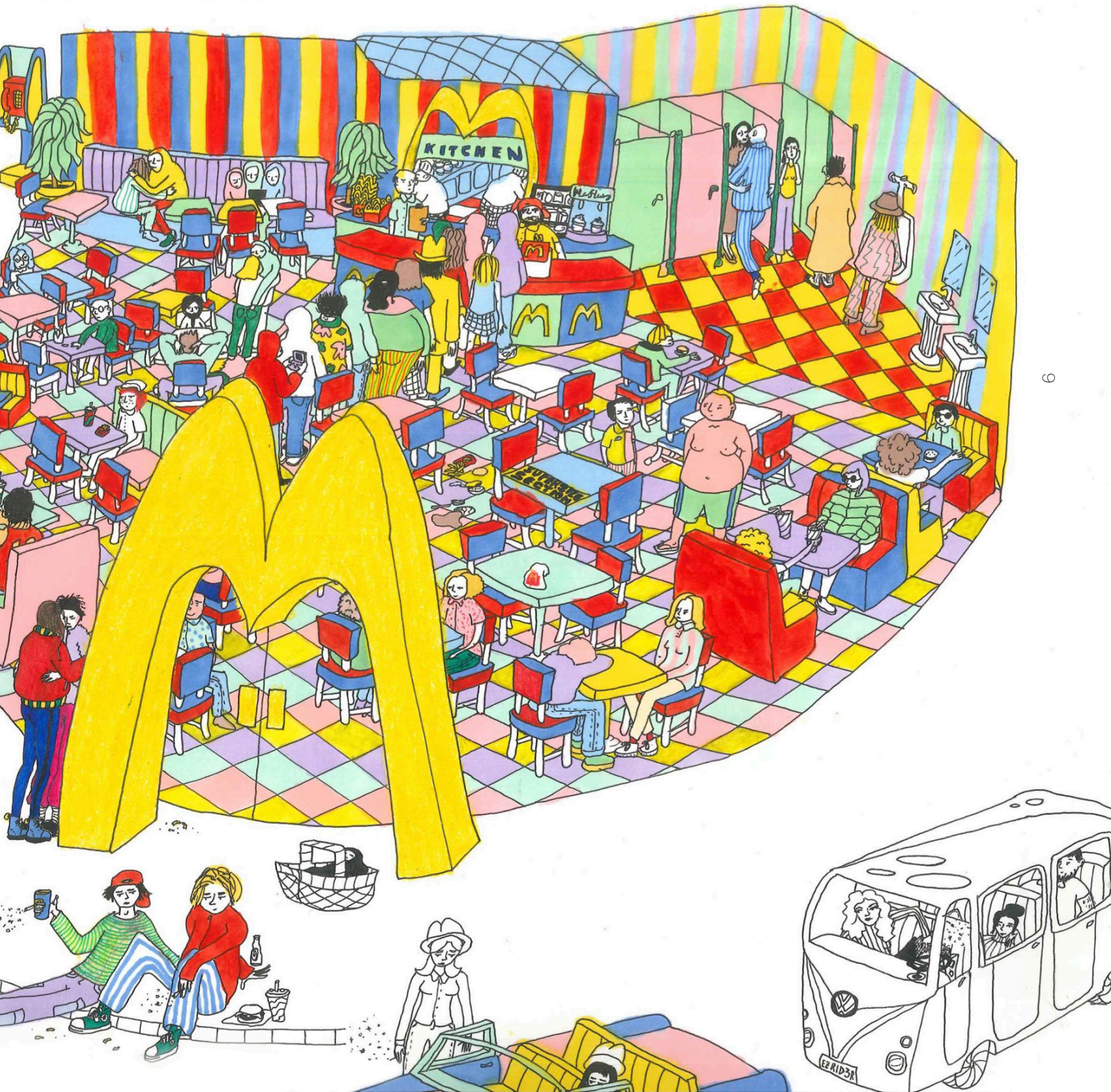
I remember the frosted glass milkshake mugs in the corner booth at Holsten's about 10:45 p.m. and the employees were vacuuming around us and collecting lint even though we had no plans of leaving anytime soon. I write "we" loosely because even though I never once felt alone in that space. I remember the way the mugs felt in the dishwasher, deeming me the first user of its renewed, clean life. There was something about the heat surrounding the cold, creamy chocolate that I would almost wake up the sticky booths and the halogen lights that remained stuck in the 60's while I probably write a list with the names of each person I've sat with in each of the booths, their own saga, a validation of friendship, secrets shared, and milestones.

I started going to Holsten's for post-Pad Thai treats with my mom and dad at the counter, and exchanging smiles with the young ice cream scoopers, who they were 25 years old. Now, I'm older than them. I remember 30-something booths, squeezing sweaty pre-pubescent bodies, dripping in stage makeup and burnt cheese fries and sing obnoxiously until every other customer left. At 11 years old, it felt like my own private and deliciously special celebration hall. I remember the booth, which had a barrier around it so no one could see just quite who was there, but for some reason has somehow escaped my memory, but on those nights, they splattered onto the counter were the most important thing in the world. I can still hear the jingle of the bell over the door, which would trigger a rapid head turn to assess if we knew the faces of the people. Usually we did, and it was equally as horrible to be caught in pajamas with a burnt cheese fry was thrilling to see the face of that cute boy from AP Chemistry.

If I were to zoom out on this picture I have of the restaurant, and let my camera pan over its plastic display cases filled with candy, the oversized stuffed animals on the floating shelves, and the bold red text on those black uniforms, it would look like a storyboard of my childhood. Each square is a different snapshot of Sydney: making a mess celebrating shows, meeting boys, and comforting losses, all over silver dishes of food. I think it's sweet that ice cream is the main character in so many wonderful chapters of that story.

Everyone says that coming home feels foreign once you've left. That may be true, but I come home to a new apartment and shove my bags onto a floor that I didn't learn to walk on. But that dusty brown carpet that manages to absorb every color sprinkle seen in my life is native, constant. I say, "I remember," as if this diner, this meeting place, this slice of life lives in some nook and cranny between nostalgia and history, but I was there, sitting with a thick chocolate milkshake in a warm mug only two weeks ago. I remember saying "I'm going to miss this place," as I walked out before I left for college the first time ago, but now I see how silly that was. I've never been gone long enough for Holsten's to be a part of my past, to miss those booths or those shakes. And that is a thought quite a bit more delicious than the ice cream. Possibly.







1



2



3



10



8



9



10



15



16



17



18



a longing

EWURAKUA DAWSON-AMOAH

i often found myself longing
for a girl that looked like me
whose hair also smelled like coconut oil and skin
like shea butter
real shea
the thick white block
of pure african shea
the kind that mama has to warm in her hands first
before working into our skin
i found myself longing
for a girl whose name clung so heavily to roots
a band of thieves could not uproot it
a name that teachers' tongues would stumble and
fall upon
a name that caused silence, confusion

i often longed to see my deep brown colour
reflected in skin
and not just mirror
to hear my story reflected in another's
and not in the dark
i longed for friends whose houses smelled like
fufu, banku,
oxtail, sweet plantain
where each room had beds so big
toes stubbed every time
whose front door said, "*awkwaaba*"
whose heart screamed, "i know"
i longed to see
even briefly
another girl like me





Untitled / BAYAN ABUKIWAN



Slowly

SHAE LIFSON

walk through the stream that cuts the canyon and the valley
slowly
the river winds through prehistoric stone
carving new paths to tread over eons
remember
that you are small but that the you that is everything is infinite
and you are the canyon
and you are the stream
and you shape yourself
slowly



to the girl that looks like me

EWURAKUA DAWSON-AMOAHA

The Sun kissed the Moon and she made you,
drawing earth up from the ground to tint your
flesh in the shade
from which all good things grow
stars plucked from the midnight sky were fixed
into the pockets of your eyes,
while the great builders fought for hours over the
curvatures of
your hips
your lips
the shape of clouds
your voice
smoother than water
not a falter
in your making

Black girl
The shade of your skin is precious
The richness of your pigment
So great
The sun lends it pieces of its gold
That you may glow, every place that you go
Black girl
Your name is sacred
Your father did not name you
For them to just rename you
When their tongues refuse
To work harder
Black Girl
White does not make a noise
Stop letting them tell you that you sound like it
When you speak in full sentences

Black girl
Your mind is a masterpiece
Your Voice
Strong enough to lead a nation
Lend the softest touch
Your heart enduring wicked pains
You thought would surely be enough
Black girl
Your body is poetry
Your skin bleeds the sweet essence of the turmoil
boiled inside you,
a diamond pulled from rough,
you
shine although it's tough,
you
scream
your lips enough
to
Shake the very mountains that hold you down,
tears
Quench the fires that surround
You,
As they spit upon your name,
shame
Your every feature as they claim
them
You cry in shadows, smile in day
light
They rock your braids
on them
It's looks "right"
Your heart is golden, but
they
can't
see

you are priceless pearls
fallen upwards from the seas

Multitudes in Aisle Five

KATIE BOVENZI

Mrs. Glenn skimmed the weekly full-color circular: globe artichokes, two for \$1.49; Hass avocados, five for \$5; same goes for navel oranges and Tommy Atkins mangos; chuck steaks at \$2.99 a piece; \$3.99 for a frozen coconut custard or apple crumb pie; 12-ounce bags of Dr. Donut gourmet coffee for \$5.99. The empty red basket knocked against Mrs. Glenn's bad knee. She hadn't yet gotten accustomed to food shopping without a grocery cart. The basket kept her off balance. It made her feel meek and unimportant. She had no one but herself to feed, and she felt that her little plastic basket announced this to the other shoppers. Those with carts dominated the aisles. They drove with both hands, leaning into their shopping with all the urgency of household duty. Mrs. Glenn dropped the listing of discounts and buy-one-get-one deals into her basket.

Thaler's presented suburban shoppers with an average spread. The fruit was mostly unripe and all the baking potatoes sprouted angry tubers. The deli counter's take-a-number spat out nonconsecutive tickets and the P.A. system tended to shriek with feedback. Assistance was perpetually needed at the checkout. Jammed pricing guns sat atop islands of cardboard boxes. Red-vested employees replenished shelves while directing customers to this or that aisle. They did most of this work from their knees. When the Glens first moved to Victoria City, the floors at Thaler's were checkered in red and white. These days the red squares were a flat peach color indistinguishable from that of a generic ibuprofen pill. Mrs. Glenn had discovered this likeness the previous week when she dropped her last pill by the pancake mix. She groped for it, sticking both hands in the filth that had collected under the shelves of artificial syrup. She did so until her chest tightened and her breath got short. The pill had hidden itself on one of the pinkish linoleum squares. When Mrs. Glenn stood, she crushed it beneath her clog. Had the checkers still been red, she'd have found that pill. Had she found that pill, she'd have shopped in less pain.

Mrs. Glenn searched her jacket pockets before popping open the kiss clasp on her purse. Had she forgotten her list or had she been too tired to make one? Thaler's shoppers passed through the automatic doors. Their soft mouths drooled out customary 'scuse-me's. Mrs. Glenn was in their way and her fatigue kept her there. She hadn't slept well since Joel left for school. That was almost four months ago. Mrs. Glenn gave her pockets a second failed search. She picked at her seed pearls. The late Mr. Glenn had gifted them to Mrs. Glenn after a year of marriage. It was their halfway mark. Mrs. Glenn cupped her jaw. The pain started there and radiated down.

Mrs. Glenn walked in the direction of the deli counter. She contemplated cold cuts and egg salad and coleslaw. A twenty-something Thaler's employee swept up red Vidalia onion skins. He sang against the store's sound system. Mrs. Glenn neared the rotisserie chicken hutch. A shopper hovered over the selection. He had a basket too. After poking each cellophaned chicken, the man made his pick and removed it from under the heat lamp. Mrs. Glenn watched as he brought the chosen chicken to his cheek. The shopper let the greased and blackened bird warm his face. He kept it there and began to sway. Mrs. Glenn's usual late-afternoon indigestion stung her throat. She wanted Joel to come home so that she could buy him his Mallomars and his orange Gatorades. She wanted Joel to come home so that she could sleep again. Mrs. Glenn wandered beyond the deli counter. Cold cuts and egg salad and coleslaw lost their appeal somewhere between the rotisserie and the frozen foods section. She wanted something warm. Mrs. Glenn navigated the seafood displays. Shrimp and scallops lay on blue styrofoam trays behind screens of taut plastic wrap. The scallops sat pretty, like porcelain cheekbones. They were regal and blank. The shrimp made pink-crescent conga lines. Their curved backs reminded Mrs. Glenn of her first few ultrasounds. Joel had curled with that same hushed bend.

Mrs. Glenn cleared an Entenmann's-themed endcap and arrived at aisle five. She looked past the stacks of bagged rice and window-boxed pastas. Stout militias of canned soups assembled in her periphery. The store's oppressive wattage pressed into Mrs. Glenn's brow and shoulders. The weight of the light bit

down and drew her pain outwards. Mrs. Glenn took wanting, narrow breaths. The light was bullying her forwards. The centermost shelves gleamed red with pasta sauces. In all her years as a Thaler's customer, Mrs. Glenn had never given much thought to the proud red jars of aisle five. There were two reasons for this oversight. First, until her marriage to the late Mr. Glenn, Mrs. Glenn had understood SpaghettiOs to be representative of all pasta dishes—a baseline of sorts. After leaving her childhood home, Mrs. Glenn had avoided spaghetti, believing that it would only ever resemble the stuff her mother slogged from a can. And second, Mrs. Glenn wore white whenever possible. She wore white in the garden. She wore white to wakes. She wore white to bed. It would be senseless for her to elect a red and notoriously splattery meal. Furthermore, it seemed to Mrs. Glenn that the vast majority of Americans came out of their mothers knowing how they liked their pasta sauce. And if for some reason an American child didn't know, they got marinara: a palate placeholder to keep the children from worrying themselves over things like acidity and chunkiness and added sugar and adhesion and garlic-basil ratios and spiciness and tartness and saltiness and so on and so forth. This all seemed very logical to Mrs. Glenn. Children were to be spared from choice. Marinara sauce was a kindness.

In line with the late Mr. Glenn, Joel preferred Scarpetta-brand puttanesca. He liked it best atop bow-ties or angel hair with extra black olives from the can. He liked Mrs. Glenn to microwave the sauce on high for two minutes or more. Joel's puttanesca had to be scalding in order for him to eat it. He liked the excess heat to rise up from his plate and open the pores on his face. Mrs. Glenn felt certain that Joel had inherited his preference from the late Mr. Glenn. But how the dish had come to double as a spa treatment she didn't know. She imagined her son's head craning over his plate. The white steam made him flush. His ears always went scarlet first. Mrs. Glenn never much cared for olive sauces. They tasted bitter to her; briney, too. A forkful of the stuff promised a night of acid reflux. She did, however, like the way it sounded. *Puttanesca*. She sometimes made it for Joel just so she could say it—just so she could shout the word up the stairs.

Mrs. Glenn faced the wall of sauces. Her eyes fell on the Scarpetta varieties out of habit. She stared at Joel's sauce. It sat on the fifth shelf towards the edge of its puttanesca peer group. Exhaustion pulled Mrs. Glenn's neck toward the flesh-checked floor. Just beneath the Scarpetta there was Emeril's, Botticelli, Don Pepino, and Rao's Homemade. Mrs. Glenn had seen other shoppers with jars of Rao's in their carts, but she disliked the idea of interrupting someone to ask which sort of Rao's they chose and why. It seemed terribly invasive. Mrs. Glenn counted fifteen varieties of Rao's Homemade pasta sauce. There was marinara, tomato basil, Arrabbiata, Bolognese, Alfredo, four cheese, roasted garlic, basil pesto, garden vegetable, Italian sausage and mushroom, *sensitive* marinara, tomato herb, roasted garlic Alfredo, sun-dried tomato pesto, and vodka sauce. Mrs. Glenn didn't feel well enough to appreciate the differences between marinara and sensitive mariana, so she moved on.

The power-hitters commanded the third and second shelves: Classico, Prego, Ragú, Barilla, Bertolli, and Newman's Own. These brands offered around nineteen varieties each: traditional, cabernet marinara, mini meatball, zesty mushroom, three-meat supreme, Old World style, Alfredo with cauliflower, chunky garden vegetable, six cheese, mushroom and green pepper, hearty traditional, spicy Italian, sautéed onion and garlic, creamy lemon Parmesan, mushroom and ripe olives, Asiago Romano Alfredo, anchovy, spicy red pepper and so on. These flavors came in either glass or plastic jars. Aisle five shoppers shuffled past each other. Some sucked in their bellies and held their arms out to the side to make way for mothers with full and reluctant carts. Mrs. Glenn was in their way.

"Can I help you find anything, ma'am?" The voice came from a jowly, bifocaled head. Mickey had been stocking shelves at Thaler's ever since his champion racing hound ate rat poison at a rest area somewhere in West Virginia, twenty or so years ago.

Mrs. Glenn nodded into her seed pearls. The fatigue pooled in her knees. “Which kind do you go for?”

Mickey’s velcroed New Balances chirped against the linoleum. He pressed a forefinger to the hearing aid closest to Mrs. Glenn. “Say again?” It looked as though someone had spackled over both of his ear holes with chewed bubblegum. Mrs. Glenn was glad that the late Mr. Glenn passed well before hearing aids entered the picture, although—she did sometimes like to imagine what he would have looked like squinting at a receipt or aching towards her with one hand cupped around his ear. She liked to think that old age would have forced the late Mr. Glenn to pay attention to the special breed of tedium that dominated Mrs. Glenn’s day-to-day. Suddenly he would have to strain towards every label, and crane for each fine-printed sound. Suddenly he’d know something about being a mother—about being a woman, even. Suddenly he’d know something about a vigilance you can’t opt out of.

“Which do you prefer?” Mrs. Glenn waved a liver-spotted hand at the jars. Her inflection configured the question as a command. Mickey pivoted again so as to share her view of things. He hugged himself, tucking both palms into his armpits. He told Mrs. Glenn with his body that he was thinking hard and that the hard thinking was just for her. Something about the way he lifted up his chin made it clear that his answer had been formulated prior to the thinking.

“I’m a mushroom guy myself. And I prefer plastic to glass. So, I guess that Ragú there would be my choice.” He freed his right hand from the left pit to finger a yellow-capped tub of ‘super chunky mushroom’ sauce. It was on sale for \$2.19. Mickey’s breath smelled of plums and nail polish. Mrs. Glenn shifted her shopping basket. The plastic red handles left behind vexed indentations along her left forearm. Mrs. Glenn rubbed at them. It looked as though she had grown new, brutalist arteries.

“Didn’t they recall those containers last summer? Something about plastic fragments.”

Mickey shrugged. He took in air just to blow it back out again. “Not to get overly personal with you, but ever since the diabetes, I’ve been steering clear of pasta. I’d probably be better off eating the plastic bits.” He winced in and out of a chuckle.

The ache in Mrs. Glenn’s jaw made it difficult for her to convey the empathy that Mickey seemed to be gently trawling for.

“Sorry to hear that. I’m pre-diabetic myself. At least that’s how my GP puts it. Elevated blood sugar and so on.”

A familiar whistle trilled over the sound system—“Everybody Plays the Fool.” Mrs. Glenn looked up in recognition before closing both eyes. She wanted to lie down. Shoppers wheeled past, clutching their lists like winning Wonka bars. They hardly blinked beneath the suspended fluorescent beams.

“Elevated blood sugar sounds like it’d be a good thing. There’s something distinguished about it—like a sugar-high dressed in judge’s robes or something. It’s got a real grace to it.”

Mrs. Glenn stared into the sauces. She thought about how much her jaw hurt and how much she wished that she hadn’t encouraged Mickey with a question. She had known Mickey far longer than she had been married, and it intermittently occurred to Mrs. Glenn that Mickey had witnessed much more of her son’s childhood than the late Mr. Glenn had. Mickey had watched Mrs. Glenn’s hair go grey. He had watched her earlobes stretch downward and her neck get crepey. He knew her name and address from her PNC bank checks. He knew that she gave out clementine oranges instead of candy on Halloween. He knew that she was mistrustful of foodstuffs that called themselves “organic,” and that she had difficulty remembering where they kept the maraschino cherries. Mickey rarely imposed any evidence of his personhood on Mrs. Glenn. What he did impose came from the fact of his body. Mickey’s ailments distributed themselves symmetrically in a perfect balance of genetic shortcoming. He wore matching black wrist braces, twin Oticon hearing aids, and a support belt with dual strappy suspenders. Both corners of his mouth reddened with angular cheilitis. Both of his medial deltoids blushed with psoriasis.

His hairline receded in a tidy bell curve that projected its median exactly between his eyes. He was more or less synchronized in mortality.

"I'll have to think on the 'super chunky mushroom.' All the sudden, I can't put my finger on what mushrooms taste like. Damndest thing. But thanks anyhow, Mickey."

Mickey inhaled at the sound of his name. It had been weeks since a customer called him anything other than "sir." Mrs. Glenn let her tongue roll over her incisors. She was thinking with her tongue, trying to locate the mushroom taste.

"Isn't that something? I was at our company Fourth of July cookout this past summer, and I couldn't for the life of me remember what a creamsicle tasted like. Jeffrey's girl had one just out of the wrapper—all frosted and orange. I watched her eat the whole thing just trying to remember that taste. I guess I should go easy on myself given the overpowering hotdog smell and all. Grilled food has a way of emptying your noggin."


Mrs. Glenn rubbed her jaw. She could imagine Mickey watching the deli counterwoman's daughter eat her creamsicle. She could imagine him squinting at her through his bifocals, trying to taste the thing with his eyes. She could imagine Jeffrey's daughter noticing Mickey's stare. She could imagine that the girl's awareness of Mickey and his eyes stopped her from tasting anything at all.

"Tongues are sort of single-minded, aren't they?"

A woman wearing a baby on her chest reached for a jar of Barilla's tomato and basil sauce. She took one and then another and another. She must have rolled away with a year's worth. Mrs. Glenn considered the mother's choice evidence of exhaustion. She didn't have the wherewithal to exercise a real preference. Tomato basil was probably sweet enough for the little ones. Maybe she liked the illustrated tomatoes on the label. Maybe they reminded her of a children's book her mother used to read her. Maybe she had a coupon.

"It's been good talking with you, Mrs. G. My smoke break's any minute, so I'm off." Mickey's New Balances chirped again. His body was gone before Mrs. Glenn could show her surprise. It never occurred to her that Mickey would know her name, yet alone see to its abbreviation. Now her tongue wriggled to a Billy Joel song. She still couldn't place the taste. The best she could come up with was a mixture of moss and sirloin and that wouldn't do. Mrs. Glenn went on scanning the mess of jars. Her judgments made circles, falling back on themselves with second guesses. Mrs. Glenn was sure there was a right choice. And that sureness kept her reading. It kept her eyes wide and her breath short.

Picture Mrs. Glenn in her seed pearls. Picture the open kiss clasp of her purse. Picture the other shoppers funneling past her, groping for their lists. Picture them humming out pop songs. Picture them buying so-and-so's favorite this or that. Picture their hands hovering over bruised pears and misshapen squashes. Picture them hesitating at expiration dates, unit prices, and serving sizes. Picture their chests tightening. Picture their breath shortening. Picture them choosing.

Mrs. Glenn felt herself leaning. The pain was sharper now and it settled on the left side of her clavicle. Acid from Mrs. Glenn's stomach jumped up her throat. She could taste it. She could taste it and still know what it was. She could still hear the radio. She could hear the radio and still know the song: "Sweet Caroline." Mrs. Glenn fell at the sauces. A row of "chunky garden zucchini" fielded her right shoulder. The glass jars of Prego broke against each other, bursting like dropped icicles. She could smell the sauce. She could know that she had smelled it, without knowing what it was that she had smelled. Mrs. Glenn's skull met the third shelf. Her head opened over the cream sauces. She hit the floor without feeling or knowing it. Teetering jars of Alfredo made their way to her, kissing Mrs. Glenn with their shards of glass, burying her in a thick white gravy. The linoleum squares reddened beneath her. Valleys of blood and sauce stretched down the aisle. Warm choice broke across Mrs. Glenn's dead cheek. 

Stigmas of the Caged

MYCHAL PAGAN

182. Irreparable

- 182.10 Hateful: An intolerable eyesore, he must be spurned. Let the shadows forever bind his spirit. He must never rise from his carceral abyss.
- 182.11 Depraved: A low-minded villain, who forfeited his right to life, who has no place among the free, among the living.
- 182.12 Insensitive: A heartless beast, with winter in his soul. He must never know warmth of summer. Waste not your light upon one deaf to reason.
- 182.13 Jailbird: A bane to society, capable of the vilest violence. Let him rot in his cage. Let its darkness consume him; let its railings destroy his flight. For as he has sown, so shall he have the fruit of his way.
- 182.14 Of no value: A hopeless wretch, incapable of courage. If he by chance escapes, let the stench of the signs betray him. Let him be clothed with nothing but the meanest garments.
- 182.15 Disgraceful: A shame to humanity, lost to all honor and love. Avoid him as you would the plague.
- 182.16 Not to be trusted: An inveterate liar, dead to all truth. Reserve your faith for those more deserving. For, once treacherous, always treacherous; he is beyond the reach of light. He is irredeemably lost.

what does your precious freedom actually mean?
what can a change really redeem?
could be free from the cage, free to soar to distant shores,
free to nibble on life 's sweetest rewards

even still, never free from the shadow that darkens the present,
never free from the images, the blemishes of a soiled past

The Plan-tation

OMAR PADILLA

Racism is so alive
in this institution,
it will catch the weak-minded by surprise.
Struggling to survive
the blow of oppression
from white supremacy
intertwined with
the Department of Corruption,
destroying and corrupting the mind,
leaving you locked in prison mentally,
with a slave-like mentality—
This fatality-turned-into-tragedy
can turn you against your family,
with your life spiraling out of control,
in disarray...
Police Officer K. K. K. in Baltimore
killed Freddie Gray,
and is in conspiracy
with Correctional Officer Michael, a.k.a.
White Power,
who killed Jay-Rock in Fishkill Correctional,
murdering him and taking his life away.
The racist white people
managed a way to infiltrate the judicial system,
through blissful ignorance of past history,
while putting us away
for the crime
we committed yesterday.
Equating slaves to prisoners,
these white folks banished slavery
by amending the Thirteenth Amendment,
continuing to falsify documentation
to lock black and brown people up
and create a false investigation,
a sealed indictment
that can cause devastation
to our liberation.
But their plan-tation
was predestination
for the fall of civilization
without hesitation.
These people never intended
our rehabilitation.

Vision

MICHAEL HUNTER

You have never been looked at, really. As you gaze around St. Johns Place, the block you grew up on, you can see how the Charlie Brown paint on the buildings is keeping up.

Mountains of garbage piled high like pyramids await their new location. Trees lean slightly this way and that, due to their constant fight with nature's weapons: rain, sleet, snow, and hail. It is a wonder how the trees can even stand after all of that assault. Gum stains the pavement in steady intervals, so much that you can't tell concrete from gum stain. You think to yourself how could it be that you scraped your knees on these grounds and didn't catch anything.

You sit on a wall that stands waist high. This wall continues down the entire block; it serves as a safeguard, so people won't fall down to the lower level. As you sit, you inhale the smells of St. John's Place, rich in spices, heavy with the sweetness of baked goods. You remind yourself to get a piece of Ms. Sugg's cake. She's a lovely lady with large breasts and an enormous derriere. You enjoy not only her baked goods, but her organic seductiveness that captures your spirit, mind, and body. She effortlessly hypnotizes men and women with the motion in her ocean, and she has been known to cause sea sickness and create sea men. She is *all* woman, and it puts a smile on your face just knowing you will see her soon.

You hear laughter and screams of joy as children play the timeless game of tag. The kids' laughter is infectious, and you feel yourself smiling and laughing right along with them. You can recall, as if it was yesterday, how you played running games in which your knees and elbows got scraped by falling down hard from being chased. Up and down you ran, around cars, and all to elude your chaser on St. John's Place. You remember your childhood friend, what was his name... Kendu Lalane. He was fast and extremely clever in hunting people down. He was very elusive, on the other hand, when it came to tagging him. He would fake right and go left, running with the easy grace of a natural athlete, leaving you in a state of confusion and exhaustion. You can almost feel your chest tighten just thinking about it. You're re-experiencing that pain of exerting too much energy and heaving for oxygen while running. Kendu was always just out of reach and close enough to almost touch his clothes.

A bald-headed man jolts you out of your reverie. His hand is outstretched, and his smile is kind of familiar, but the fog won't quit in your head so you're not registering. You grab his hand in a firm handshake and attempt to focus on his features, his eyes, anything that can give you a clue, yet you draw a blank. "Can I help you, sir?" you ask. You are attempting to be nice although you are very confused.

"No, but I enjoy greeting people who come to visit this block. You can call me the tour guide. My name is Dubie and I would like to ask you, what is your business here?"

You are in no way a stranger to this place, so you politely decline his offer to guide you.

The name should mean something, yet you still can't think of anything.

"A tour guide is the farthest thing from what I need. I thank you for your offer, sir, but my business is none of yours," you say with the humblest of regards. This man looks at you with a curious expression and nods his head in agreement. There is a moment of loss to you. You are a man of solid fortitude, or so you would like to think. This mystery has to be looked into, just not at this time. Without a second glance he bows and turns to walk away. His shoulders are slanted from some type of work. You can tell he is carrying the weight of something; be it emotional or physical, something is there. Your mind is working in overdrive, so you decide to take a walk. You find that when you do this it helps you in figuring things out.

You walk up St. John's Place headed towards Sixth Ave. You pass a couple holding hands. They look so in love, so much that it appears as if they are looking through you as you make eye contact with them. This is strange to you, because you command respect and a healthy amount of fear wherever you go. You shrug it off: *everyone must be going through something, right?* You make it to Sixth Avenue and turn right. This block here is quiet and relaxing, just as you remember it. As you walk, you recall all the people who lived in the buildings lined down this street, and a smile threatens to come across your face. You're already beginning to let go of that conversation you had with this Mr. Dubie person, whoever he was. Your old school appears

as if out of nowhere: majestic 282, the elementary school where a lot of your life was formed, stands tall. This is a landmark in your life, in a way, because you always end up back where you started.

A family is walking its dog and their kid is looking your way in a strange manner, almost as if she's looking at something behind you. You turn around only to see that nothing is there and think to yourself, *that was odd*.

"Hello little girl," you say in your stupid little kid voice. The family continues as if you never said a word, and this disturbs you. What is it that has the world going crazy? Why are you not involved with the happenings? This is driving you mad. You sit on a shady patch of grass, grass reserved for the dogs to sit, to think a little.

Through the corner of your eye you see a familiar shape, and you jump at the chance to do something, anything other than self-reflect. This shape is a man and you can recall his bop with a slight gangster lean. It gives you comfort in this confusing day to recognize something. The person stops in front a painting on a wall on the side of the 282 school. As you get closer, you can see the painting more clearly; it is a memorial kind of painting. You barely look at it because you now see that this person that you have been following is none other than your little brother. He has eyes the same shape and size as yours and a nose just as flat and wide. You could have easily mistaken him for yourself. His height just touches six feet, with a body similar to yours, strong and stocky, around 200 pounds of athletic build. You have missed him, to say the least, and you can see the mature facial features he has developed in your absence.

You go to hug him out of pure reflex, and as you close in to tighten up you realize that you have just passed right through him. *What the flick?* As if the day couldn't get any worse. You turn to look back at him and see the tears that are in his eyes and you look at the wall more closely. This wall is dedicated to everyone who has passed on to the next realm, and as you look more you see names and dates of people who you know. You see Kendu Lalane, also known as Dubie, who passed away in 1998 at the age of seventeen. There's Ms. Diane Suggs, also known as Ms. New Booty, who passed away in 1999. Michael Hunter, also known as Young Black, who passed away in 1999 at the age of eighteen. He got murdered by his older sister Michelle Hunter.

You are standing there with your mouth hanging open, looking stupid. Chills creep up your arm and the breeze picks up, causing you to get uncomfortable. The bald-headed man who tried to greet you earlier walks down the street; his walk is easy, almost as if he is gliding. You watch as he approaches you, and when he nears, you take him in fully. He has crow's feet by his eyes, yet he still looks youthful, and his walk is easy, almost like an athlete's. He's bald, but you can picture him with hair. This has to be Kendu, the one you used to run and play with in your youth. As he stops in front of you, you see him for the first time, really. Your vision is clear and this time no words are spoken; there is a clear understanding going on within yourself in relation to how you connect to the universe. You place your hand in his out-stretched palm, and he leads you down the street to your new destination. There is no fear this time, not even anger, for you understand your vision.

The light is very bright, so you close your eyes to adjust to it. You trust that your guide will take you to your destination. Your movement has stopped, and it feels strange, almost as if you're not yourself. Your limbs are awkward, and that makes your movements jerky. You struggle to open your eyes, and when you succeed, you stare at your brother looking down at you as only a father could. You smile because you don't know what happened, but your brother can see you, and that is all that matters. You have been reborn to do life all over again not as yourself, but as your nephew with the unconditional love of your brother. Visions of family flash across your mind but no one knows this, but you; so you smile and your brother/father smiles too. ^{GR}





Light in Shapes 2 / VERONICA LIOW

A Series on Rogue Geographies

MAXINE FLASHER-DÜZGÜNES

bottle-cap popped waves
saving grace when Rodeo lagoon
spills over its sands
one day
a salty marsh tide
oozing the muck
with the anemone

will 20 years make a swimming pool?
thighs knee deep in
choppy rogues
who've given up
on retreating

~

this dry brush
by Bonita lighthouse
cancels the weekend
the hillside tunneling
visions of delicate
sea walls
364 days of caution tape crossings
the hiker approaching
with scissors

the coast guard
answering his call
seconds before
a tumbling darkness

this year's too-late
peanut butter picnic
planned on the refrigerator
with mom's purple sharpie

~

better buy back the
Water World inner tube
safe atop the bleach-blue concrete
thin air currents
and swirls in Concord!

an okayness with the
plastic spoon from the Dippin' Dots
because here
in these manufactured sea caves
the janitor beats the whale

A Chance at the Crossroads

TYLER PURCHAS

Where do I begin? How to delve the depths of the mystical tongue that refers to chance and destiny? The multitude of roads we dare not travel down is vast indeed. To fathom a journey at the Crossroads reveals the inconceivability of destiny. Do I decide to choose to go to my right or my left, or the more practical and contented route straight ahead? Forward seems to be the more convenient logic. To speak of “chances:” a symbolic reference to conceive that there is a power greater than ourselves. This is the ascension of the curiosity of man. This notion of destiny is what drives humanity to journey to the edge of creation, to conquer the vastness of uncharted territories. Who is to say whether we have lived a life worth living, while everything around is stagnated and in a cycle of perpetual repetitions?

The imagination of a child is boundless. Chances of life flourish with fascination in the child’s dream of being a firewoman or policewoman. This child does one of two things: she will either try every conceivable road, despite the risks of failure, to reach her imagined reality, or she will blindly proceed forward to settle for less. The freedom of a child to dream is corrupted by the conformity of maturity. A child is from birth always at the crossroads, to explore and test the limitations that propel the youth into maturity. Imagination is reality. Imagination inspires creation. We build towers and buildings that reach the heavens all in the pursuit of our everlasting aspirations. The one who refuses to take a detour from a path of ruin or torpor, to take that chance of a lifetime, is unimaginative, never imagining the potential of the universe.

A man who suffers from the afflictions of nonentity will be inspired to take his last dollar and grab that pair of dice, to squeeze his eyes tight, praying and hoping with every particle of his being that if there is a God out there, He hears. In the hopes his afflictions will be heard, the man tosses the dice on the table. As the rhythmic sound of dice bounces across the table, the laws of reality seem altered and distorted, as if time has slowed. The mysticism of the universe whispers its sweet nothings.

Life is a gamble, are you happy? Are you sad? Do you feel you could be better than you are now? I’ve rolled my pair of dice many times in life. I’ve been to the top and fell from grace multiple times, and relied on the mysticism of “chance” to create new realities because imagination was my guiding inspiration.

Do I regret my life for what it is as of now? I regret very few things in my life because my unsheltered experiences are essential to my essence of “self.” I have lived my life on my terms, without the guidance of The *Moirai*, the Fates, to dictate my direction. It is because of this, I perhaps, tend to be found at the crossroads, more than not. I subsisted a wild adventurous life that some couldn’t possibly fathom. I witnessed good and evil, stagnation and repetitions, had wealth then none. I’ve seen the multitude of shifts in my reality. The artifice of spiritual reality, is one that is never without pain and loss, to be obscured or forgotten amid the vast mechanisms of the material world that surrounds. These set of skills and experiences have only made me more enlightened and conscious to what the world truly has in mind, a spiritual awakening so to speak. So again, do I regret my crimes? To an extent, “yes.” Only for the reason: I have been separated from my dearest A and E, letters at such a distance, but so close to my reality.

As the gates close behind me, razor wire inundates my visions, flashing its primordial fangs of a Cerberus oppression, signifying The *Moirai* have declared my tragic fate. A deviant child I am, once again, to escape the Fates, I come to the Crossroads. “Decisions of my life,” such a lustful statement to concur. A validation of the will of direction is profoundly questioning, as to decree my compass onward, otherwise, a decision of detouring from my state of perpetual ignorance? Questions of chance and destiny surge through my quantum cognizance. That is the beauty of the crossroads, the journey is one that is not worth taking, if you know were it will bring you. This beauty of defiance shall anger the hideous Atropos as she violently snaps her mystic secateurs at my life line-to no avail. A thought to cachinnate, as to imagine a life worth living, is to rage war with the furies to remove thyself from the decrepit hands of the Fates. I shall in vision a reality with unforeseen twists and turns to a life I imagine that is earnest of living. A meticulous destiny is no longer visional. As I step forth to undue the nexus of the Fates, I Conclude thyself, as a man of “chance,” to present the directions of my “fateful fluidity.” I say my farewells to perceive to be unforeseen amongst the discernments of the transcendent beings of fate and destiny. “Sorry Fates, I think I’ll take my chances at the Crossroads.”

Manifestation: A Sestina for Midwestern Gas Stations

YAGMUR AKYUREK

Why do people in the countryside
never pump their own gas?
Nine miles of searching and fear echoing half
of my face, I should be pretty
grateful now: some cigarettes and a piece
of pumpkin pie in my car, fuel in my stomach, the dew

disappearing from the grass. Oh, how I dread the dew.
It means night has come, probably from the side
of sky that is always turning, always craving a piece
of security, but for what? I finally have gas;
why still the questions? I don't know when to look pretty
and just shut up. My therapist says only half

of me lives life to the fullest. The other half
is never satisfied. It's not like I pick dew
violets in the Wisconsin fields, wondering if I am pretty
or not. But I do long to live. I burn the wax on both sides
of the candle. I meet girls behind the center city gas
station, sharing smoke and folding tardy slips until the piece

of cheese in the sky has moved across the plate, and the bowl piece
is tired from giving birth to all that smoke, only half
desired. Afterwards, I sleep. I do not stick my head in the gas
oven. I place empty bottles of Mountain Dew
into neat rows, like they are concertgoers swaying side
to side and I am the main act. It's a pretty

drab situation. I want my head to be a pretty
place, with vines growing from all four corners and pieces
of lavender strewn about, like the family farm in Minnesota, the side
of the Sandstone curb where daisies are not a miracle. On behalf
of all Midwesterners, I love the Midwest. Even its raindrops like honey dew,
its thunder and windchill. On idyllic Madison days, I hit the gas

like smacking a mosquito dead on the wall and gas
myself up in the side view mirror: *I am not pretty*,
I am beautiful! I would like to believe this, even when dew
drops spill from my eyes, even when I have to piece
myself whole like a landscape puzzle at half
past eleven on the bathroom floor, lying on my side.

In the gas station parking lot, with the dew
long gone and a half-moon etched into the pretty
daylight with a piece of a chain, I would like to be on my own side.

Serious

OMAR PADILLA

Impaired
Profound views
Distorted and confused
There are no
Big me's or little you's
I do not give respect to silly dudes
Those were not guys with
Black bow ties and black shoes
Who killed Malcolm X
Serious McCray
That was hate
Like what runs deep into your veins
Inflicting mental pain
Too complex
To decipher this message through your brain
God
The best thing said
Is something unsaid
A jewel is worth way more than bread
Delivering a message
When I try
Though the messenger is always the first to die

Mango Morning

LISA COOLEY

We had a mango makeout this morning — sticky,
sweet, tart —
under melting dew and lazy sun,
molten rays gleaming, winking,
spilling the secrets of a certain sinful sweetness
through the rustle of gossiping trees,
two chins covered in nectar and laughter, basking
in this morning of after,
this garden of Eden
where things are softer,
and there's a quiet thrill
hiding inside every ordinary object like
the empty cup on the table
and the strand of hair on the pillow
glinting knowingly in the morning light.
All witnesses, shared conspirators
in the moments belonging only to us
and to last night's
moon who blushed
and closed her eyes and hummed as she
soaked our sheets with her glow
spotlighting some beautiful sin, some sinking skin
until the slow spin
of the new day came
with its obnoxious
birdsong and light, and now
we're choking, laughing, breathing
—mango eating,
defiantly like your outline,
golden, flushed, clear,
existing on the butt of a morbid inside
joke, a sly innuendo
that makes us feel
Alive.

I suck the seed, sorry, no, the pit, I mean.
Cue a stupid wink, a clumsy
laugh.
Pregnant
pauses, playful dark
green-red tinted skin and soft
forbidden yellow flesh melting
into the humid air,
this human air
thick in lungs and throats and tips of tongues
The Russian roulette of things to say
I excuse myself into your apology until they fold
into each other flirtatiously in a mumbling, smiling
heap of breath and we
meet on a mossy mango patch
A promised land
underwhelmed, relieved, giddy
Comfortable discomfort
gently brushed off until
everything is funny
pulsing with the rush of tender electricity
Let me pluck the mango strings from your teeth
and play a song with them
Let me lodge myself into those gaps instead
and hold my breath and body boldly
inside the periphery of
your personal space just
for a minute, without squirming
Let me lock eyes and limbs
with you for that minute
on this sticky sweet
mango makeout morning

Violets on my Grandmother's Grave

ANNIKA VON GREY

There is a body buried in the deep south,
under soft beds of peat, moss, and other small bodies,
which belonged once to my mother's mother.
Violets crawl up through that grave now,
through dirt and through flesh,
staging a tender and violent emergence.
I picture their roots bundled tight in her ribcage,
coiling up and out of her mouth,
carrying the proteins of her tongue
back up through the earth.
Sometimes I sit down beside
her soil made bed frame watching
the tight buds open into bloom.
If I push my index finger into the bud,
quietly forcing its petals open,
and lay my head gently against
deep purple lips,
I hear Persephone laughing
from within the stomach
which carried the body
which gave me my life.

How To Be A Successful Female or Die Trying!!!

BRIANNA MCLARTY

1. Grab everyone you know.¹
2. Line up straight.
3. Tie the nooses around your necks.
4. And all together, kick the chairs.

The ones who choke last are the winners!²

1. Your friends, your enemies, your class, your siblings.
2. The class president, the summa cum laude recipient, the valedictorian, even the salutatorian, the smartest superlative, the best dressed superlative, the most popular superlative, the cutest couple superlative, the prom queen, the Ivy-League accepted, the my-daddy-bought-me-in-but-still Ivy-League accepted, the dean's-list-all-four-years, the competitive internship winner, the took-five-shots-and-still-aced-their-exam-the-next-day kids, the impressive summer jobs, the good-last-names, the Cartier bracelet, the two Cartier bracelets, the Cartier with diamonds, the skinny-rich-and-smart, the married rich, the got-married-at-the-right-time, the lost-the-baby-weight-the-fastest, the best jobs, the most money, the best kids at the best schools, the head of the P.T.A, the my-child-is-advanced mothers, the I-drop-my-kid-off-in-perfect-makeup-every-single-goddamn-morning, the my-husband-didn't-leave-me-for-someone-younger, the I'm-the-someone-younger-that-he-left-her-for, the I-balanced-a-job-and-kids, the PhD published dissertations, the acclaimed novelist, the acclaimed journalist, the acclaimed scientist, the who-knows-why-but-they're-acclaimed, the who-gives-a-fuck-why-but-they're-acclaimed, the producer, the had-enough-money-to-become-a-producer, the Nobel prize winner, the Pulitzer puller, the Oscar obtainer, the Grammy gainer, the proof that you won something, the proof that you are something, the proof you existed, the you-made-your-life-worth-something, the you're-not-a-failure, the person who matters, the best. The Best.

Intangible Wounds

HASHANI FORRESTER

In October 2005, I received an honorable discharge from the United States Army. My estimated time of separation was July 16, 2005. I remained another three months, because I was then deployed overseas on OIF III, or the third consecutive year of Operation Iraqi Freedom. As a soldier, I performed my duties effectively and honorably. But in the back of my mind I was restless. I was anxious to reunite with my family. I did not want any misfortune to prevent me from doing just that.

Throughout our deployment, we suffered casualties. They were men who had served honorably. I had met most of their families. They were in my company. They were in my platoon. We served alongside each other in combat. As soldiers, we had taken an oath to defend the United States of America against all enemies. My eyes have witnessed soldiers make the ultimate sacrifice. Always, I reflect on what they sacrificed for. I was a soldier. I was not a politician. I put those thoughts to the side, and I was able to drive on. However, the seed of distrust in my government had been planted. How do you continue to live the same way after a significant life-altering experience?

The reasons for the sacrifices that were suffered had escaped me. Distrust grew commensurately with the number of casualties that we suffered. At the same time, I had grown indifferent to the violence and gore that had become commonplace. I was doing my job. The unfortunate aspects of combat were inseparably part of the job. The mailman may not enjoy delivering mail in inclement weather, but the nature of his job necessitates his doing so.

In Iraq, people used a phrase commonly when speaking about something that had not as yet transpired. In speaking about a thing that had not as yet transpired, they would say "*inshallah*." In preparation for my deployment, I studied the Arabic language. The phrase that I heard often was familiar to me. The English translation of *inshallah* is, God willing, or, if God wills it. In combat, soldiers who performed their jobs perfectly were still killed. At that, I concluded that my life was not in my own hands. I made my peace. The phrase that was used commonly by Iraqis had become a part of my own vernacular. Silently, I would think to myself, *ishallah*. That psychology enabled me to drive on, as they say in the Army, without even a healthy amount of fear for my own personal safety. My job had become as common to me as teaching was to a teacher. I was stoic.

I have read books that have described war eloquently as if it were a thing to be in awe of. My experience was not like that. If you put sugar on sand, then would it be any more edible to you? Since the violence was an inseparable part of the job, I thought I had developed an indifference to it. Still I was traumatized when I saw a child get shot. Before that, I had not ever witnessed violence against children. Violence against children was unthinkable to me. A soldier had egregiously mistaken the car that the child was a passenger in for a VBIED. Vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices were automobiles that had been loaded with wired mortar rounds. Those vehicles were used to get within proximity of soldiers and then detonate. The SOP, or Standard Operating Procedure for VBIEDs was to fire one warning shot, then light them up. Most often, VBIEDs were easily recognized as any vehicle speeding directly towards you.

That day, we were patrolling, in a convoy of three HMMWVs. We had pulled over along the side of the road. The kid was in a passenger vehicle that was driving, at moderate speed, past our position. I speculated that the man who was driving the car was the child's father. As the car drove past, a young soldier in the turret of the HMMWV in front of me aimed his M4 and fired.

Immediately, the car stopped just a few meters past our position. The father frantically attempted to aid the wounded child. I observed closely, but I saw no movement from the child. The man drove some meters more down the road and stopped by a group of men who were gathered on the sidewalk. He spoke briefly to them as he motioned towards us. I could not hear what he was saying, but I understood. His mannerisms were expressive of fear, worry, and panic. Almost as soon as he had stopped to address the men, he sped away. I imagined that he was compelled to seek immediate aid for his child. As he disappeared in the distance, I thought to myself, "if that man was not our enemy, then he is now." I wondered if that kid was what politicians called a casualty of war.

Soldiers fighting in a foreign land wait in anticipation to reunite with their families. Chronic exposure to constant life-threatening situations has proven to affect the psyche of humans. Wounds suffered in combat are not always physical wounds. Soldiers who have sustained intangible wounds often have complications adjusting to civilian life. Those soldiers exhibit a range of symptoms. Collectively, those symptoms are known clinically as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD.

I Used to Be So Sad

HANNAH BENHAMO

I have this fantasy about the middle-aged woman who used to bag my groceries in Tel Aviv.

It's an elaborate fantasy, the kind to which you devote a good ten minutes daily, in elevators or on your morning commute. Ten minutes too long, especially when you consider that my fantasy offers none of the usual prospects: no sex, no staged primetime interviews.

Instead, it goes like this: I go back to Israel, to the old neighborhood in Tel Aviv. I stop into the *makolet* to buy cigarettes—I'll buy Winston's, even though I'm no longer 18 and an idiot, but just for the sake of old times, just to jog the woman's memory. And, after a moment spent studying my face with that cruelly creased expression unique to older Israeli women, she will haltingly ask if I used to live around here.

And I'll say yes, yes I did. And she'll tell me how grown up I am, and I'll say, and here is where it gets a little strange:

"I used to be so sad, right?"

Unfortunately, elaborate fantasies require exhaustive context. I think it's one of the reasons people don't bother sharing them, or at least it quickly becomes one when you try. Try to explain a private fantasy to somebody, and it wilts, just falls right off the vine.

When I was eighteen years old, I lived for one year in Tel Aviv, in an apartment originally purchased by my father for his mistress. My father, who stayed with my mother after extensive marriage counseling, could not sell this apartment for the life of him.

And so, impossibly, I took up residence there. I was something less than a tenant; there was something transgressive about my existence within the apartment's walls. I was a squatter.

I left the apartment largely unfurnished. There was a bed in the second bedroom, where I slept (The master bedroom, the mistress bedroom really, I avoided entirely.) And then there was the living area, which had a big white shag rug that eliminated any real need for furniture, as well as a small glass coffee table, for guests who wanted to do drugs.

Technically, I lived alone. Sometimes a friend would join me for a month or two. One, a pretty Israeli girl named Shai, stole from me with such frequency that I began to notice gaps in my closet where clothing had hung before.

There were guys. One—an unnaturally good-looking, older startup type— frequently mistook my sarcasm for sincerity and had an annoying habit of interrupting me with a kiss whenever I went on for longer than a sentence. Years later, I'd learn from a mutual friend that that guy was "on the spectrum," and something about that—mostly, that I thought nothing of our glaring interpersonal disconnect at the time—makes me smile a little bit now.

Because really, the year was one I spent alone, alternating between inescapable loneliness and self-inflicted isolation. My vision, incidentally, went near-sighted that year, and I can distinctly recall wandering around, wondering when all these passing figures became so faceless.

If I had any consistent relationship back then, it was with the middle-aged woman who owned the twenty-four hour *makolet* across the street, from whom I bought cigarettes and heaps of junk food at suspicious hours. And then I'd rush home, bingeing on frozen potato bourekas and candy bars and the Moroccan cookies that came in plastic tins, the trans fats coating the ridges of my mouth with an unctuousness that fleetingly rivaled human affection. That was sometimes, when you consider all the things people want from you in exchange for affection, even better.

"*Layla tov, capara,*" the woman told me every time she bagged it all up, a trace of warning in her voice. "Stop walking so late at night. I see you walking around like a crazy person."

They were the only words of kindness I really tolerated that whole year.

Eventually, I actually do return to Israel. I don't stay at the apartment—it still hasn't sold, there are some things that just refuse to be let go—but I stay nearby, as I always do. I'm on a date. We've just finished a bottle of wine. He announces, the way all American guys do when they get a little drunk, that he could go for a cigarette.

"I know a place nearby," I hear myself say, and then we're meandering along the winding paved streets of Neve Tzedek, and he's keeping a steadying hand on the small of my back while asking if I really know where I'm going.

"Of course I do," I say, and he mistakes it for drunken arrogance and laughs. But of course I know where I'm going. Four years ago, I was a veritable neighborhood eccentric, the bleary-eyed girl who wandered around the neighborhood after all the shops closed and everyone went to bed, when only the stray cats were out scuttling around with their wistful meows.

"Oh," my date says in surprise, when harsh fluorescent lighting spilling onto the sidewalk heralds a twenty-four hour *makolet* just a few feet up the street.

"See? I'm not a liar."

We step inside. She's here manning the counter, eating a candy bar that looks a little stale, the chocolate coating white and chalky. She eats it slowly, breaking it off in bits. I immediately avert my eyes, veering off toward the freezer with all the ice creams. My date comes up behind me and loops his arms around my waist.

"I'm gonna do the Magnum bar," he says. "The one with almonds. You?"

"Not sure."

I slip out from underneath him and start wandering the aisles. They've moved things around a little bit. The American cookies are where the chips used to be. The traditional candied nuts and dried fruits are in the back rather than up front.

"Are we looking for something?" My date calls uneasily, from where he's waiting at the register.

She sighs. She's never liked American customers; she prefers the Israelis, or at the very least the French.

"No," I say, and cautiously join him at his side. She looks at me. She has deep, hollowed circles under her eyes, a detail I hadn't remembered to include in my fantasy. "*Rak zeh?*" She asks, gesturing to the ice creams.

"Marlboros, too," he adds. "Reds."

"Winston's," I correct.

He shoots me a quizzical look. I ignore him. She turns back to us, and holds up the carton for us to confirm. "Do you remember me?" I blurt then, and I tack on a little giggle at the end, like maybe it doesn't matter, but nothing is happening how it's supposed to, and I'm getting nervous.

Her eyebrows—they're sparse, menopausal, another detail I forgot—knit in frustration. "What?"

"I used to live in the building across the street," I tell her in rushed, bad, hurried Hebrew. "I came here all the time. I smoked Winston's, like a pack a day. Or every other day. You remember me, right?"

A paunchy man I hadn't noticed before steps forward from the boxes of underripe produce he's unloading and leers at me. "*I remember you, capara.*"

The three of us—my date, my fantasy, and me—shush him. She smiles at me, amused. "Internationals come in and out of this neighborhood. They stay for a few months and leave. I couldn't possibly keep track of you all."

She speaks English. She never bothered with English before. Something about this—the implicit refusal of my deteriorating Hebrew maybe, or just the change itself—brings actual tears to my eyes, stinging with humiliation.

"Are you sure you don't remember me? I bought junk food a lot." I've got my hands clamped to the edge of the counter, and I'm reciting an entire inventory of foodstuffs: Barbecue Bisli, chocolate-filled Bamba, Argentinian shortbread cookies, Jordan almonds.

"You remember me, right? I was in here almost every night."

"Hannah," my date starts, and he reaches out a comforting hand, but I wave him off. He wants to take the cigarettes and go, his place or mine, it doesn't matter. But this isn't about him. He shouldn't even be here. In the fantasy, it's me alone, the way it really should be.

"Do you remember me?" I ask again. And then, like a grade-schooler fumbling her lines in a holiday play, I uncertainly blurt out, tears rolling down my cheeks: "I was so sad. I'm not anymore, but I was so sad back then."

"*Capara,*" the woman says finally, her voice going soft. "I'm sorry, I—you look very familiar. I can definitely say you look very familiar." ^GR

Pamuk shares a memoir

MAXINE FLASHER-DÜZGÜNES

Pamuk walks me
through a painted
city
this Thursday
up in Kips Bay
the flurries of yester—
my Patago-coat bundling
my hands
dry from flipping pages

the black 'n' white scenes
ink heavy
the chapters perused
by my father
on the other side
of the phone

~

a childhood image
in the ancient ruin
mosques covered in soot
and pigeons
cobblestones angering taxi drivers
museums of east
in the living room

~

I pick up *Istanbul*
as I would a writer
sipping a foamy melancholic memory
an introspect—
[shack]led
belonging
to the place
of mini pasts

where no-longer things
can fit inside
cupping fingers
in the winter-becoming-
fall



Light in Shapes 3 / VERONICA LIOW

A Tale of Two Kisses

EMILY CARPENTER

I remember my first kiss.

I would love to forget my first kiss.

I was 15 years old and he was soon to be 18. Yes, that sounds mildly predatory, but this kid stood about five foot four, was a high-school dropout and very, very unattractive. This isn't to say that I myself, with frizzy hair and chronic acne, was necessarily a *stunner*, but despite my wardrobe consisting entirely of t-shirts and insecurity, this guy had it for me. I know I really liked that. Despite our age gap, I clearly had the upper hand and I really liked that, too.

It was on a mattress.

I say mattress because that's exactly what it was. Not a bed, for there were no sheets or blankets, no pillows dented by the back of someone's sleeping head. It was on a bed frame, but it lacked ownership or privacy. Instead of frilly pillows or duvets, it was covered in plastic, sterile and sticky as it crinkled below the weight of our sitting bodies.

It was on a mattress in the furniture department at Macy's.

Only workers passed by, few and far between, probably used to the sight of horny teenagers. For the most part we were alone in our escapades, but I can't pretend we weren't in the middle of a department store. The gaze of potential onlookers sent red through my body but still a harmless peck escalated into a clumsy tango of tongues, teeth and lips. His lips tasted wet and salty, like a soggy paper cup, or the way you feel after having eaten too many goldfish.

"Cause we are living in a material world, and I am a material girl."

"Ughhh. *WHY* are they playing this *SONG?*" Why did he have to call attention to it?

"You know that we are living in a material world-"

Madonna's lyrics boomed through the speakers, pounding in my head like a metronome that matched the beating of his heart. I put my hand on his chest and felt his insides race. His face flushed pink with bliss and his huge pupils made his eyes look bottomless. He said that he lost track of time, forgot where we were. I listened to him, but looked around and realized that I had never even closed my eyes. I was still sitting on that mattress at Macy's.

The salty and soggy taste of my first kiss never quite left my mouth, but every time he sent me another tiny-texted love note, my heart burst like a confetti cannon. For months I lead him on, kissing on mattresses, squished into tiny restrooms, and even on the pungent-smelling moldy upholstery of the back seats of our friends' cars. Each kiss was a payment: in return he would look at me with love in his eyes and tell I was beautiful. I would look in the mirror and, for a second see his words reflected back, only to quickly remember that I didn't feel beautiful. I felt mean. I felt mean for lying to this boy whom I couldn't look at with a flushed face or dilated pupils, for kissing him just so he could make me feel better about myself. It was never him I wanted; it was his affection. Guiltily, I ended things, apologizing for wasting his time and ultimately remained the same 15 year old I had always seen in the mirror, all front-cut bangs and insecurity. As much as he wanted me, his desire hardly acted as a remedy for my own self-loathing.

Now 20 years old, I follow closely behind a new boy into the small, dimly lit dive bar he has selected for our third date. He is also short, maybe five seven but tall enough that I have to tilt my head to look him in the eyes. His arm muscles pierce through every tight-fitting henley he owns and, like the rays of the sun, his small smile blinds me into looking away before my face gets too hot.

The bartender sits in front of his large bottles of liquor in the corner of the room, while couples and groups of friends mingle around wooden tables. We order two shots each and sit at our own small square table, finally facing each other. Our faces are lit only by red lights of the cars that pass down the small Parisian street outside the windows and the tealight candle in between us, casting soft shadows over our faces. One by one, we down our glasses of clear liquid, him grimacing as it burns his throat once and then twice, making me laugh. I take them down like a champ. We do the small talk, asking about each other's days, as if we hadn't had class together seven short hours ago. As I search for a photo in my camera roll, I

stumble across a picture of a personality questionnaire that I had never deleted.

“Wait, we should do it!” His eyes light up like a child’s at Christmas. He’s always so excited.

We take turns answering questions back and forth, never letting our eyes break away as we talk, hungry for new knowledge about one another, eager to share. I’m warm and the world feels easy; my words spill out of my mouth like honey and without even noticing, the two of us sit in the same orange glow, taking as much as we are giving, without wishing to be anywhere else.

“Question 16: What poem makes your spine tingle?” Our eyes light up simultaneously, blinding the rest of the bar with the answers we have at the ready. “Mine’s a Neruda poem.”

“Same!” Of course. We’re both sappy enough to fall for Pablo Neruda’s romantic lines and both sappy enough to be proud of it. We look into our phone screens, Google’s white glow lighting up our faces as we search for our favorites.

“Read it to me.” And so I do, professing my love through words not my own. I can feel his eyes on me as I look down at the screen, attempting to recite a poem that doesn’t quite fit at our tiny wooden table. We share a look and I feel shades of pink all over. His turn. Sonnet XVII.

“I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where...” His voice is steady as he reads, meeting my eyes every so often. I should be taking more of it in but my insides are buzzing and my eyelids feel heavy.

Once he finishes the poem, we finally breathe and for a moment we marvel at Neruda’s genius, or maybe at each other. “He’s a sad man,” I say to ease the silence.

“He’s a man in love,” he says resolutely. I look into his eyes and think almost nothing. I don’t have to.

“Can I kiss you?” Without words, I smile, nod once, and lean forward. It isn’t our first kiss, but somehow each one feels better than the last. My eyes close and I am somewhere else, unaware of the clamor of the others packed into the tiny bar, unsusceptible to their prying eyes. Tingles swell through every part of my body, butterflies made of golden liquid filling me as if I am a vase. I grow even warmer than before, but still comfortable. My head is numb and weightless. We lean back and open our eyes to find that somehow our hands have met halfway across the smooth table. Is it the alcohol or is this how Neruda feels?

Three and a half weeks later we’re standing against the red bricks of our school building. The air is cold and biting and the sky is gray and cloudy, matching my insides. It’s the 100th day of the year and I’m wearing my thick-knit rainbow turtleneck made of wide stripes of bright pink, blue and yellow yarn in celebration, attempting to summon the sun and a happy ending to our conversation.

“I think I need to figure things out on my own.”


My chest suddenly feels twice as heavy and the backs of my eyes sting. We hug, quick and meaningless, turn opposite directions and start walking. I take a shallow breath and find my friends, Mady and David, on the top floor of the building. Their eyes meet mine, asking how it went, and I shake my head, unable to produce a sound that isn’t a sob. Mady rubs my back and David makes me laugh. We sit for as long as I need to until they remind me of the genius idea I had earlier that morning.

I pick myself up and follow my friends out the front floor of our building, back through the chilly spring air, following the blue line on our phones leading us to the party supply store 25 minutes north. Twenty-eight euros and a metro ride later, we’re sitting on the hard floor of my dorm room, heads adorned with party hats as we blow up 100 balloons as colorful as my sweater, until we grow light-headed. We try to write Roman numerals on each of them, but give up when we realize we wrote “37” on a yellow one and have only blown up 26. We drink sweet, cold cider from glass bottles as we toss around the balloons that now completely cover my floor. I am laughing despite left the pit in my stomach by the day’s events.

Mady starts, “If you had told me this morning we’d be blowing up THIS MANY BALLOONS-”

David interrupts, “Oh, she did. That was the first thing she told me.”

“You’re the only one I know who would think of this.”

The day was gray and my heart is broken but when I wash my face at the end of the night I look in the mirror and smile. I have bright eyes and a colorful sweater and a personality to match. Mady’s right; I’m the only one I know who blew up 100 balloons to celebrate this Wednesday in April. I’m the only one I know who can make a little bit of sun shine through the cloudy skies. I’m the only me I know, and finally that seems to be enough, no matter who kisses me or who doesn’t. 

Dog

SHANTI ESCALANTE

A blue square of night came through Marta's window with the wind, shifting her curtains. They pulsed in and out. The edges of each linen rectangle briefly parted, then joined gently together again when they pressed against the wire screen. Her curtains were kissing, sharing breath. This tender scene of inanimate love briefly sparked a feeling of disgust in her. Then the feeling faded, leaving behind the acrid dregs: a dull, self aware ache. She remembered how her old boyfriend's belly would lap against her lower back as he slept. He always fell asleep hugging her. When they were still together, she would stay awake to feel this touch and the rush of affection that followed. "My baby, my baby animal," she thought to herself, curled up beside her in its most vulnerable and innocent moment. Then he left her. No more touching. Though she had begged. She had begged for a little more touching. One more night to sleep together. One more hour to be held. One more minute for a kiss, to feel his lips, to take his face into her hands. He said no and she asked again anyway. If he had been unsure of her, he had been sure after that, and she saw the last of love come out of his eyes. Now Marta was stuck loving and wanting to be loved by someone who did not want her anymore. After years and years and years.

When she had described the ugly break up, the begging, to some sympathetic friend, she ended up getting out her chair. Words wouldn't do. She got to the floor and on her hands and knees began to crawl in circles around the table at her friend's place. She crawled like a dumb beast, panting, and crying. "Like that, like this, this is how it was and is! It's going to be okay? Is it!"

Marta felt desiccated with crying. She was dry on the inside now, she knew. She cried in the shower and leaned her forehead against its white tiles to cool down. She shuddered hot and open-mouthed like a child in a tantrum, sitting up in bed looking at the wall. In rarer moments of clarity she began to feel scared at her state of mind. This was not who she was at all. Her friend warned her she was approaching hysteria. Marta told her friend that if this lasted longer than three weeks, she would need to stage some kind of kidnapping, to arrange some kind of incredible spa in an adobe facility in New Mexico. Her friend looked pained and told Marta she'd call her parents in New Jersey. At least Marta never cried at work, not even in the private bathroom. But she did love to cry in the street, where there was no one she knew.

With extreme crying comes illness. The sticky heat of the city in mid-summer only worsened her congested nose, sore throat, and constant headaches. Marta laid naked in her bed with her legs and arms spread out in starfish position in front of a fan for some relief. She refused to turn on the air conditioner for political reasons; besides, she suspected there was black mold stuck deep in its coils. The fan worked fine enough, anyhow. It stuttered and creaked reassuringly in the dark. The sound it gave off was practically companionship. Its mechanical breeze relieved her section by section. Sweat chilled on her neck, her breasts, stomach and chafing inner thigh before fading back into fever.

Feeling ill, hot, and restlessly craving some form of comfort, Marta decided to masturbate before going to sleep. She hesitated to break the gentle harmony of the room, the click of the fan, and gentle stream of traffic which pushed the shadows of her room around. "But I'm disgusting. I'm unclean. I cannot sit here in this simple atmosphere and be beautiful with it," so she limply dragged her computer from where it rested on the floor, and flinched at the bright and incriminating light emanating from her screen.

With limitless choice comes some anxiety. There were many different categories to choose from on the porn site, mostly related to ethnicity, sexuality, age, and kink. "Figs, fig tree," Marta thought to herself, "this is what Sylvia Plath was talking about. Except no, it is not that every fig is delicious, I just don't know what I like anymore."

Everything was shifting about. Everything was porn. Porn as advertisements for more porn. The video ads were all sped up into an almost comical frenzy of humping and open mouths, switched perspectives and positions on a loop behind graphic text. HOT MILFS HOT ASIANS BIG DICKS GET POUNDED, etcetera. There were multiple ads for supplements, exercises, and surgeries to increase penis size. Marta only ever

encountered a man with a small penis once and he was the best. He did not take it as a limitation or as a victimhood, and they had had a very good time together. Men just don't approach problem in this European fashion anymore. There were also cartoon sex games advertised. This confused Marta because she thought animation was very difficult to do and very expensive; surely this blonde elf bouncing around at the edge of her vision wasn't so lucrative? Marta was caught with the sudden desire to be an elf too, and fantasized that they could live out a gothic life and have private sex by the low stone wall in the common wood. She clicked on a trending video. A stepson found his stepsister taking a nap. Marta felt somewhat shocked and virginal again, having gratefully quit porn after three years of consistent real life sex. Her boyfriend had not quit it, but she assumed it was different for him.

There was so much incestuous sex the site had included a "family" category. Marta wondered how the moderators had felt about creating that tab, writing the code, hacking the computer, whatever it was that they did. They were probably very open-minded people. The scene was brightly lit to mimic day light; in fact, it looked like a house and not a set. This was perhaps the most obscene part.

"This is why people are going cray over porn," Marta thought, "They took away the absurdity of the set, the velvet, the bachelor pad of the porn palace in the desert. Now people think these things can happen in the home, that you can do this to the girl the next room over." There was a teen girl playing on her phone. The man in grey sweats and a monster cock slipped in from behind. Marta felt uncomfortable and started clicking about again, and then landed on a massage video from Japan. Very oily, gentle, attentive, though again there was this mischief of accidental sex. Due to the professional setting, the girl's doubts concerning the masseuse's techniques were set aside. They assured her that this was all within the normal range of getting a massage, until of course, they fucked her, but by then things had gone too far to say anything. Marta thought that in this situation she may have behaved similarly. She moved her hand up from between her legs so she could type with two hands. A video that was supposed to be something else ended up being a brutal gang bang involving a ball gag and a lot of fat bellies circling an emaciated woman. It looked like a cult ritual, or maybe cults are just bad sex practice. There is that sacrificial tone to things. At this point Marta remembered how evil porn was and how she wasn't supposed to be supporting the industry through her clicks, which were tracked and somehow translated to an important currency that would keep young women in subjugation for centuries to come. She felt like a teenager again, frustrated with what the internet had to offer, and also really horny. Disgusted, but also into it. In the spirit of adolescence she looked up the role-playing site she had used as a 15 year old.

Marta quickly found that, though this kind of interaction had quickly riled her up as a teenager, her role-playing partners were disappointing. They said, "I have my hand on your boob" or, "I'm thrusting inside of you." Even more off putting than this was the question, "How does that feel?" Marta canceled out of another chat and curled up on her side away from the face of the computer. "Who are these incompetents," Marta thought to herself, "that think this normal sort of talk will work when there aren't bodies involved?" All they had to offer her was a sad pantomime of the sex that happens between two real people. Marta worried this was less a sign of inadequate imagination and actually an indication that she was dealing with teen virgins, as she had been when she had originally used the site. Then again, she also remembered how the chat room had been plagued by many adult men looking online for pretend sex slaves who would obey their commands to send pictures over text. Where was that freak now when she needed him to create the illusion that she could be taken over, the only approximation for fucking that was not fucking?

Her computer emitted a sparkling sound that disturbed the placid flatness of her contemplation, and she turned to her computer again. The chat began with the etiquette she had begun to expect and had remembered from before.

Him: m/f?

Her: f

Him: m

The proper dance of heterosexuality once affirmed allowed for some continuity.

Him: age?

She used to pretend to be over [stet] when she was looking for sexual chats as a 14 year old. It made her feel old, now, to pretend to be younger.

Her: 19, u?

Him: same

Him: u wanna roleplay?

Her: yeah

Him: do you have a dog?

Her: no

Her: were r u from?

Her: *where, lol

Him: Ohio

Him: you have a german shepherd, he's been your dog since childhood. he's coming into your room

Him: you get on the floor to play with him, what are you doing?

Her: I'm scratching him behind the ears

Her: so what do you look like

Him: brown and black fur

Him: he keeps nuzzling your crotch, and won't stop when you push him away

She hates herself later for not stopping here. She imagined hot breath against her underwear, the insistent push of a hard nose. But she remembered this was a dog's nose and it could not be good to be imagining a dog's nose.

Her: this is weird

He takes a moment to respond.

Him: don't worry it's a robot dog

In her mind the image of the German shepherd, its black and brown coat, becomes chrome, the slope of its back interlocking metal. A robot dog not unlike the robot dogs she had seen in movies as a child, close cousin to the robot puppy toys that she had asked for as a child but had never received.

Him: you're wearing a nightgown, but no panties

What kind of tongue does a robot dog have? A wet one.

Him: he forces you on your back

Him: with his paws.

Him: the dog is licking you all over

Him: what are you doing?

Her: i'm trying to push him off but he's too strong and heavy

Her: i roll over, i'm trying to crawl away

Him: remember your parents are downstairs

Him: you can't make a sound or they'll find you

Him: the dog gets on top of you

Him: your night gown slips up and he gets inside of you

Marta imagines herself getting fucked by a robot dog.

The black screen of her computer was open and staring at her when she woke up the next day. This alone felt perverse. Then she remembered the sex robot dog role play. In her empty room with Sunday morning yellow light streaming over her and glinting of the white ceramic cup on her nightstand, she said "fuck" out loud, to herself, just once and then tried to live with herself for the rest of the day.

Marta walked to work and tried not to jump into the river of traffic that ran by her. Heat and light refracted off of the glass and cement surrounding her. There was drilling and shouting and ambulances and it was all entering her at the temples where her headaches gathered. Everything smelled of piss and garbage. She felt sick. "I'm a sick fuck." She wanted to give up on this crazy idea of going to work and being there. Of ever going back. Sweat began to prick at her neck and underarms. With some disgust, she realized she could smell herself. This set off a wave of self-hatred. "Dirty. Dirty. Whore, stupid bitch. Fuck! Dog! You're a dog. You're just a fucking dog. What's wrong with me, what's freaking wrong with me? Fucking freak, fucking loser," and this went on until the tinkle of metal penetrated her mind and she noticed the dog trotting along in front of her. It was one of those breeds whose skull and ribs can be felt through its thin skin and short hair; their legs reminiscent of a raw chicken thigh, joint still supple and malleable, somehow resistant to rigor mortis. Marta feels that she could step on this dog like Jews step on a glass under a cloth on their marriage day; it would crumple in that way, the mess contained by its covering.

The dog padded ahead of her and she followed it. She stared at it. She felt relieved to notice there was no sexual desire. As large dogs passed by as well, there was nothing left over. No fear or post-traumatic flinch. There was no secret desire she felt that she was hiding from herself. The dog did not represent a challenge. These were just strange animals in love with their owners. If there was anything about dogs that disturbed her, it was their blind affection. These creatures were designed to love without question. The owner could beat them or love them as children. Still the creature would crawl to its place by the master's feet.

Her ex dreamt of getting a dog all the time. He would point out beautiful dogs on the street and tell her "That would be a great dog for me." He told her all the things he would do with his future dog. Go for walks, go to the park, play fetch. His imagination was limited. Mostly, he imagined companionship. Petting, sitting together. Dogs were very cute, he would point out. If given the opportunity, he would drop everything to squat to the ground and ruffle a dog's ear, give it a nice scratch under the collar. Of course, he told Marta, the dog would be adopted from a shelter. "Think of all the dogs that *need* me," he would say when she told him it was cruel to raise a dog in the city. "It's got to be better with me than in there. Unwanted, badly treated, on the chopping block. They kill dogs in shelters. Or they slowly let them die." All this talk of dogs annoyed her. It got to the point that she thought to herself, "What's a dog

have that I don't?" Finally they got into a fight about it. They were drunk in the elevator ride back to his apartment. . He had shown her a picture of a dog in a shelter. It was cute. Marta knew it was cute and it was good and it was kind, but she jabbed at him. It was a big dog with special needs that he didn't know how to meet. They got off the elevator. He was being selfish; he would be at work all day and that dog deserved a better home. He barely knew how to take care of himself, much less have a full time dog-baby. And the money! Dogs cost a lot of money. They walked down the hall and reached the door of his apartment.

"And sure, she's small now, but not for long! I just don't get this obsession." He stood still with his key facing the door knob, and then turned his head to face her.

"Is it so bad that I just want something that's going to love me unconditionally?"

Then he unlocked the door and walked into the dark rooms of his home. She followed him dully all the while thinking to herself, a little hot with shame, "But I love you unconditionally."

The dog walking in front of her had felt Marta's gaze and it had peeked at her from the side of its right eye, flashing the dark circle of its iris her way, leaving a crescent of white. The dog quickly averted its glance after making eye contact her, feeling caught and shy, just like a human would.

Marta had a dream that night of a wolf in the woods. In the dream she had just emerged from the pines and had come to the parking lot of cracked asphalt, sand, and pine needles. A lone and rusting truck sat there, and beyond it, a road. In the corner of her eye Marta saw something shifting at the threshold of the forest, but coming closer. She knew her only chance of surviving the predator would be if she got to the road. If she just cleared the truck, she could make it. But with the first twitch of her mad dash, the wolf in the woods bounded into the parking lot, blocking her way. The wolf began to speak to her and while he spoke, Marta looked frantically on the ground for a tool, for a weapon. She finds a club, which is more like a pathetic stick. She begins to swing at the wolf, who nimbly dodges her gangly swipes. He continues to speak in a measured voice. He is not exerting himself





at all while Marta fights for her life. But all Marta can think of is getting past this wolf to the road. Finally she drops her stick and grabs the wolf by his fleshy nose. She hesitates to hurt him, but then digs her nails in deep. "Let me pass!"

When she woke up the next morning, the feeling of his nose was still in her fingertips, stuck under her nails. She wished she could remember what the dog had said. It had sounded really important. ^{GR}

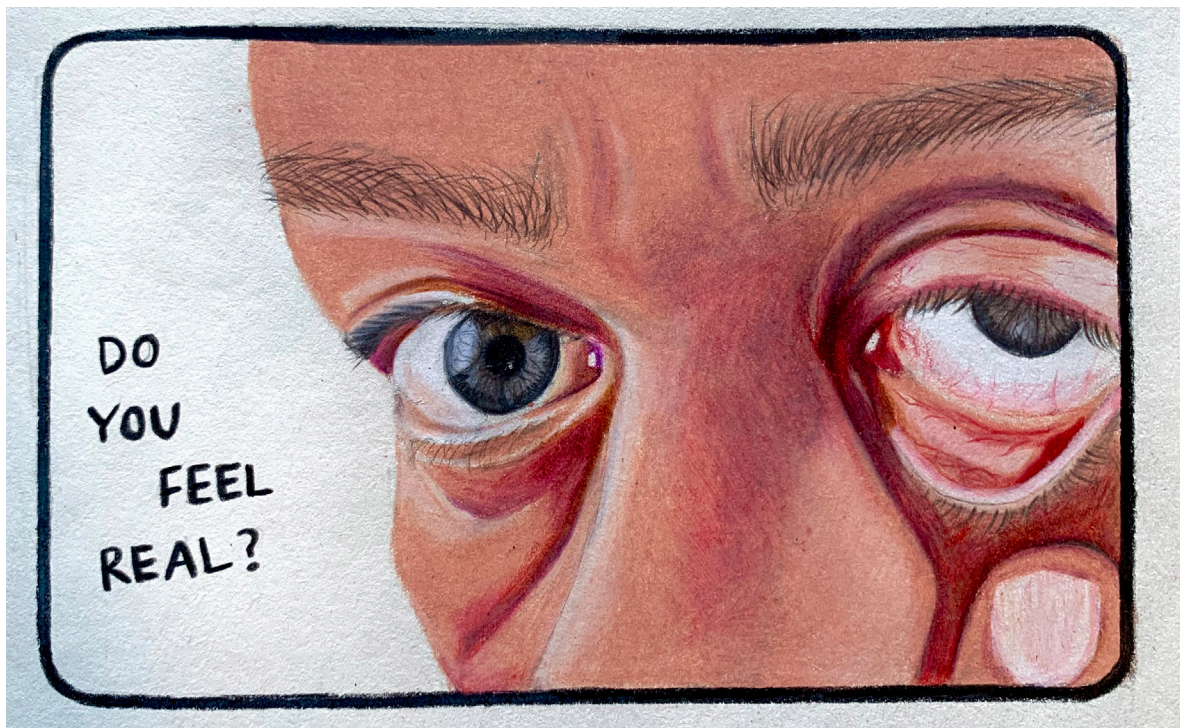
The Essence of One's Self: A Journey in my Mind

LAWRENCE POSEY

I lie in my cell at Wallkill Correction and think about my life, the choices I've made and the road I've traveled. Growing up in poverty with three siblings, I was predetermined by society to fail. My mother was a single mom with no education who really didn't care if we were educated, and with no foundation for success we were doomed to become a product of her cycle. I was determined to exceed the expectation of society and break that cycle.

In the late 1980s, crack cocaine became the poison that plagued society, mostly the ghettos. This drug became an escape for most people from the struggle of oppression, and my mother fell victim to this escape— which made living in poverty a step up from my reality. There no food in the refrigerator at times, there were few clothes and those were shared, there was a lot of abuse, and the care for education was non-existent. I lived through the social violence that plagued poor black people in the United States. In my "Racial Capitalism" class this semester, I read a piece by David Stein, "This Nation Has Never Dealt with the Question of a Peacetime Economy": Coretta Scott King and the Struggle for a Nonviolent Economy in the 1970s." Stein talks about Coretta Scott King's ideas of social violence. King believed that social violence, such as suppression of culture, poor education, and contempt for poverty, slowed the progression of black prosperity.

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Do You Feel Real? / YASSMIN DEHESH

I got up every morning, and even if I missed the bus, I would run all the way to school. So even though my appearance was low in comparison to my peers, I created a formula that made up the difference through my personality and intelligence. My mother moved us around a lot, and that formula kept me socially accepted. I went to three different elementary schools, and more than once I returned to the same elementary school. I also went to three different middle and high schools. All this happened while I was bouncing around from family member to family member. Through all this, I still graduated high school and went off to college, and from there served in the Army, and then into the work force.

Throughout my fight there came a point when I gave up, and I have my reasons; if I were asked, I would share them. Something happened in my life that broke me, and I gave up trying to overcome that stigma set by society. I started making bad decisions, which led to my incarceration.

I share this summary of my life, so I can share my ideals of the essence of one's self. Essence of one's self means what makes you who you are. Most of us spend our entire lives trying to figure out who we are. Sometimes we think we know, then something happens that changes our perspective on ourselves and the world. I believe that life is set up in phases that are forever shifting through time as the self evolves. Through phases of life our perspective and perception of ourselves and the world is always changing, from our childhood, to adolescence, then adulthood. These are the main phases, but within the passages of time there could be multiple phases within the main three. I've been through many phases in my life. I am finally at the point where I understand who I am. Because of that I can adapt to my changes from this phase to the next.

When going on this mental journey, I was able to understand the essence of myself through these phases. You are not the same person you were three years ago, and as time goes on you will not be the same person you are at this moment. I believe we are the essence of our past self, always renewed. I believe this is because it is human nature to continue to learn and evolve, which brings forth new ideas on how we see things, which causes us to adapt and change ourselves and interact in the world. The influences that others have on us, and how we influence others also effect changes, no matter how big or small. This is a form of evolution in one's self. For example, something that used to elude you now has your focus; the way you process information has changed; the way you understood the world has morphed into a direction for how you will survive in it. Understanding my own essence has helped me identify who I am at this point in my life. It has not been easy coming to this point because I only wanted to identify with the good in myself, but to truly get to this point in my life I had also to identify with the bad and the ugly. Once I accepted those truths, I felt a wholeness, and I was able to forgive, reshape, and refocus who I am.

My goal in this phase of my life has linked up with a younger part of my essence. This link has reshaped and refocused my motivation, drive, and determination for education with life experiences, which will pave the road to success. I believe it is by understanding the essence of one's self through the phases of our lives, and accepting those truths of the good, bad, and the ugly, that a person will become whole, and truly understand who they are. So, I ask, how does one keep on fighting against the odds? How does one overcome the barriers set by society to the pursuit for happiness, to achieving the American dream? To me, it is understanding the essence of one's self! ^{GR}



Disease / YASSMIN DEHESH

The C*nsorship (e) of B*tchcraft (i)

HANNAH JAVENS

Trazodone sleep in early morning
 Collapsed in a bathtub's water w*ll
 Clutching a lover's prescribed warning
 In the entrance of an underground h*ll
 (e) (a)

Muffled screams of spells gone wrong
 Naked idols forgetting what they w*re
 On the altar of rosemary and torch song
 To a no-name, nobody knows wh*re
 (o) (e)

A portal on which the dead knock
 Hiding before the window sh*t
 Salt brushed from the iron lock
 Sharp keys pushed into the sl*t
 (u) (o)

Another swallow of pain's sweetened cider
 Strength unable to be found and m*stered
 The curse in the mirror splitting wider
 Cameras flying overhead like a b*stard
 (a) (u)

Candles brushed with burning life
 A comforting army now m*ssed
 Sacrificial skin under pearlesque knife
 Ritualistic stroke of a love that's p*ssed
 (i) (a)

Bathwater broken by a hand dyed in rust
 Reaching towards money stacked for the r*nt
 That I pay in exchange for angel dust
 And copper bullets worth ninety-nine c*nts
 (u) (e)

Lit sage fooling the senses into living
 Cigarettes mix and my love makes me s*ck
 For favours carved on the gun forgiving
 Knew not to panic before I down this d*ck
 (i) (u)

Aimed at the pentacle on my forehead
 Made an offering in the cauldron's p*t
 Prayed I would be guided by the dead
 And go unblamed for this sh*t
 (i) (o)

But if I miss the mark
 And they can't burn the witch
 Throw this body a spark
 And hope you got the bitch
 (i) (i)

Ode to the Man Who Owns the Flower Shop on the Corner of Anchorena and French

TALIA RESNICK

To the man who owns the flower shop on the corner of Anchorena and French, I do not know your name. I will tell you what I do know. To the man who stands outside of his flower shop on the corner of Anchorena and French, old and never without his zip-up cardigan, he stands outside his flower shop starting at dusk with the early bustle of human traffic and remains until the first star emerges in the dusty, pale blue sky that nears deep navy. The man is not fully there. Yes, he is fully there, but after having walked past him at least 227 times, and observing his interactions, he is a man who, I suspect, is not fully there. Perhaps that is why he prefers to spend his time standing still on the corner, surrounded by his arrangements of flowers, ferns, and cacti. Some tower over him, while other small pots surround his worn leather loafers. He stands at that corner, the man who owns the flower shop, so consistently that one may actually mistake him for a still stalk of one of his more impressive flowers.

To the man who owns the flower shop on the corner of Anchorena and French, you've maybe never seen me even though I see you two, three, four times a day. If you have seen me, however, you've seen it all. The rushed strides, sweat covered forehead and glistening chin. You've seen the slower-paced stomping at night—a pace that isn't defeated, just a bit lost. You might've seen a giddy step or two, walking away from Avenida Santa Fe, eager for late-night plans. You also might have seen a pace so uneven, so unsure, that you might've felt the slightest bit of concern. But you probably didn't feel concerned, because you don't seem fully there, and that is something I cannot help but appreciate.

To the man who owns the flower shop on the corner of Anchorena and French, you never once have failed to smile at me these past four months. I've seen you two or three times inside of the flower shop rather than outside on the corner nodding to all those who pass, most of whom blatantly neglect your very existence. Those times you have been inside, I saw you pulling out flowers to arrange into bouquets. I saw the way you held each individual stalk, and gently wrapped and tied them together, handling the petals as if any movement that was more sudden than average could cause the flowers to disintegrate into dust that would evaporate before hitting the ground. I saw you with the flowers, alone and ignored and in bliss.


To the old man who owns the flower shop on the corner of Anchorena and French, the flower shop across the street from Granja, the bright red butchery: although I see you so often, I must admit you are not constantly on my mind. You are replaced by recollections of drunken nights where the number of bottles of Malbec consumed is unknown. You're replaced in my consciousness instead by regret when I find myself recalling the money spent on one too many cans of Quilmes, drunken stumbles on the classically uneven sidewalks of Buenos Aires, or the time I left early because my social limit was hit and I still stayed awake at home that night feeling lonely and guilty. Your smile, always stretched across your face when I nod to you, does not stay imprinted in my brain. Instead, live music in parks with friends on sun-soaked days, the smell of freshly-baked *medialunas* from Costumbres, the surprisingly brisk air that makes my hair stand on end, the sounds of cackling and clinking, and the never-ending hum of tango coming from bars while the *boliches* bounce with beats - those are what stay imprinted in my mind. Yet you, the old man who owns the flower shop are far more consistent than any of those things. And still, you evade my memory first.

TV Dinner / FERNANDA E AMIS



To the man who owns the flower shop on the corner of Anchorena and French, I pass you and your flower shop so frequently, yet I couldn't even tell you the name of your flower shop. I could tell you the name of the person who keeps me up at night; I could list to you all of my favorite bars in each neighborhood in Buenos Aires, where to find the cheapest empanadas. I could sing to you an entire song in Spanish that I've discovered only recently, and I could present to you an entire argument as to why Berni is my favorite artist. And yet, I could not, look you in the eyes and tell you the name of your own flower shop.

To the man who owns the flower shop at the corner of Anchorena and French, I ache for the peace you seem to have. You are another flower in the garden you've planted within the concrete surrounding the shop. I don't know your name. But I see you. I see you standing there every day, blissfully, with the sun reflecting your balding head.

To the man who owns the flower shop at the corner of Anchorena and French, I may forget many things about the last four months I have spent in Buenos Aires, but I won't forget to remember you. 

What attachment is

ELIETTE CHANEZON

54

Attachment is a lightbulb hanging from the
ceiling
a safety hazard
but how soft it makes a room





What Used to be a Monument / BAYAN ABUKIWAN



In the Death Throes of Renewal: Un-learning Sexism

MYCHAL PAGAN

The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous.

— Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

I was a sexist, and for a while I have hesitated to write about it. I was ashamed of the truth, afraid of uncovering the reality of my deepest condition--as if it wasn't a glaring flaw, visible to even the dullest eyes. As a matter of fact, I never understood what it meant to be a sexist. To my disappointment, Webster's definition of it felt superficial. I always find myself cringing at that word: superficial. It calls attention to how tethered I feel to the surface of things, how much I am suffering in its darkness. The dictionary would have me believe sexism is merely discrimination against women. Another word that makes me red with shame whenever I, unconsciously, use it to think about femininity: *woman*. It feels like another superficial construct that fails to grasp the essence of what a person is. Another word that makes me feel *tethered*.

The loneliness of a prison cell didn't help to improve my attitude towards *feminas*, which is how I now prefer to think about them. For I remember the long nights of tossing and turning on my wretched paper-thin mattress, in a fit of nocturnal aches, the throes of sexual frustration. Truth be told, pornography provided a poor relief, because it only strengthened the bondage of sexism. It only heightened the sense of disconnection that afflicted my inner life. It only reinforced my perception of feminine sexuality as a symbol. When I realized the symbolism inherent in my sexist imagination, I became sensitive to the imbalances it was creating in me, and the spiritual disharmony that followed. I had to undo how I saw femininity, had to expand and deepen my perception of it. And, in this way, reclaim a part of myself that had been lost.

THE SYMBOL

There was a girl named Shakia. We went to middle school in Wyandanch, New York together. She was a lovely girl with fair skin, sensuous lips. To the leering, shallow eyes of the schoolboys, her ripe physical attributes were an invitation for their groping hands. I often witnessed Shakia's sexual abuse. To hear the boys tell it, she relished the experience of being fondled. What is worse is that seeing how giddy the boys were after feeling a girl's breast, I ignored how this affected Shakia. How narrow my perspective was at that foolish age! To my shame, I even started daydreaming about how sweet it must feel; I wanted to make a move myself, but never had the courage to go beyond the creepy stare. After years of internally living this way, I became conditioned to view the earth's *feminas*' in an erotic context. To my emerging perverted masculine imagination, women were the source of pleasure, they were objects of my sexual desire; beyond that, they were nothing. Since I associated women with pleasure, the physicality of their femininity became the symbol of it; their worth was measured in accordance to the capacity to give pleasure. This reduced femininity, in my view, to flesh and blood, as if it was nothing more. In this way, my sexist mentality took shape.

Patriarchy, sneakily, shaped this attitude. Within the fabric of male-dominated societies, philosophy, religion, politics are all built on sexist ideals. Essentially, through religion, we're taught that pleasure is evil, that the things of the flesh are sinful. Since I am a creature of the flesh, fundamentally driven by the pleasures of the flesh, I should fear and subdue it and in turn, dominate what gives me pleasure. For the flesh has the capacity to control who I am, to influence how I think and the choices I make, and the power to determine my eternal fate. The cardinal virtues--prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice--were a protest against the flesh. For this reason, all objects of pleasure, the things of the flesh, ought to be *beneath* me, under my control. I suppose this points to the source of what chauvinists call female inferiority: the story of the fatal seduction of Adam justifies the bondage of Eve.

I can't help but feel suspicious toward anything patriarchal, or anything conceived purely in the masculine imagination, because it feels deeply one dimensional and stiflingly shallow. Its way of seeing is always, at some level, deifying masculinity (Father God, Moses, Abraham) and carnalizing femininity (Mary Magdalene, Eve). The word "woman," in a patriarchal society, is actually a bondage term that incarcerates femininity in its physical nature. This concept of carnalized femininity in my sexist thinking was one of the links to this symbol that was shaping my internal portrait of who *feminas* was: she wasn't the Divine Lady of Creation, but the whore of a man's passion. Alas, as without, so within.

THE FLAW


Shakia and I was born into a world, a system of meaning, that was conceived in and shaped by the masculine imagination. How can we not be afflicted with the imbalance that prevails here? She yoked to her physicality; me tethered to mine. As faulty and incomplete as a man's thinking is when it's one sided, so is the world he creates. So are the people that inhabit his carceral creation. Is there not a relationship between patriarchy and mass inequality? Or patriarchy and sexism? Or patriarchy and mass incarceration? In truth, whenever I desire to know what's in the heart of any man, religion, family, or nation, I have but to look at their attitude towards *feminas*; this will always betray them. In a world designed by men, Shakia was doomed to be perceived in terms of her sexuality. My growing perception of her as a source of pleasure--even though I never tried to grope her, I didn't stop it from happening--was a projection of how I was learning to see the world, how I was learning to see myself. Herein lies the root of my deepest flaw, my spiritual imbalance, I was imagining *women* to be a thing to be liked and desired rather than a *feminas* to co-create worlds with, divinities to be known and revered.

THE CHRYSALIS

Coming to prison is equal to dying. It's similar to what happens to a worm when it goes into a chrysalis to renew itself, to reshape itself after a higher pattern. It's a process that has to be anything but sweet. The worm goes into utter darkness, seemingly isolated from nature, undergoing a physical evolution; it's unlearning how to live as a worm, a creature of the earth, and learning how to be a creature of the open sky. Unlearning sexism is similar to figuring out how to free oneself from the filth of a lower nature. Sexism, a disease inherited by men, the worms of the earth, is built into the structure of this decadent system, patriarchy. Where did the schoolboys learn to see Shakia as a source of pleasure?

Though I am in an abysmal darkness, I'm still vulnerable to images of sexism. Thank the patriarchs for pornography, brothels, and strip clubs, for these are integral to their creation. It's in the music, the magazines and books, the movies, even in the everyday, casual chatter of inmates. A poor *femina* can't make appearance without eliciting a symphony of salacious comments from shallow men. Sadly, it's even in the psyche of modern day *feminas*, who imagine that a gorgeous body or pretty face can compensate for the emptiness in the heart. Is this not the real issue of sexism, and its founding father, patriarchy? It enslaves us to this one dimensionality, this shallow truth of materiality to the exclusion of deeper, fuller spiritual realities.

Society will never be a sustainably balanced world of mass equality until it reaches a symbiotic state; I will never achieve anything meaningful until my psyche reaches a symbiotic state. According to Virginia Woolf, this is the only way. And this will only happen when the perceptions of femininity are revised and deepened and expanded. As long as *she* is seen as a thing, a product to be consumed, a means of gratification, and therefore inferior, and not as a partner and co-creator, equally responsible for building a better world we all can participate in, there will be no end to mass inequality or mass poverty or mass incarceration. The problem isn't just what is happening in our society, but the structure of the society itself.

Unlearning sexism is about recognizing that when the human *femina* is reduce to nothing, I am reduced to nothing. Her limitations are my limitations; her fulfillment is my fulfillment. The incident with the schoolboys and Shakia was but the mirror of my own internal devolution. A part of me was abused by shallow ideas, which tethered me to one dimensionality. I've always felt a death inside me, in my heart, in the interior sound of my voice, the weight of it silencing me. Now, I am engaged in the work of breathing life into her, reclaiming her, because if I don't save her, she will not save me; if she is not free, I will never be free. 

i am happy

JARED SKORO

i am happy i truly truly am when i lay back on my bed and dream sweet dreams i am happy when the orange sun struggles against the dark sky i am happy when the white moon slices a hole in the night for its light to shine sun rises moon falls the cycle loops and i am happy

from my window i see the sun and moon casting light into my special cave my room with its mattress in the corner and gray walls and beige carpet and clothes on the floor the shadows ever shifting it is silent it is quiet sometimes i hear noises from the walls but not all the time still some days i feel as if the window is leaking that the rain is drip-dripping through the window drop-dropping onto the floor spit-spitting me as it falls or maybe it is the ceiling or the walls or the jonky pipes that cluck through the walls spitting at me

did i mention that i'm happy of course i have for what is there to not be happy about i have all that i need i have wants but wants are just wants wanting more is to be unhappy and since i am happy there is no need to want more i have all that i need

what i need i found when i walked through the streets one day it was cold the wind wisped harshly there were others walking poofy jackets beanies scarves around their necks entombed in wool i could see their eyes and i would look into them and they would look back for a moment before darting off in the other way every pair of eyes did so no one could hold a stare and i was i am happy

that is why i stay in my room it is much warmer sometimes light comes in the day when there are no clouds when locks of rain don't fall down slip peeling off my window to the ground below i wondered why there's been so much rain lately so i asked a woman why the sky's so rainy but she told me to fuck off so i am left with more questions about the sky and why it rains but to ask is to want and to want is to be unhappy and i am happy so i don't ask about the sky

it is best not to want voices voices are mean voices will call to you dripping orange honey and voices will cut you red with a knife voices harm and to want voices is harm so do not ask for voices ask for food on the street rattle a cup say not a word and they won't say a word to you hear the clink of the coin as it hits the cup and be grateful for what you have for what you have is enough and enough is enough and do it so often and you will be happy and happiness is everything

happiness i found tossed by the wind today a blotted yellowed crinkled thing abandoned by whoever last had it i picked it up and i was so happy for now it had hands to be held in and it was alone no longer i flipped through it and it had many things to say it said take care of yourself and follow your dreams and find people you want to be around with and such things as that but the words didn't stick to me as it said happy things but not my happy things so i threw it away

i go back to my room i always go back to my room the sky is cloudy and the rain is falling and i am staring out the window at the drip-dripping rain as it splats on the ground and the jonky pipes in the walls bubble and i can't help myself but cry cry cry so many tears like the clouds ripping out their locks of hair tossing them down down to us oh god why am i unhappy was unhappy i am happy.

i am happy.

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FERNANDA AMIS studies “Narrative” - an amalgam of film, English, writing, sociology, philosophy, and psychology. Her rationale focuses on art mediums in the modern age, touching on comedy vs. tragedy and irony vs. sincerity within those mediums. Her art contemplates these themes as well.

HANNAH BENHAMO is concentrating in “Materialism and Consumerist Constructions of the Self in Literature,” mixing the study of aesthetics, creative writing, cultural studies, and comparative literature.

KATHERINE BOVENZI is a senior at Gallatin studying grotesque art and literature. Her investigations of the cast-off take special interest in the writings of Julia Kristeva, Georges Bataille, and Marquis de Sade.

EMMA CALLAHAN is third year at NYU Gallatin and recent transfer. She is a performer, writer and video artist, has had plays read in festivals in the city and in 2015 won the title of Studio360/BJ Novak’s Funniest High School Comedy Writer. Her concentration focuses around narrative and postcolonial histories.

EMILY CARPENTER is a junior in Gallatin and loves telling people that she made up her major. Her concentration is titled “Human Narrative and Society” and involves study in theatre, education and writing. She is President of Lamplighters NYU, a non-profit theatre for young audiences club on campus, regularly enjoys pasta, and hopes to one day get paid to do anything that isn’t super boring. She is tired of writing cover letters.

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ELIETTE CLAIRE LEILA CHANEZON will graduate from Gallatin in May 2020 with a concentration in “The human experience through medicine and poetry,” exploring the ways in which medical science and poetry can inform one another. After graduation she intends to go to medical school in hopes of becoming an obstetrician.

LISA COOLEY is concentrating on the intersections between art therapy and social justice, examining the ways that the illusion of meritocracy shapes not just wider society but the individual. She has exhibited paintings in the Gallatin Arts Festival for the past 3 years and is excited about dabbling more into poetry as a form of artistic expression and healing.

EWURAKUA DAWSON-AMOAH will graduate in May with concentrations in film and sound studies. She plans to use her passion for film to promote representation of people of color in the media industry.

YASSMIN DEHESH is concentrating in economic policy and poverty alleviation. Although this is her first time being published, she hopes to pursue visual arts further in the future.

MAXINE FLASHER-DUNZGUNES’ poetry has been published in *Literary Yard*, *Red Cedar Review*, and *October Hill Magazine*. She is an editorial writer for *Inbtwn. Magazine* and a creative writing editor for *Washington Square News Under the Arch*. Her first novella, “through Eileen,” will be published in May 2020.

HANNAH JAVENS is currently concentrating in “Negative Experience,” exploring the behavioral patterns behind that which we call “terrible.” Through a combination of literature, art history, neuropsychology, contemporary media studies and archival work, Hannah works to understand the emergence of “monsters” in creative representation.

BAYAN KIWAN’S concentration at Gallatin is currently in gender and film in the Middle East. Her practice is interdisciplinary in process, with several media informing and negotiating the final form.

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SHAE LIFSON will graduate from Gallatin in May 2020 with a concentration in “Systems of Exploitation” which focuses on the roles of capitalism and imperialism in shaping the modern world and producing anthropogenic climate change. Shae serves as an editorial board member of *Compass*, the Gallatin student research journal, and will be attending law school in the fall. In their free time, Shae engages in various creative pursuits such as writing, playing the guitar, and updating their five-year plan.

VERONICA LIOW (she/they) is a senior building their concentration in the “Ethics of Multimedia Storytelling.” Liow is an interdisciplinary artist whose work incorporates multiple forms of media, more often than not with a focus on photography. Through using interactive and multimedia storytelling to engage with different communities, they are able to account for language barriers, accessibility issues for the differently-abled, and cultural differences.

SHANTI ESCALANTE-DE MATTEI is concentrating in anthropology, environmental humanities, and writing. Her writing can be found in *Interview Magazine* and *Embodied*. She is graduating May 2020.

BRIANNA MCLARTY is currently a sophomore who will graduate in 2022. While she has not named her concentration, she is focusing on how macroeconomic trends affect production within the arts. Brianna was previously published in her high school’s literary magazine and is excited to continue that tradition at Gallatin.

SYDNEY MIEDE is a junior concentrating in storytelling and performance art, exploring the study of theater, creative writing, and history to discuss how our minds, bodies, and spirits tell stories! Sydney is currently studying at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, and was involved in Gallatin’s Mainstage play this fall.

OMAR PADILLA is a 38-year-old Puerto Rican. He is a published poet and writer. He would like to become a grassroots activist so he can fight against the oppression, injustices, and discrimination that plague marginalized communities. He is currently taking courses on the Washington Square campus and working towards his Bachelor’s degree.

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MYCHAL PAGAN is an emerging poet and essayist, currently obtaining an AA in liberal studies from NYU. He takes great pleasure in designing collages from discarded newspapers and magazines.

YUWEI PAN is an MA student at NYU Gallatin studying “Speculative Design and Social Change,” working in many different mediums, including installation, performance and socially engaged art. Humor and social commentary are important elements in her work.

TYLER M. PURCHAS is a 26-year-old aspiring writer. He was born in Oswego, New York, and raised in surrounding areas of his home county. He enjoys being outdoors, writing poetry, writing songs, and living in the moment. There is no past or future, just now.

TALIA RESNICK is concentrating on human and environmental rights in Gallatin and hopes to graduate in the Spring of 2021. She is excited to take classes at Exeter College at Oxford University this summer to pursue her interest in international law. In her free time, you can find Talia taking naps in Washington Square Park and spying on dogs in the dog parks.

JARED SKORO is a freshman trying to wrangle his interests in political science, English, psychology, creative writing, and philosophy into one concentration as well as get his life together. He’ll get there as we all have, hopefully...

ANNIKA VON GREY is at Gallatin studying political ecology and minoring in psychoanalysis. Annika is interested in the intersections of ecology, psychology, and human movement. By studying narratives of ecological relation, displacement, and reciprocity, she hopes to better understand and aid efforts to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis on vulnerable peoples.

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