

JAH'CHINA DE LEON

ELEVEN AND A HALF





# ELEVEN AND A HALF

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## **FROM THE EDITORS**

There was pressure to be hilarious or impressive or dazzling when writing this letter to you, reader. It's too bad we won't be doing that here. Instead, that will be done by the talented and honest writers and artists who have been compiled into the magazine to make Volume 9 of Eleven and a Half. At its core, this issue is a rumination on how literary communities and practices reshape themselves over time, in reflecting on present politic, conflicts, and trends. Our hope is that this body of work will continue to evolve and reveal itself in new and differing ways.

**Feel free to read cover to cover, flip through, or  
cool off by using this booklet as a pretentious fan.**



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# CONTENTS

NON- FICTION FEATURES	<b>Annotated Musical Scores</b>	
	26	4 Odin Scherer
	72	Accretion Odin Scherer
	90	My Religious Experience So Far Sebastian Alexander
	62	A Remembrance of Toni Morrison
	110	Interview With Anna Dunn
	148	Ask an Archetypal Lang Student
	Literary Pick Up Lines	
FICTION	13 <b>The First of May</b> Carmen Major	
	31	<b>China Boy</b> Darren Sung
	38	<b>I am Nadia</b> Katherine Marciak
	74	<b>American Love</b> Alana Saab
	138	<b>I Wish I Could Love Like My Kid Self</b> Alice Makwaia
	143	<b>We all Fall Down</b> Chelsea Carney
	21 <b>Dangerous Intersections</b> Edgie Amisial	
	34	<b>The Island's Bravest</b> Isabela Cordero
	49	<b>Immigrant Ingenuity</b> Jane Dangel
	91	<b>The Bear on the Top Shelf</b> Chelsea Carney
	98	<b>Granny</b> Lucy Bent
	127	<b>Her Own Wild Animal</b> Eva Silverman
	172 <b>Contributor Bios</b>	
	181 <b>Acknowledgments</b>	

- 10** **Ode to Rodeo Clown** Emily Hirschtick  
**12** **Prickly Smiles** Emma Dowhie  
**24** **"What Happen, Did You See a Mouse?" & Sad BabyBlue Girl** Sae Feurtado  
**28** **Our Triad** Giancarlo Castro Salas  
**33** **Steady Steady** Madison Major  
**47** **Silicone Disfig**  
*urment Strips* Lauren Kate Hurlocker  
**58** **Poetry** Ozra Yazdani  
**61** **Calabash** Odin Scherer  
**71** **Silk Worms Look Grey in the Moonlight Sometimes** Grace Adamczyk  
**89** **/bə'kəmīNG/** Genevieve Raftery

- 96** **R con R** Hannah Nishat Botero  
**108** **to decide i wish to dig and then to begin digging** Daniel Tahoun  
**116** **DIY Mysticism** Katherine Iwagami  
**124** **For, The Shangri-Las** Isabella Kazanecki  
**141** **Millennium Baby** Vanessa Genao  
**142** **House of Sharks** KG Newman  
**153** **Before Dawn** Daryn Coates  
**156** **Couplets 11-14 and 82-47**  
 Rebecca Resinski and David Koehn  
**161** **Flatbush Avenue to Peckham's Rye Lane**  
 Simone Allen

- 9** **Between Time** Maya Eapen  
**20** **Don't Go** Diana Victoreen  
**23** **A Waltz in 2/4 Time, Which Isn't a Waltz at All (in Fact)** Grace Adamczyk  
**29** **Untitled** Snow Xuecan Ye  
**30** **Destruction and Operation** Jinghan Hu  
**46** **Shade of Our Broken Bones** Ryan Webb  
**48** **Mythologist and Mythologies** Ting-En Tsai  
**59** **Me No Dijo un Pajarito**  
 Hannah Nishat-Botero  
**60** **Breathless** Elif Geçyatan  
**70** **Influence of Creation** Celeste Hutchings  
**87** **Picking Flowers** Stacie Carlo  
**88** **Photograph #1** Mike Naideau

- 97** **The Double** Hannah Nishat-Botero  
**106** **Black Spine #1** Oliver Mashburn  
**125** **Tell Me What a Home Is**  
 Hannah Nishat-Botero  
**137** **Prosopometamorphopsis** Lili Price  
**139** **Spaced Out** Santo Jacobsson  
**142** **Installation – Modern** Yuco Li  
**152** **Crossing of the Sea** Maria Carla Genovesi  
**154** **Woman Sitting Again & Woman Sitting Once More** Grace Adamczyk  
**158** **Let the People Sk8** Diana Victoreen  
**160** **Inside** Maria Carla Genovesi  
**171** **Thank You** Diana Victoreen





*Between Time*  
Maya Eapen

## Ode to Rodeo Clown

Emily Hirschtick

Oh *bow wow*

Be still my hog-wild heart

You ain't nothin but a

Lost sock

yellin at a ham on rye

Time & time again

It's an alarm clock that just keeps beeping  
Unearth unearth unearth unearth....

It's a spit-take at a high slit

Don't sweat the small stuff

You got a real hot temper for a know-nothing hunk

It's the concrete jazz of worms on the sidewalk after it rains  
Squirming like it's their job

You can call me thumbprint jones cause i'm one of a kind

He's a real one trick pony with a racehorse mind

A too-tall dude with a bad attitude

A tough cookie with a real green thumb

Puttin' on a puss face

Break my heart kid you're nothing to me  
But the gum on my keds, the skin of my teeth

He's a slugger with a sense of pride  
A real sucker for natural light  
But i'm a hometown hero with a knack for line drives  
And i know a thing or two about  
Hittin' somethin out of the park

You know you're no speed racer with your kicks untied  
Smooth moves mr. autotune  
My dream come true  
Will You Be My Valentine ?  
Where'd you learn to shmooze like that  
I huff and puff oh  
I do this for sport

## Prickly Smiles

Emma Dowhie

we'd stay in the sea for days on end  
until tiny hands were all pruned  
covered in sun spots  
as if we'd been fisher men out in the sun  
our entire lives.  
we had.

our tan cheeks chalked with little pale crow's feet that met  
our eyes and exploded out of them like half fireworks  
we were perpetually smiling  
so the sun stained us that way.

sometimes I would come home from one friend's house only  
to be met with another  
dangling from  
the big yellow tire that hung from the tallest tree in my backyard  
I'd call up the friend that  
just left  
"come back"  
and we'd lay on our stomachs  
in the prickly grass  
or pick grapefruits from our tree  
and complain about how sour they were.  
we would watch each other do backflips  
on the trampoline  
and crown the winner for who could do the most without  
touching the ground.  
once Paloma did 4 that  
was a big day for all of us.  
there have been no bigger days since

## **The First of May**

Carmen Major

The ocean moves me on her chest, a steady in and out rhythm I match to my breath. I float on my back and let the current carry me. The sky feels close to my face, like there is no space between the water and the heavy clouds that hang above it. I hear my mother call my name, but it's muffled by the water around my ears and the shushhhh of crashing waves between us. I don't move, willing the current to take me further out to sea, or under, any way that isn't near her.

It's May in Cape Cod, and the water is cold, and so is the air. On the first of May when I was five or maybe six, back in the days when the world had more color to it, my mother and I drove to the ocean with the intention of walking down the shore and collecting striped wishing rocks for an art piece she was in the process of creating. The sun was warm on our bodies as we walked. Soon we had stripped down and crashed through the white surf to swim in the ocean. And then it became a ritual, jumping into the sea, our own celebration of the coming spring, or a chance to feel alive through the shock of the cold water and the smell of the salt after a winter spent

in stagnant hibernation. We swam on warm Mays, on rainy Mays, and even once on a snow covered May. Colds ensued more often than not, but even the colds became a part of the ritual; we ate lemon rice soup and drank ginger tea huddled on pillows and wrapped in blankets in front of the wood stove.

This morning I woke to a heavy grey sky and the smell of baking scones sticking to damp air, and knew the day would be difficult. My mother only baked if she had slipped into her sadness, or a buyer fell through for a painting, or if she needed to apologize to me, or if she felt I needed to apologize to her. I rolled around in my sheets until my legs became too tangled and I could almost feel the tension rising from the kitchen like heat.

I looked out my window at the tree just outside as its branches bent back and forth in the wind of what looked like an oncoming storm. I picked up one of the stones resting among the shells and sea glass in a small basket on my bedside table. The rock was smooth and dark, a thin white line running around its middle. I wished for rain. Water does something to me, places me back into a body I feel distant from in moments. Rain, ocean, streams, and rivers- any form of water settles me, rids me of anxiety that builds within my bones, helps me feel whole and present enough to exist in the same space as my mother.

Summer rain is my favorite, when the air is warm and sticky and the cool rain is a welcome relief. Once when I was small, I sat on our window seat, watching the rain. My mother sat beside me. The window was open, and we listened to the sound the rain made on the wooden window sill, letting the spray from hard droplets mist our faces. After some time sitting like that together, she stood up and ran to the door. In one graceful movement she pulled her dress over her head and left it lying on the floor.

I remember her body, thin and bony. She opened the door and flew out into the rain, flinging her arms around, spinning with her face to the sky.

"Come, Gracie! Come dance in the rain!" she said, spinning and spinning and spinning.

I followed her, stamping my feet in deep puddles, letting the mud splash my legs. My mother swayed back and forth, wet hair sticking to her forehead, hands above her head as if grasping for something unseen far above her.

It didn't begin raining immediately after I made the wish. Maybe it was time I stopped believing in wishing rocks. When I reached the kitchen, the table was set with the rose plates we discovered on one of our garage sale hunts, and the scones lay next to the special blackberry jam, the French kind we can only find at Gregory's Gourmet two towns over. The scones were oddly shaped, some burnt and others barely baked. Mom poured coffee into two large mugs. I watched her face, attempting to gauge the reason for the scones, hoping to prepare myself for whatever reaction was to come.

Her eyes and nose were tinged red, the skin around them puffy and swollen, and her hair hadn't been brushed. It hung around her face in tangled chunks, sticking to her cheeks where they were wet. As I watched, she let a tear slide down her skin, making no move to wipe it off.

"Good morning, Gracie," she said.

"Good morning, mum," I replied.

"I hope your sleep was magical. Did you dream?" she asked, setting coffee in front of me.

I hadn't remembered my dreams since I'd left for college, since my mornings ceased to begin with this question. According to her, if you don't intentionally remember

dreams, they slip away with the sun, and we miss out on the musings and processing of our subconscious. I never thought much of it. For as long as I can remember my mother began our mornings with this question. And then in college, when the question never came, there were no more dreams.

"Nope, no dreams last night," I answered. I didn't ask about the tears, or the puffy face, or the red eyes, letting her share when she wanted to, knowing it would come inevitably. I had learned that it was easier to let her go through these moments in the way she wanted, that interrupting them only made it worse.

"Scones look good," I said, sipping my coffee slowly.

She sat down and picked up a burnt scone, spreading jam in chunks along its blackened edges. In the hard light of the grey morning I could see lines spreading around her eyes and creeping across her forehead. They hadn't been there last time I saw her, I was sure. Three months wasn't enough for lines that deep to appear, but maybe I hadn't looked at her like this, watched her the way I was now, in a long time.

She took a breath in, opened her mouth, and closed it again. I put down the scone I was eating.

"Well, I didn't dream either, which is rare for me, you know. I didn't dream because I was up all night." She paused and looked at me.

"Oh no, why couldn't you sleep?" I said calmly, knowing she was waiting for me to ask.

"It's just- lately I haven't been able to paint, and I keep forgetting to eat, and I've felt this big empty hole in my chest."

"Oh, mum..."

"And then you came back, Gracie, my little muse, and my fingertips have begun itching to paint again, and I felt the hole in my chest fill right up as soon as I saw you come off the train, and I woke up craving scones." She reached across the table and

cupped my chin in her hand.

"And I couldn't fall asleep knowing you would leave me again." She broke off and took a deep shaking breath.

Guilt scraped at my insides, hollowing out my stomach and making the taste of sweet scone bitter on my tongue. But as I sat there, waiting for her to continue, knowing she was looking for comfort, or some sort of apology, the guilt bubbled into a sour anger that drove itself up my esophagus until I bit my tongue. I couldn't let it out. I didn't want our short time to be painted with anger and sadness, didn't want to leave her unable to get out of bed again, unable to eat, or paint. And so I bit the anger off before it could come out, shifting my voice to a kind neutral tone I used when speaking to children.

"It's only been three months. And I had midterms and finals. And play practice- ."

"Don't you want to see me?"

"Oh, mum, of course I want to see you." The guilt began to scrape at my insides again, so loudly now I could almost hear it echoing in the air between us.

I got up from the table and wrapped my arms around her. I had missed her. I always missed her. I missed the way my mornings began with questions about dreams rather than an angry alarm clock and a loud roommate, I missed having every one of my favourite foods in the fridge without me asking for it, I missed finding notes with her half-finished poems and sketches on my mirror, in my backpack, in my purse, in my pocket; I missed our estate sale hunts and our banana pancake Sundays.

Part of staying away at school so long was my veiled attempt at separating, pulling myself away from her, beginning the severing that I knew was inevitable, that I knew was impossible for her to grasp. And so I chose school as the opportunity, an excuse I believed even she had to understand somewhere deep among her drifting thoughts.

I tried to let her sadness wash over me and away, willing it to not enter. I sighed and squeezed her more tightly.

"Well, I'm here for a bit, so let's make the most of it," I said, hoping she had grown enough in the time I had been away that this conversation would end here, hoping the little time I had with her would not be fighting off guilt, hoping my happiness wouldn't have to be an act in order to keep her mood high. She leaned her head against me.

"Why don't you just stay for the whole week, Gracie? Skip school! Play hooky like we used to?" she asked. I pulled away.

"I'm going to put on my swimsuit," I said, and walked toward the stairs, refusing to engage in the fight I felt coming, hoping to extinguish her spiral in its early stages. I'd learned over the years that the only way to stop these spirals was to stop engaging with her, my own anger or anxiety simply fueling the manic energy, pushing her to do and say things I wish I could forget as easily as she does.

"Gracie?

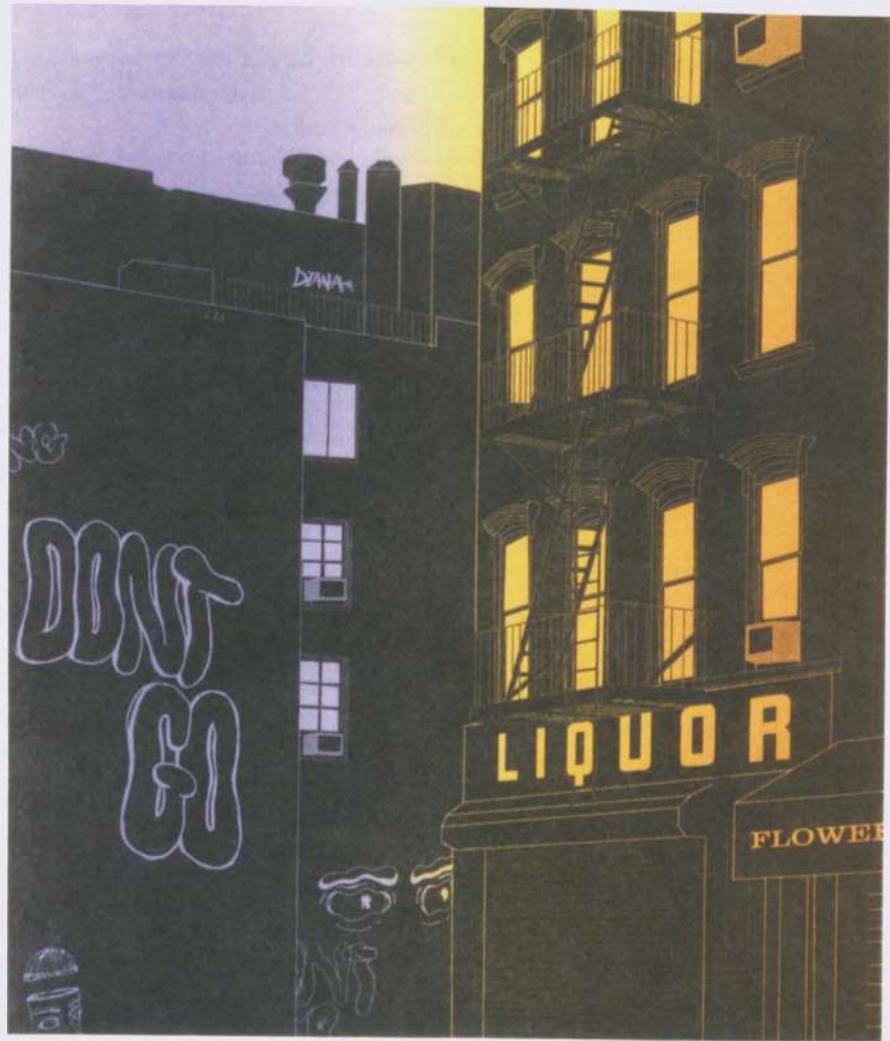
I didn't answer, and she stopped calling my name.

I know there's nothing I can do now, nothing to make this separation any easier, and so I take it slowly, letting her love wash over me when I'm home, soaking up the comfort to store in my body for when I leave again, holding on to all the good I can gather within my memory, and letting the bad slip away with my anxieties on a strong current, far out to sea.

I hold my breath and flip below the surface of the water, opening my eyes to let the pale green light filter into them, to let in the sting of salt, familiar and comforting. I push myself through the water, feeling the temperature change as I dip further and

further below the sun warmed surface. When I come up for air, I can see her sitting at the edge of the water, knees pulled up to her chest, hair tumbling across her face in the wind. She looks small on the wide stretch of empty beach.

My legs reach the point of numbness where I worry if I can stand, and my fingertips have wrinkled to prunes. I sink back into the water one last time, feeling it pull at my hair as I come back up, plastering it out of my eyes and onto my skull. My mother stands up and brings the towel she's been sitting on and wraps me in it with a hug, rubbing my shoulders in an attempt to generate some warmth. A slight wind drifts the smell of decaying seaweed over us, but I bury my nose in my mother's hair, and let the sickly sweet smell of amber paste curl into my nostrils.



*Don't Go*  
Diana Victoreen

## Dangerous Intersections

Edgie Amisial

Intersection 1: Your friends are listening to 80's Hip-Hop and Chuck D—an iconic rapper they grew up listening to. You have no idea who they're talking about, because you grew up listening to Haitian Kompa and French ballads. Your friends tell you that you aren't black enough, despite your brown skin, despite your kinky hair, despite your heritage, because every black person in America should know about African-American cultural icons. They joke about you being an oreo, black on the outside, white on the inside, because they fail to see the similarities between your culture and theirs. You begin to wonder if your blackness will ever be as valid as theirs.

Intersection 2: You're walking down the Raritan Road, in suburban New Jersey, in the summer, in shorts and a tank top, because it's far too hot for long sleeves and layers. A man follows you, comments on your curves, and asks for your number. You turn him down, and he touches you anyway. When you get home, your parents tell you no man would ever respect you in clothes like that. You realize that you're being taught to view your own body as your enemy.

Intersection 3: You overhear a group of teenagers laughing at a woman with a thick accent who can't quite speak English, and you remember your grandmother, and the way her tongue moves so gracefully when she speaks French and Creole. You remember that she was a writing teacher, back home, and it pains you to think that the new world she has migrated to will never know how eloquently she can put words together.

Intersection 4: Your family is at the dinner table, having a passionate conversation about the state of the world today. They speak of war, they speak of hunger, they speak of violence, they speak of death, and in the same breath, they speak of the gay men and women whom they believe are a sign of the end of times. They blurt out hateful slurs and laugh at them, unaware that they are laughing at you, too.

Intersection 5: You experience all of the previous scenarios in one day. By the end of it, you are too tired to speak. You are no longer sure how to stand up for yourself, how to find your identity and your voice within the world, when so many parts of you are being pulled apart. You fall asleep realizing that every day, from the moment you open your eyes to the moment you close them, you are fighting multiple battles at once.



*A Waltz in 2/4 Time, Which Isn't a Waltz at All (in Fact)*

Grace Adamczyk

## **"What Happen, Did You See a Mouse?" & Sad BabyBlue Girl**

Two Poems by Sae Feurtado

injured in early Saturday  
according to Toulouse Street  
Preliminary, woman and man  
    injured both were  
    where they were, occurred  
    in the preliminary from each other  
    someone from one and the other  
Two people retaliated," according to preliminary fire

Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl  
Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl  
Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl

Poor baby/toddler growth & development of oral health in low-income minority children: the ABCD study

Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl

Poor infrastructure: garblym i'r golygau a llawn ynddiol o'r sefydliad yng Nghymru wrth i'r dudalen hawl y lloedd hysbysgarf.

Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl  
existence is too much to bear, so you scream in agony whenever reminded of your mortality

Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday

Poor babyblue girl to man a Muthersay if you want to take her I want her to be dead like a flower blue girl

Poor butthole girls in much Abutassalayoff's own butthole girl when our old butthole girl existence is too much to bare, so you scream in agony whenever reminded of your mortality.

Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl  
existence is too much to bear, so you scream in agony whenever reminded of your mortality

Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl  
Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl

Poor healthy girl in much & Malaria/salivary/orchitis/child/girl William von Wieden's day: poor healthy girl in much & Malaria/salivary/orchitis/child/girl William von Wieden's day: poor healthy girl in much & Malaria/salivary/orchitis/child/girl William von Wieden's day: poor healthy girl in much & Malaria/salivary/orchitis/child/girl William von Wieden's day:

Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl

Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl

Poor baby blues jerk from much a *National polydactyl* *sooty* *ringo* *girl* *bene* *vor* *a* *blonde* *skate* *show* *booby* *blue* *girl*

Poor baby blue girl is such a Washout y'd scratch yhuh or girl have a Washout like that but these girls existence is too much to bare, so you scream in agony whenever reminded of your mortality.

Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl born on a Wednesday Poor baby blue girl  
existence is too much to bare, so you scream in agony whenever reminded of your mortality  
existence is too much to bare, so you scream in agony whenever reminded of your mortality

existence is too much to bear, so you scream in agony whenever reminded of your mortality.

existence is too much to bare, so you scream in agony whenever reminded of your mortality.

existence is too much to bear, so you scream in agony whenever reminded of your mortality.

Odin Scherer



let's write and give  
back what this (or some other)

(or) wind with improvisation

String quartet

at least 3 systems score -  
indicate who does what where  
detailed notation

come up  
with a title (first part)

(best = strict  
or very  
exact)  
10/28/19

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open rhythmic improvisation (low density, low volume)

(no right material)

9 is introduced - start in the drums? (mentioning the joint)  
what are the written material at 2? keeping rhythms but improving pitches?

go with, then bring in 2 (repeat this section, develop material, etc.)

2nd part: some short notes, then some variation line to lead into next part

break one section into a full thing, here it's 4 movements of

a piece. Registration things, the treble clef change mostly with less complex (unusual) rhythms,  
the pitch set with the octave jumps, and the two Webber rectangles with  
longer

① Develop first 4 bars score, write Accomp. and bass part, maybe don't use the 2nd  
4 bars, longer purchase with form? might not cut into form?, interesting material??

② write ending to go back to the bright please?) Develop the material much more,  
figure out the vocal write Accomp. + Bassline, interesting material??

③ Long Webber term and a wish note? improvisation with pitch set that leads to floated  
Webber material over a substrate floating bassline (some note in drums)

④ Create a rhythmic focus, irrational meters, odd signature in 5-8,  
think about Anna Webber Rectangles 3 - make rectangles 1? or 5 or 3

# Our Triad

Giancarlo Castro Salas

*Jazz  
It speaks  
Laughs  
And dreams!*

You and me  
nothing else  
but prisms

Refracting

Reflecting

Decomposing

Remembering

Repeating  
Working through

Let the sax  
unfold its devilish hive of passions  
fundamentally imaginary  
masking the real tunes  
of this soirée nocturne:

Percussion of the present  
A reminder of time

Bass of memory

An illusion articulated as reality

And the piano

your keys

Pure oblivion brought from the future

It just takes a triad,  
my love,

to portray  
our unavoidable fate

Just a mere ode  
to the hidden sax

below your tongue



***Untitled***  
Snow Xuecan Ye



*Destruction and Operation*

Jinghan Hu

## **China Boy** *Inspired by Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl"*

Darren Sung

Wash the rice before you cook it, and always check with your index finger that you put the right amount of water; if you don't finish the rice, freeze it and use it for fried rice tomorrow; don't make loud noises in public even if you're lost; soak apple slices in saltwater if you won't eat them right away; don't be picky with your food; always fold your blanket when you get up; don't smoke cigarettes like your father; always sit upright in your chair and not like the slob you are so bent on becoming; is it true that you cheated on your test?; always chew with your mouth closed, but make sure to slurp when you're drinking soup; never steal, and always give back what you borrowed the next day if you forgot; cook pear with crystal sugar if you have a cold; cook tremella with crystal sugar if it is just a cough; never cheat on a test, even if you get a lower score; never speak English in the Asian flea market; never speak Chinese in American supermarkets; *but I never chew with my mouth open and I always get As;* always help others when you can, or others won't help you when they can; this is how to talk to elders; this is how you can sit at the dinner table; this is how you will sit at

family gatherings; this is how you must sit at business meetings; this is how you light a cigarette for your uncle – far from the dinner table, because cigarette smoke gives you cancer; this is how you drink scotch without feeling the burn; this is how you take a shot and smile for another; this is how you take back a lie, because only honest people make a good living; this is how you set the table in tribute to your ancestors; this is how you ride a bike, and when you fall, try, try again; this is how you greet your aunts and uncles; this is how to behave in the presence of your father's friends; this is what to say when you are asked about your grades and aspirations; this is how you laugh at a casual event; this is how you laugh at a serious event; this is how you suppress your feelings when you feel hurt – you are a boy, you know, and boys don't cry – if you must cry, always do so alone, in your room, or alone, in the rain; this is how to talk to a girl you love; this is how to surprise her on her birthday; this is how to take her to the mall; this is how to make her feel loved; this is how you have an argument with her; this is what to do when you catch her sleeping with your friend; this is how to talk to a girl you don't love anymore; don't wear your shoes in the house, always wear slippers; don't sit on your bed or my bed or anyone's bed before you change your clothes; be sure to shower every day before you sleep; this is how to make lazy man's rice; this is how to put on a condom, and this is what you do when the condom breaks; this is how to help someone getting bullied; this is how to fight back when you are bullied; this is how to debate; this is how to do the math in your head without giving yourself away; this is what you should do to plan ahead; this is how to make real friends; this is how to give up, and know when to give up, and how to not get caught up in it; this is how to trust, and be trusted; this is how to scream when you're stressed or frustrated; this is how to belong, or how not to belong; this is how to be class president, valedictorian, and eventually CEO; always seek the support of your closest friends; *but what if they don't want to support me?*; you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of man that can't move up in the world?

# **Steady, Steady**

Madison Major

It's a mountain top

phone tower And a tent Peekskill of my tongue The cavities from sugar Two growing  
in too late A house A kitchen island Sculptures and figurines cased inside and  
outside a pool is framed in a wooden deck Acrobatics Putting on the breaks To  
clean To punch holes through The number system Hitting buttons on the high rise  
A valve and boats And factories Almost dusk

So the light is still very bright Light bright on concrete

Moving me Preferring the triangles in the river waves wildly

Two colors deeper A picnic bathroom A cartwheel a cookout Hold the door

Warning

Tight on my neck held a piece of bandanna Making me feel a way

Away Some sort of clarity A gun shaped cloud fucks a mountain Peak

Bang bang bang

Antonyms for fuck : abstain

Feeling grateful What is the world reflecting, though

Too many leaves Making stairs up the wood

Using each other The ones at the top racking up the heat Light, but smog

And the ones at the bottom the breeze and the dust it's direct

If we stack up a bunch of rocks behind metal containers and we don't do it  
deliberately not one by one if we make piles and not clay piles not ceramics it won't  
hold because it's electricity it's power

## **The Island's Bravest**

Isabela Cordero

We matched on... well I don't know exactly but it's been over two months now. Sixty-something days. Every day is something new. Some pictures of him coked up with his boys or getting beaten up while high off xans. He misses the taste of coke. He told me that a few days ago. Or at least it feels that way. It could've been a few weeks. My heart flutters a bit when I see his name pop up on my screen and that feels majorly fucked up considering we haven't even met in person yet. Yeah, we haven't met in person yet. And it's been that long. I know it looks like I'm wasting my time; it looks that way to me too. But I still give him my time. I put up with Snapchats when he's drunk and pissing or when he calls me names that are just a screwed up version of a pet name. I started writing poems about him, probably cause I'm not sure how to deal with my

feelings for him. I like him for all the things that make him different than the other men I talk to. Yet, some of those reasons are also why I shouldn't like him so much. I wrote this poem about him because he confuses me. He's pretty straightforward, puts it all out there for me to see. So why does it confuse me so much?

You have a really skewed idea of what it means to be a man

You say you're a man

Cause you talk about babies

And marriage

You say stuff like *what kind of guy do I look like*

Your head hurts in the morning but that ain't a hangover, that's withdrawal after a couple hours without a drink goin' down your throat

I guess it pisses you off when I speak up a bit cause I say the words sexist and double standard and you run off for hours and for what?

I've gotta wonder if the name-calling is cute or if it's just you drunk off your head

And if I wanna fuck around with a guy who's got a cup to his lips at every hour

I think it's perplexing, to say the least. I'm smitten with a man I've never met. Or at least, not in person. It's not like other dating app interactions though, although even phrasing it that way feels as if I'm trying to justify it all. We've heard each other's voices. Talked about so many things. But that in-person contact... that just feels like something different, something that's missing. He says all the right things – soon, next week, the dreaded "I wanna see you", although that one only slipped out once. I think over when to ask him again because I don't wanna sound desperate – I don't want to be the one to have to bring it up. But he sets himself up for me asking. We've agreed I will until we meet or he gets annoyed. For a man who says he has no patience, he certainly has a lot for me. He answers every dumb question I ask him. Puts up with my

drunken messages when I got so drunk I threw up in a bathroom stall at Webster hall and my friend had to take my phone away and Uber me home. I went on about how I thought he was hot and he put up with it all saying “drink water sexy” and saying I was the hot one.

Sometimes I need a dictionary to speak to him.

I may also need blinders or something so I can forget some of what he says. My friends say he's interesting, he's a character, and finding something new about him is like a caricature or mad libs. Sometimes I stop a conversation and just ask, cause what the hell does some of it mean. And other times I just raise an eyebrow and cough out a laugh to myself, scrolling through urban dictionary or remembering this amazing movie, Staten Island Summer and all the slang used in it. What's really wild is how he thinks I'm making up sayings like calling a kettle black or when I tried to explain a throwaway lit studies term... I wonder if he needs a dictionary for me sometimes. I almost hope so.

I wrote down the words he uses and tried to define them:

**mink** – a synonym for mint or sick. Means very nice.

**banged outa** – called out/ not going in - like, he “banged outa” work one week

**tight** – To describe someone who is annoyed. Or in a sexual context, referring to a female's anatomy.

**skell / skel** – A criminal, hoodlum, homeless person, a bottom-feeder, freeloader, drug addict, cheat. Previously used by the NYPD; short for skeleton, to describe drug addicts who lost weight.

**shot** – When someone is mentally burnt out. Shot(s) as in alcohol. When you physically do not feel well.

**clown** – A fool.

**cone (head)** – A stupid or silly person. (There are a few sexual definitions, but they were never explicitly used.)

**turkey** – A person who talks back, is snappy, bitchy, or opinionated. A person who is secretly a spazz, who maintains a cool appearance but is really cringy, goofy, or stupid. A great girl, who is smart, caring, and funny.

**goose** – A cute, silly girl. A term of endearment for a friend who is acting silly.

**scheeve** – A term for someone or something utterly disgusting.

**burnt** – Someone dumb, “fucked out”. Someone who smokes too much pot and gets too high.

**mad** – Synonym for ‘very’.

**brick** – Dumb.

**moe** – His synonym for “bro”–although when I looked it up, something else came up...

I was asked what our relationship was the other day - like if I had to define whatever this is. I stumbled over my words, slightly confused as to what to say. And then I said, “we’re talking to each other.” I felt a little nervous saying it aloud, like it wasn’t really the right thing to say exactly, but also that there was nothing else that could fit whatever we have.

If it weren’t for how we haven’t met, or his screwed up past that spills into the present, I would almost think it was all too good.

# **I am Nadia** *A one act play based on the novel Exit West, by Mohsin Hamid*

Katherine Marciniak

## Cast List

Nadia: wears a black robe that covers everything except her eyes, ageless

Young Saeed: Late 20s

Older Saeed: 40s

## Act 1

### Scene 1

*A dark stage lights up to reveal two sets. These sets seem to be removed, floating in islands of light on a dark stage, with no attachment to a specific place, culture, or history.*

*Under a spotlight on stage right, there is a cafeteria table with plastic stools attached to it. Sitting on a stool is a nervous YOUNG SAEED. He puts two sugar packets in his paper cup and mixes recklessly, wiping up the coffee dribble with a gum wrapper from his pocket. Across the table from him is another coffee cup.*

*On stage left, lit up by a second spotlight, there is outdoor restaurant seating: a small table with an umbrella through it, a plastic, checkered tablecloth, and two plastic chairs. There is a bottle of honey and an ashtray. There are two coffees on the table in ceramic cups. OLDER SAEED is sitting, drinking his.*

*Third spotlight: NADIA. Center stage, but closer to the audience. She is in her own island of light. She wears a black robe that covers her whole body. We only see her eyes.*

NADIA: I am Nadia. My name is Nadia because my mother chose it for me. Sometimes we don't get to choose things. Most things are chosen for us.

The violence was chosen for me. The bombs blasting behind my building. The guns going off for good morning, good afternoon, and goodnight. I did not have a choice in when it would kill, who it would kill, which neighborhood would be gone by Thursday. Violence is the worst neighbor you'll ever have. I was living with violence, cleaning up after it when it beheaded the family upstairs.

I am Nadia and I don't know where my mother is anymore. I don't know where the woman who chose my name is. When I walked by her house the first time it was deserted. When I walked by her house the second time it was gone.

I left my family before they left me. I left my mother, my father, and my sister. I wish

I could say that they left, but they didn't do any of the leaving. I first started leaving during prayers, telling them that my head or my back or my ankles or another part of me hurt. Sometimes I would create the hurt, put my fingers in the door frame and my robe in my mouth. The leaving became longer—first at prayer, then I was gone for dinner, then I was gone for all dinners, then I left to see a house, then I stayed in that house and payed its rent. This time it was me who chose. And this choice made me leave the person who made the first choice for me. Who chose my name. My name is Nadia.

Now I am the one who makes choices. Has to. I met Saeed when I was already used to choosing. I had already chosen a small apartment with a terrace, and sometimes, on nights when the forecast was light gunfire, I would choose to take my mattress and sleep outside. I had already picked out a tomato tree from the market, and when it sprouted its first lemons, I chose to keep it anyway. Before I met him, I had already learned how to make great lemon curry. Before I met him, I already knew my entire vinyl collection of Diana Ross by heart. Before I met Saeed, I was already Nadia.

(*Looks at YOUNG SAEED, drinking coffee alone*) I want him to know all the things that haven't happened yet. I imagine it would be like catching a bird in your hands—he would resist at first. Scared of being crushed. But I don't want to hurt him. We could both be calm. I want him to know things so that he will won't be crushed by them when they happen to him. When his mother is killed. When he has to leave his father. When he has to migrate from country, to country, to country. When we begin to hate each other. When he has to start living on other people's property because he's too poor and illegal to have his own. When we kick the other's bruised body in bed. When his father dies. When we break up.

I can tell him that, you know. I'm a migrant through time more than anything else.

*NADIA leaves her spotlight and walks over to the cafeteria table where YOUNG SAEED is sitting. YOUNG SAEED stands up and smiles.*

NADIA: I am Nadia.

SAEED: Hi I'm Saeed.

*They sit down across from each other.*

SAEED: I got you coffee.

NADIA: Thank you.

SAEED: It was an interesting class right?

NADIA: Right.

SAEED: About product branding. I love product branding.

NADIA: Yeah.

SAEED: I mean of course I love product branding. Otherwise it wouldn't make sense. To take the course. Is that why you take the course? Because you love it too?

NADIA: Yeah.

SAEED: Yeah.

*A silence. And not a comfortable one. Saeed rubs his hands on his pants to get rid of the sweat.*

NADIA: (Carefully) Saeed. Your mother will die.

SAEED: (Doesn't seem to be able to hear her) Do you drink your coffee with sugar?

NADIA: She will lose her earring.

SAEED: (Still doesn't hear what she's saying, like he can't access this information yet) I always take two sugars.

NADIA: She will look for her earring.

SAEED: That's a lot of sugar right? For a small coffee?

NADIA: She will go into the family car to look for her earring.

SAEED: I'm trying to substitute white sugar with honey.

NADIA: She'll look under the seats.

SAEED: It's healthier that way.

NADIA: When she sits up, a quarter of her skull will be chipped off.

SAEED: I heard brown sugar is also healthy.

NADIA: Some stray gunfire will have hit her.

SAEED: But I think honey is healthier than brown sugar.

NADIA: I'll move in with you and your father after your mother dies.

SAEED: What do you think?

NADIA: I'll move in because you won't be okay.

SAEED: I'm sorry. I talk a lot.

NADIA: I'll catch you crying into a towel in the bathroom.

*YOUNG SAEED freezes. NADIA, still sitting on her stool, turns to face the audience.*

NADIA: The curse of the narrator. The playwright. The director. Even the costume designer who knows to dress Saeed's mother in black in Act 1 and then bathes her in blood in Act 2. I have the curse. The curse of knowing but not telling.

*NADIA pulls out a book from under her robe. A copy of Exit West. She flips to a dog eared page.*

And as character Nadia, I dutifully say my following lines.

*YOUNG SAEED unfreezes.*

SAEED: Are you religious?

*NADIA reads from the book. She is obvious about it, holding the book up instead of hiding it under the table. She reads but acts her lines. With engaging attitude.*

NADIA: What?

SAEED: You're wearing a robe.

NADIA: That doesn't mean I'm religious.

SAEED: Oh? If you don't pray, why do you wear it?

NADIA: (*smiles, takes a sip of coffee, still reading*) So men don't fuck with me.

*Lights Out.*

### Scene 2

*NADIA is back in her own spotlight. The two sets, one with YOUNG SAEED and the other with OLDER SAEED light up. YOUNG SAEED looks just as nervous as he did at the beginning of Act 1, as if NADIA still hasn't come to his table. OLDER SAEED looks relaxed, taking in coffee, his breaths making imprints in the cold air.*

NADIA: Someone needs to ask me why I do this. Ask me why I'm with Saeed if I know we are not going to be together. And not because one of us dies brutally. Ha! We fall apart on our own. We don't need wars for that.

I'm a sucker for Saeed. A sucker for people like him. I tell them their mother, their father, their sister, their brother, their uncle, their aunt, their cousin, their relative, their friend died. I am death without the scythe. I am strong for the people who are not. For the people who crumple like sheets when you release the clothespins holding them together. Holding them unwrinkled. We all wrinkle through time.

And when I am not strong they are there for me. But I don't like to talk about that. Sometimes I shouldn't feel so that they have all the space they need to feel. And to heal from feeling. I shouldn't take that space away.

I stayed with Saeed for as long as we could. If I wasn't with him, he would have been killed at a checkpoint. And if he wasn't with me, I would have exploded in my apartment. So, with all the doors available, I chose the best one.

*NADIA leaves her spotlight, walks to OLDER SAEED. OLDER SAEED wears sunglasses, black mittens, and a beige coat. He takes off the sunglasses and stands up when NADIA enters the lighted set.*

NADIA: I am Nadia.

SAEED: Of course I recognize you Nadia!

NADIA: Sit, Saeed, please.

*They sit.*

SAEED: I ordered you coffee with honey. I remember you like it that way.

NADIA: Thank you.

SAEED: This café is by your old apartment, isn't it?

NADIA: Good memory.

SAEED: Remember when I had to wear your spare black robe to get into your apartment?

NADIA: Because I told my landlady that I was a widow like her? How could I forget.

SAEED: I think you just wanted to see me dressed as a woman, didn't you?

NADIA: *(Laughs)* I think that was my agenda all along!

SAEED: I missed you Nadia.

NADIA: Imagine if you didn't miss me. Imagine if I had agreed to marry you!

SAEED: How different everything would have been. Imagine if we had sex!

NADIA: We did have sex!

SAEED: *(Considers, smiles)* Oh! Indeed we did. How could I forget.

NADIA: Younger Saeed didn't forget things so easily.

SAEED: Yes, I suppose I was my best self in my youth.

NADIA: You're not that bad now.

SAEED: *(Laughs)* "Not that bad?" What are we, evaluating coffee?

*Nadia laughs. They pause to drink coffee at the same time.*

NADIA: Did you go to Chile?

SAEED: What?

NADIA: I remember you saying you wanted to.

SAEED: I actually did. I would love to take you sometime Nadia. If you ever have a free evening. It's a sight worth seeing in this life.

NADIA: (*Closes her eyes*) I would like that very much.

*NADIA faces the audience. Opens her eyes. OLDER SAEED freezes.*

NADIA: We'll see Chile together Saeed. That's another thing I know before you'll know. And when it happens, it'll feel like bird catching. I'm sure.

*Lights out except for center stage spotlight. Empty spotlight.*





*Shade of our Broken Bones*  
Ryan Webb

# **silicone disfig urment strips**

Lauren Kate Hurlocker

on blue wall  
I seep / look inside slowly  
rub fingers over  
ornate edges / grip with thumb  
lacquered reflection

when you sleep = I am watching even when  
I am watching = you sleep

squint left eye / line of sight  
lick the corner of your nose

— look inside quickly  
avert  
scrutinize

cheeks = trampolines  
sprinkle the center  
cherry pie

hair = reckless  
— insensible strands stitch  
fabric sweater

ask for things:  
want of  
symmetry = mirror mirror  
fail to  
let me lie

sip disguise  
dysmorphic tunnels



**Mythologist and Mythologies**  
Ting-En Tsai

## **Immigrant Ingenuity** *Beating Westerners at Their Own Game*

Jane Dangel

It is late August, also known as mid-summer, peak summer, turn your seatbelt into a branding iron stage of summer, in the north of the Sonoran Desert. The heat slithers in through the cracks in the flimsy walls of the plywood houses of Guadalupe, Arizona—all lined up in rows along the street, helpless to the relentless firing squad of 115 degrees. Inside one baby pink house on the corner, windowless and cramped: Lorena, a five-foot-tall woman with beady brown eyes stands sweating in a smoke-filled kitchen, her waist-length hair swaying along with her swift chopping motions. Finally, holding out a plate of carnitas fresh off the plancha—“¿Quieres?”, she asks a lanky girl sitting on a couch in the corner, trying a little too hard to seem at ease as a layer of sweat consumes her. “¡Que Rico!”—suddenly the plywood home seems not so dismal, as little gems of fried meat light up her face.

This house, and the many others like it that line the dusty streets of South Phoenix, make up the brilliantly fabricated communities of Central American immigrants that have come to define a certain counterculture—one that originates out of a cultural bereavement, a lack of resources. And this bereavement is not subtle, but can be seen in everything from plywood walls, to swap meets, to racist police forces, to the cracks and trembles in Lorena's voice when she describes her aging husband, still unable to retire from janitorial work. But it is this bereavement that gives birth to so much of immigrant culture—it is the very reason for the brilliance of front yard tamale shops, self-taught mechanics, or 2 am gatherings on the stairwells of the public housing buildings (the only time one can comfortably be outdoors in summer). Haitian-American novelist Edwidge Danticat writes about the incredible creative ability of immigrants in her essay *All Immigrants Are Artists*: "I realize now that I saw artistic qualities in my parents' choices—in their creativity, their steadfastness, the very fact that we were in this country from another place." As Danticat observes, art, or creation from nothing, is necessarily inherent in all immigrant cultures.

This mode of cultural production arguably lies in contrast to mainstream western American culture, which is born out of the distortion and appropriation of existing cultures and resources. This is evident in everything from the pace at which we consume and throw away products, to rampant cultural appropriation, and can be traced all the way back to the physical foundations of American buildings, built on the backs of slave laborers. Ironically, however, it is this fundamentally unoriginal culture that is often asserted as the basis or default of culture itself, acting as a supposed savior to immigrants from foreign cultures, and subsequently indebting them to eternal gratefulness to Western civilization. Iranian American author Dina Nayeri writes about this very dilemma upon her arrival to the U.S. in her essay *The Ungrateful Refugee*: "We sensed the ongoing expectation that we would shed our old skin, give up our

former identities—every quirk and desire that made us us—and that we would imply at every opportunity that America was better, that we were so lucky, so humbled to be here". This power dynamic, between a dominating Western American culture, and suppressed immigrant cultures from every pocket of the world, is one that continues to keep many trapped in its throws. Just as Nayeri writes, many immigrants struggle to pin down the true nature of their identity as it is trapped in a perpetual push and pull between an obligation or desire to honor their roots, and the demands of their new life in a Western culture.

The same dilemma often afflicts the children of immigrants, who exist in a liminal space between two fundamentally opposite cultures. In contrast to the merciless, racially motivated bullying she received in her early childhood, Nayeri began to accept and be accepted by Western culture in her later youth. She writes, "I started to love the Western world and thought of myself as a necessary part of it," even mentioning her staple 90's caramel highlights. Nayeri's identity takes a critical turn when she later becomes aware of the nature of her acceptance into American culture, and it's hinging on her subordination and conformity. While the refugee must strive to contribute to Western culture in ways that Western culture sees fit (so as to be a "healthy return on investment"), the refugee also, "has to be less capable than the native, needier; he must stay in his place." So, the immigrant must strive to be like and to please the holders of Western culture, and yet not surpass these holders with their achievements, which would serve to invalidate the entire system of subordinating immigrants. Nayeri's experience brings an essential question to light: why should the immigrant identity be forced to express itself within the constraints of Western rules? Likewise, can these rules be reclaimed by immigrants themselves as a framework for expression that surpasses that of the holders of Western culture, thus beating Western culture at its own game?

Dominican artist Tony Capellan explores this very question in his 2015 installation at the Perez Art Museum in Miami, Mar Caribe. The work is made of hundreds of blue and green flip flops, laid out overlapping one another on the floor. At first glance, the work is aesthetically pleasing, even calming, to the Western eye, the scattered blue and green patches coming together to mimic the movement and color of a tropical ocean on the perfect all-inclusive resort getaway. However, when one looks closer, the flip flops appear old and worn, and their straps have been replaced with barbed wire. The shoes are in fact used flip flops that have washed up on the river banks of the Dominican Republic, found by Capellan over the course of his decades-long artistic career. The wire and heavy wear on the shoes call attention to the fact that, underneath the shining blue sea and lavish resorts, the struggles of daily Dominican life persist, exacerbated by the establishments of residual colonialism, and perhaps exacerbated by you, likely white American gallery-goer.

Just as Capellan explores his own Dominican identity within the context of an oppressive Western culture, language can serve as another source of identity crisis for immigrants. Of course, we've all heard the phrase, "you're in America, speak English," a blunt statement that has become a kind of catchphrase for the far-right preservationists of, "real American culture." It is woven into the fabric of so many American establishments, that pseudo-languages like Spanglish or African American Vernacular English are widely viewed as unprofessional and emblematic of a lower intelligence. However, the myth of America as an Anglophone promised land founded on the backs of European ingenuity is dispellable with one glance at any credible history book. In language scholar Werner Sollors' book entitled *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature*, he cites the many languages at play during the formation of the U.S.: "There are many, many American texts that were written in languages ranging from indigenous Amerindian tongues and

from Spanish, French, Dutch, German and Russian colonial writings to immigrant literature in all European, many Asian, and some African languages" (Sollors 7).

Perhaps the prime example of non-Anglophone influence in the U.S. can be seen in a pseudo-language born out of the melding of Latinx and American cultures: Spanglish. This dialect, which involves the interchange of Spanish and English words according to certain unwritten rules and structures, stands as its own creation in the sense that it is illegible to those who only speak one of the two languages. Thus, the language unifies a sizeable group of largely second-generation immigrants, whose parents originated in Spanish speaking countries. As is noted by Cornell University linguistics professor Almeida Jacqueline Toribio in her 2004 study entitled *Convergence as an Optimization Strategy in Bilingual Speech*, the strategic convergence of English and Spanish is often utilized when, "a new sign emerges or a new or nuanced meaning is ascribed to an existing sign, motivated by the need to articulate unfamiliar objects, notions, and cultural practices." So, Spanglish is not only a means of maintaining a native cultural connection, but a way of processing the realities of a new Western world on one's own terms; through a linguistic structure ruled not by the language of the West, but one that reforms Western ideas through the lens of native linguistic tendencies. Out of this is born a completely new creation, able to function outside of the traditional, "semantic and discourse-pragmatic constraints," of a monolingual mode of communication. One journal entry for the National Council of Teachers of English entitled, "Reading, Living, and Writing Bilingual Poetry," explores the positive impacts of welcoming both Spanish and English into the American classroom. The entry offers the perspective of Middle School literary studies teacher Melisa Cahnmann, whose classroom is mainly composed of children of Central American immigrants, who speak English as a second language. As Cahnmann began her own endeavors into learning Spanish to be able to connect with her students on a more personal level, she cites how, "seldom

we learn to listen to music in bilingual diction or the creativity of Latino students' sentence structure, or the content of their spoken and written words." More often, this form of code-switching, especially within an academic setting, is highly stigmatized as informal, vulgar, or lazy, and deserving of repercussions. In her process of combating the stigma of Spanglish in the classroom, Cahnmann found poetry to be one of the most conducive mediums to sparking bilingual students' creativity. Poetry provides a sufficiently flexible medium through which multiple languages in their literary and vernacular forms can interplay, resulting in works filled with complexity and nuance that can seldom be achieved by monolinguals. Thus, this form of expression acts as yet another mode through which immigrants can routinely outperform Westerners in their own arena.

These same innovative qualities can be seen in one of the most prevalent and historically significant dialects in the U.S., African American Vernacular English (AAVE). The origin and practice of AAVE is explored by African American scholar Henry Louis Gates in his book, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. Gates recounts how AAVE served as a way in which those forcibly brought to North America from Africa could preserve the basis of their culture within the framework of colonial rule; playing with and editing the English language to reflect African traditions, while still maintaining the subtlety needed to avoid corporal punishment. Gates tells us that a crucial part of West African linguistic tradition involves wordplay—the multiplicity of meaning in a single word or phrase. AAVE, like so many other brilliant forms of immigrant creation, works in and around the constraints of a Western custom to simultaneously conform to and subvert it.

One manifestation of this subversion of Western standards can be seen in the form of a uniquely African American creation: Jazz. Born out of its predecessor, Blues—

which in one light can be seen as a direct musical manifestation of the cultural death experienced by Africans brought to the New World—Jazz is perhaps the ultimate embodiment of foreign distortion of an oppressive white Western framework. Since the scope of American Jazz is immeasurably diverse and cannot be covered in its totality in a precise manner, it is necessary to zoom in to a more specific example. This is clearly present in a few of Louis Armstrong's early lyrics. Armstrong seemingly pays no attention to presupposed notions of grammar and punctuation, creating a sea of commas, quotations, underlines and much more that serve both as visual and aural cues. Just like in his infamous quotable, “And that's one-word even 'you should be rawther familiar with.” Armstrong toys with and adapts the language of the dominant, the colonizer, and claims it by making it his own, thus taking away its power. Ultimately, Armstrong's deconstructing and rearranging of English syntax throughout his lyrics reinforces the long-held African American tradition of distorting established rules to create something completely novel—existing as a solidifying code among the holders of the counterculture.

It is brilliant immigrant creations like these works of music and poetry that are central to Edwidge Danticat's argument in her article, All Immigrants Are Artists. Danticat's reasoning stems from the idea that, “re-creating your entire life is a form of reinvention on par with the greatest works of literature.” The upheaval of life and cultural bereavement that all immigrants must undergo is not necessarily a cultural death, but could also be viewed as a rebirth—and it is in this rebirth, or, creation from nothing, that art exists. Danticat recounts her mother's artistic ability through the dresses she would make for her in her childhood, which were replicas of dresses she saw in the store: “She could have been an extraordinary designer in another place, in another situation—she was an excellent seamstress...we'd go to the cloth shop, buy some fabric, and she'd make me a beautiful replica of the dress.” Here, Danticat's mother uses the

framework of a memento of the West—a store-bought dress, likely made overseas—as a template for her own creation, which in the end, far surpasses the store-bought dress in quality. Even on this small scale, we can see how immigrant ingenuity embellishes and bends the framework of Western culture to surpass it by its own standards. From this anecdote, we can see how the fruits of immigrant resourcefulness can surpass the fruits of the dominating culture, both on a large scale (as is seen in the case of pseudo-languages), and on an inter-familial basis.

The same principle that Danticat explores can be seen in immigrant populated towns across the country, such as one largely Mexican-American and Yaqui Native American community near Phoenix, Arizona. In the midst of the sea of beige box buildings and halogen-lit industrial parks that comprise most of Phoenix, stands a bright and colorful town named after the Virgen herself, Guadalupe. The town sits in seeming defiance directly across the highway from a string of lavish gated communities and golf resorts, holding its ground though the surrounding Western world knocks on its door. Arguably, Guadalupe is an embodiment of all facets of immigrant culture, likely stemming from its creation as a sanctuary town for Yaqui natives seeking refuge from persecution in Mexico in the 1910s. This rough beginning is something that haunts the people of Guadalupe today, 31% of whom live in what could be considered extreme poverty, lacking basic resources such as clean water, sturdy walls, or air conditioning for the scorching summers.

Despite living in a post-colonial system strategically designed to work against them, Guadalupe residents have taught themselves how to thrive on their own terms. The town overflows with immigrant brilliance at every turn, without aid or influence from the outside in both law and spirit. With its own markets, potters, welders, mechanics, cooks, artists, and even police force, Guadalupe represents a unique solidarity among

Central American immigrants, and Yaqui natives, who are effectively treated like immigrants in their own land. This is not to romanticize struggle, however—at times it seems as though the town, in its defiance, has been abandoned and neglected by the far wealthier townships that surround it, perhaps as a consequence for its unapologetic un-Americaness. Nevertheless, the people of this town host the most vibrant swap meets in Arizona, can fix a car with nothing but spare parts, and put on Banda concerts even more lively than those in Mexico. It is clear that the people of Guadalupe do not feel indebted to America, forever looking to live up to Western standards, but know how to preserve their culture within the context of Western culture and despite their chronic economic poverty. Guadalupe always finds a way.

The tension between a dominating Western culture and the vast diaspora of immigrant cultures is one that has come to define many discussions surrounding political and cultural change in the U.S. Moving forward, it seems as though holders of Western culture are left with a choice—to let go of convoluted concepts of white American heritage preservation (and to acknowledge the false nature of this heritage as the basis for modern American culture), or, to continue to cling to these dated notions, becoming openly hostile to anything that might threaten them. This fork in the road is manifested clearly in the increased polarization between liberal and conservative schools of thought, as well as the rise of immigration as an explosively controversial topic—manifestations of this polarization include the entertainment of extreme actions of fear such as closed borders, or the banning of individuals explicitly based on race and religion. If the U.S. is to progress at all in this modern age, it will most certainly be at the hands of the expansive, intercultural knowledge that immigrants continuously bring to the global table.

**Poetry** after Bei Dao's "Notes from the City of the Sun"  
Ozra Yazdani

**POETRY**

a man gets  
punched in  
the gut  
then  
asked  
to go home  
but he just  
can't  
and then  
he  
either  
cries or  
smiles  
you  
pick.

**POETRY**

a woman  
watches  
as  
an  
orange  
gets  
crushed  
beneath  
a  
bicycle spoke  
/the wheels  
of a  
grocery  
cart.





**Breathless**  
Elif Geçyatan

# Calabash

Odin Scherer

Ache  
Concrete

Battered feet shattered  
ice catapulted onto asphalt

Frigid wind permeates  
Through skin  
Through flesh

But I am warm.

Entangled in a vision  
of simplicity.

Hit with sticks / draped with hide  
Strung up / plucked  
the griots regale with songs of old  
Woven into community  
mycelium amongst roots

Setting sun

Rising synthetic stalagmites  
of anonymity  
of apathy

# INTRODUCTION

by Aishamanne Williams, Editor in Chief and Founder of Alchemy Magazine

*"Those who love us never leave us alone with our grief.  
At the moment they show us our wound, they reveal they have the medicine."*

These are Alice Walker's words in her introduction to Zora Neale Hurston's *Barracoon*, a statement that writer Brooke Obie describes as the "Hurston-Walker Test" which she uses to engage with Black art. Legendary black writer, Ms. Toni Morrison, passes this test with grace. The brilliance and otherworldly intuition of her words artfully portrayed the multitude of experiences that come with being black, especially as a woman. Ugliness and pain are natural parts of these experiences, but after exposing these wounds, Ms. Morrison was always there with her medicine that healed generations.

The first Morrison book I ever read, like many other people, was *The Bluest Eye*. I was fifteen and I finished it in two days. I would've read it in one night if not for how dense it felt. The story was gorgeous yet heavy; its weight was something that could not and should not be consumed overnight. Pecola Breedlove's life felt to me like a bad accident that I couldn't look away from—worse yet because it wasn't accidental. Her hatred for herself and the hatred everyone around her felt for her was a result of very real anti-blackness, a global disease that runs deep and, as *The Bluest Eye* illustrates, sometimes has no cure. I was shocked when I finished the book. Shocked that writing could be so potent and alive and hurtful yet warm. It was like an emotional hug, one where both people are crying and there is pain, but their love keeps them in the embrace.

Almost four years after reading *The Bluest Eye*, I still feel embraced by Toni Morrison. I still feel embraced by her work and every story of black women she told. I still feel loved by the fact that she didn't strive to write about "the black experience," as that in itself is an insulting attempt to lump blackness into a monolith and package it for the consumption or understanding of white audiences. As someone who is committed to creating art from a place of alchemy, who honors the way that my ancestors have and continue to create something from nothing just by the magic of their hands, I feel embraced by Toni Morrison's commitment to writing for the people she was speaking to and no one else. I am forever inspired by her words: "I'm going to stay out here on the margin, and let the center look for me." Beyond her masterful prose and cavernous imagination, what makes Ms. Morrison's work so uniquely special is that it wasn't trying to be for us, it simply was. Its merit was not declaring itself as a "FUBU" masterpiece while actually repackaging the surface of blackness in order to evoke empathy from white audiences. Her work did not pander, it simply saw. No other creator has ever made me feel more seen. I am thankful to have been born into a world where Toni Morrison was a writer.

I am thankful to have discovered her stories as a young black girl and have my wounds simultaneously exposed and healed by her. I am thankful to have seen the documentary about her life, *The Pieces I Am*, before she died. It was an honor to gain a deeper understanding of the pieces she was, the community she shared with black people and black women writers, and witness how the greats of our culture put each other's pieces together over and over again. Even more than creating something from nothing, or creating lemonade from lemons, or even creating center at margin—Toni Morrison, an alchemist, created gorgeousness from ugliness and medicine for our wounds.

YOU ARE NOW ENTERING A  
REMEMBRANCE OF



TONI MORRISON

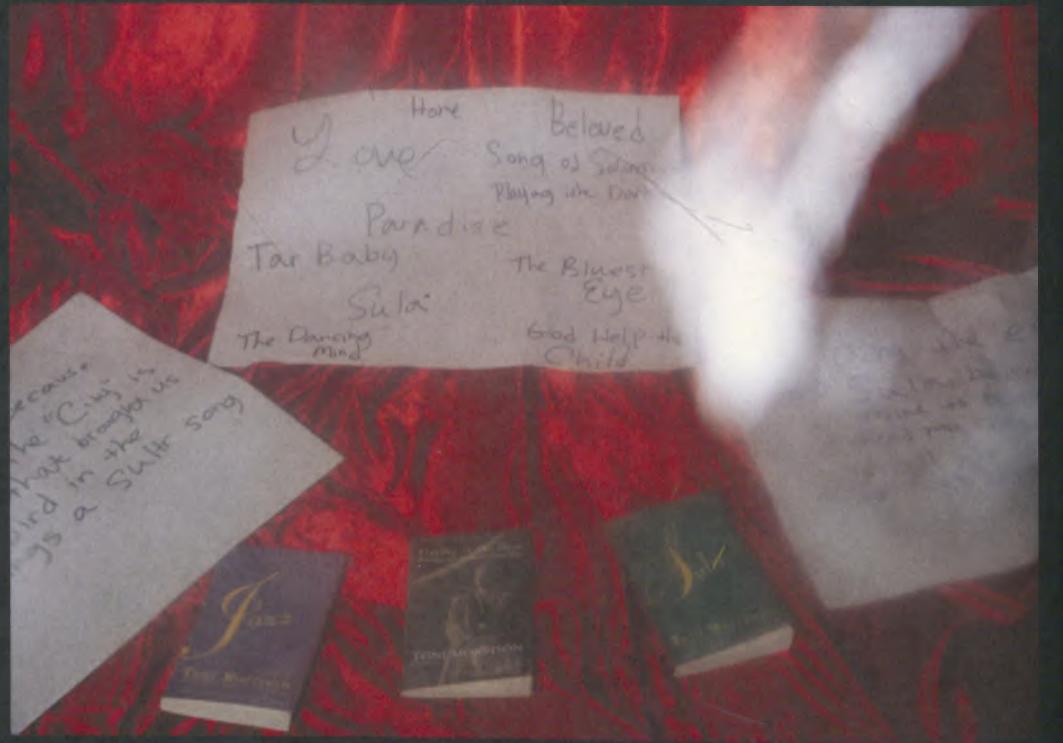
*The Photos before you, are a representation of how Ms. Morrison's language lives on in the young creative warriors of today.*



I am the embodiment of "Sula" because my life is mine to re-imagine. My job, is to extend "my naked hand," so that we all, all my sisters, are constantly re-imaging our lives together in this experimental place called America.



Sethe asked, do I let her live? Or do I save her life? What are my choices when this country wants to see me die? I rise out the water, with my hat on. I will hold Beloved again. Is she my illusion? Let me live.



Turn to page.....Bible study? Warrior Audre Lorde said, "it is better to speak remembering we were never meant to survive."



Ms. Morrison left us a world where we are always reborn. A living document. May we use it to enrich our lives. Listen to what she says about us as much as what she says about the danger.



We live to bear witness. To think. “An artist without her art form is dangerous.” We live because Ms. Morrison gave us the power of language. Her dreams are eternal. We survive because she gave us the language to live. We are her will.

Those eagle eyes are what I will miss the most. Watching. Assessing the world to ensure our legacy, as black women. You are gone, my sweet ancestor. For your love and warrior strength bound us together and protected us from evils. I am scared that you are now not in this world, though comforted that you are protecting us in the next. You did not teach us to wait for someone to save us, to free us. You taught us to free us and not leave our sisters behind. You taught us to challenge the illusions and denials of ourselves we hold so dear. For those illusions will not protect us in the end. You taught us to embrace the scary parts of ourselves: the angry, the vulnerable, the sad, the violent, the beauty, the confused, the humble. You taught us to love ourselves, over and over again. For an army of Womxn who love ourselves is stronger than the violence that tries to tear us apart. The world will not stay silent for much longer. And so I will miss those eagle eyes, staring at the world we face but now, those eyes are staring behind us, pushing us to scream and answer your call.

Oh, how I miss those eagle eyes.

A very special thanks to the young warriors who helped make this project come together:

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*Photography: Yetunde Sapp @yaytuneday*

*Illustrator: Jah'china De Leon @sunny\_mind\_state*

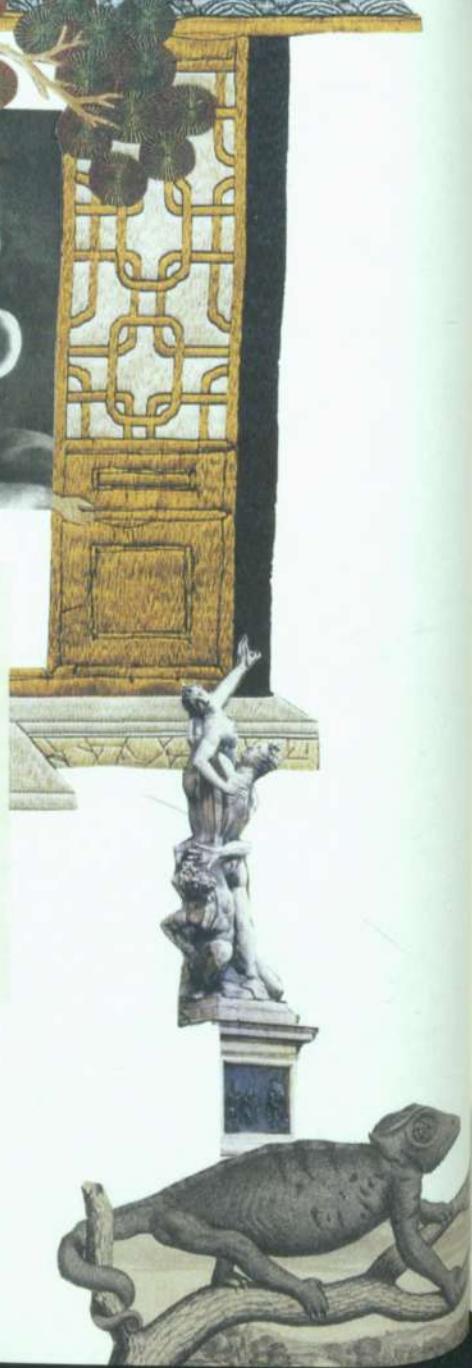
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@niceonegab Isabelle Khoo-Miller @isabelle227 Somaly Tum*

*@somalytum Zaire Nixon-Reid @pixieshawty*

*Outro and text: Daryn Coates @uptown\_princess*



*Influence of Creation*  
Celeste Hutchings



# Silk Worms Look Grey in the Moonlight Sometimes

Grace Adamczyk

listen , the

noises the blinking high beams are blinding - secrets - shoved into pockets now covered with  
lint and washed - a neglected dollar bill and grocery  
list.

please stop whispering behind my back it echoes in here and my shirt isn't on my body  
now it lays on the ground don't touch me there I'm not yet ready why  
can I hear voices through the crack under the door.

Stop it I can't breathe in warm places and my tremors are trembling even louder now loudest  
now can I go home now will you let me be.  
Where are the old lamps when the rooms are pitch black I just need some cough  
syrup and

p o w d e r e d sugar is that right to want something sweet and something to heal and  
something to pretend with.

I can make it stop if I say I love you even though you know its a lie when I say nothing instead  
of yes and no isn't in the dictionary it creates a dilemma for  
me but spares you.

I just want to start a car with no keys and a manicured nail with no dirt but instead  
maybe I should be one to shut my back door and sleep with my  
socks on.

The bathroom sink is running again can somebody please turn off the tap I can't find the  
lightswitch.

My great aunt's silk robe is sinful and I apologize

## Score

Accretion (process of growth by the  
addition of material)

Odin Scherer

*J = 75, Ballad, no upbeat beats*

Solo form ideal

what is M  
is back to  
measures 1-11.  
Our work  
measures 12-19?  
#  
/etc more  
realization?  
& (soliloquy form  
in the last state)

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1: m. 1-5                             | Maybe expansion<br>from thematic ideas?<br>Hence? - except for quotation<br>material? |
| 2: m. 7-12                            |   |
| 3: m. 16-19                           |   |
| 4: m. 18-19 (for example, ends alone) |   |



## American Love

Alana Saab

There was a map with streets like veins, oceans like boys, and traffic like heat. It ~~read~~ in black: Eastham, Harwich, Barnstable, Hyannis, South Dennis. That summer ~~Cape~~ Cod smelled like salt and vodka. It felt like sand in my white sneakers.

I missed Joey when I fell off my plastic chair near the fire pit that Tay's dad ~~made~~. Earlier that day, Joey and I were supposed to meet at the little beach by the ice cream shop and "do stuff." At three, Tay and I rode there on our bikes, but Joey wasn't ~~there~~. I called him on my flip phone, but he didn't answer. Tay and I stayed there waiting, leaning up against our bikes in our bathing suits. After twenty minutes, Tay reached into her backpack and pulled out a water bottle with our favorite brown concoction, a little bit of everything we could sneak from our parents' liquor cabinets without ~~them~~.

noticing. When an hour had passed, the water bottle was clear as air, and Joey still wasn't there. When I hopped back on my bike under the unforgiving Cape Cod sun, tears and sweat laid on my cheeks like a new layer of skin.

By the time we reached Tay's driveway, I could barely see. Tay said that's how it was supposed to feel. Tay taught me how to laugh. That night when I fell off my chair in the backyard, we laughed so hard that Tay's little brother stuck his head out of his bedroom window and told us to shut up. Tay said "Fuck you," but really we meant fuck Joey and that summer house and that stupid beach. I didn't leave the wet grass for a long time. That made her laugh even more. I had a cramp in my head, and we liked it best when it felt that way.

Head against the grass, smoke from the fire blew into my shoulder-length brown hair, making me feel as crisp as my skin looked that August. When Tay's dad came outside with marshmallows and graham crackers, he said, "You girls are awfully silly tonight." Tay stopped laughing, and I slowly got up from the grass. Tay's dad knew what it was like to be silly. He had left serious for silly earlier that summer. And so for the first summer in her life, Tay no longer had a Mom and Dad. Tay had a Mom, and Tay had a Dad.

*Dear Diary,*

Never start a story with fire; it will burn itself to the ground.

My father could fix anything; the leaking sink, the testy garage door, the lopsided desk. He was always running around the house fixing whatever needed his hands for a moment. My mother and I sat at the wooden kitchen table and watched him repair the broken facets of our home. He was a master problem solver. When the list of what needed fixing ran out, he fixed the things that didn't need to be touched. He took the

TV and got a new high tech remote. He took the kitchen chairs and put sturdier, taller legs on them. He took the thermometer and programmed specific temperatures that coordinated with the levels of the sun. My mother and I were exhausted by the way he ran around from room to room fixing and tweaking our surroundings. We asked him to stop the projects and just sit with us for dinner. He grew angry with us then: at our ability to live with the old and our lack of desire for the newest model. He called us ungrateful. What my father didn't realize was that these changes were a nuisance, a complication to something that never needed complicating. As weird as it was, I think he fervently believed that he was doing the right thing.

That spring when Tay's dad left Tay's Mom, he blamed it on everything except himself. Despite what he said and how many times he said it, everyone knew that Tay's mom wasn't at fault. Neither were the house, the kids, or the dog. The whole thing was obvious from the business cards and the phone records. Tay's dad and Silly had become coworkers months before the separation, and he was just like any other man, playing with women like cars, trading in one for another.

*Dear Diary,*

We are a country born from rebellion, war and biting the hand that feeds us. And who, may I ask you, feeds us more than our wives?

When my grandparents came to America with my mom and her older brothers back in the 50s, they settled on Dodge Street, like all the other Greek immigrants. Two weeks after they arrived, my grandfather started visiting the neighbor's house. It took only a month for him to start going over too often for it to go unnoticed. Every nosy old woman on the street saw my grandfather as he stood under the neighbor's doorway, adjusted his trousers and placed his hat ceremoniously on his head. Then,

they watched him walk to the sidewalk and back into his own house. He didn't even try to hide it. Men back then didn't have to.

My mother told me that there were others before. Ones on neighboring islands before they came to America. My grandfather would go over by boat and stay for weeks at a time. He would leave my grandmother with the kids, the goats, the pigs, and the chickens. At least in those days, my mother told me, my grandmother didn't have to look the other women in the face. In America though, things were different. Each day, my grandmother had to see her: through the window, at church, on the way to the bakery. She even sent flowers to the lady when her mother died back on the islands and cooked dinner for the family when she was sick in bed.

My grandmother never said a word about the other women to anyone. She never reprimanded my grandfather or confided in friends. She just spent her days tending to the house, feeding the family and praying to God. "It was custom back then for a woman to live in silence, to pretend like it wasn't happening to her," my mother said, "But things are different now. Women have more of a voice, especially in America." She said, "Times have changed."

I said, "Thank God."

*Dear Diary,*

What is phenomenal? Something that happens.

That summer, I saw Tay have to meet Silly for the first time. It happened the day before the falling and the bikes. Why did you think we started drinking? When the lady's blue car pulled up around lunchtime, we hid behind Tay's curtains and watched her through the sheer. When we saw Silly's blonde hair through her Honda's tinted

window, Tay said we had to do it. She said that she wouldn't survive the spaghetti and meatballs if we didn't. Had he known what Tay would say to Silly, I'm sure Tay's dad would have unscrewed a handle and started drinking too.

By the time the front door opened, our water bottle was a quarter of the way empty. Tay's dad started calling us from the bottom of the staircase, telling us to come down and introduce ourselves. That's when Tay started taking bigger gulps. He called us for over an hour. Despite the way he said our names side by side, it was clear that he wasn't talking to me. When Tay and I finally went downstairs, the water bottle was empty, and our breath smelled like firewood and rubbing alcohol. Tay said she was only going down, because she was starving. I said "Me too," but in reality, I just wanted to see what the blonde looked like up close. I wondered if she looked like Tay's mom.

One day during a car ride home my sophomore year of high school, my mother, with her eyes fixated on the road, explained how in some countries, people didn't care about the seemingly greener grass on the other side, because everyone was too busy trying to keep their own grass away from the government. But in America, she said, it was like there were too many binoculars and too many people who had too much time to waste, and so they stared at their neighbors, waiting to be entertained. Not only that, but homeowners weren't building fences anymore; some didn't have enough money to, but others just wanted to see and be seen. Mother said those were the type of people who pranced around their kitchens with their curtains wide open. She was talking about people like her dad and Tay's dad. She didn't know it then, but she was talking about people like my father and his business trip girlfriend.

*Dear Diary,*

A line, no matter how definitive, keeps no one in their place. The proof is on the kitchen door frame. Look closely at the dates and see that time is to blame.

By the time we were in high school, Tay's dad was engaged to the blonde. So instead of Tay's beach house, we went to mine. My mother knew that nothing she approved of happened on the beach after the sun set and the sand went cold, but she let us go to the water anyways. We would leave through the sliding door at some time past midnight, usually at the same time that my mother climbed up the stairs to her safari-decorated bedroom. When she stepped over the stain made from when our dog once threw up rainbows, a consequence of a Crayola lunch, Tay and I would grab our backpacks and head toward the sliding door. My mom would shout from halfway up the staircase, "Don't let the bugs in. Don't leave fingerprints on the glass. Lock the door behind you!" It was all old news. And the way we ran up that sandy hill, old habit. It was dark as space as we reached the peak and began to hear the crashing waves. The two of them—Mom and Dad, except not Mom, but someone else—probably heard the same crashing when he opened the sliding door and let her in.

When Tay and I finally reached the water, we'd lay a towel down and sit side by side, facing the black ocean. We'd listen to the sound of water collapsing onto the sand while the backs of our oversized hoodies stared at the porch-lit houses past the sand dune. To warm our tanned skin in the chilly summer nights, we'd pull our sleeves down past our wrists and rubbed our legs. We stayed this way, listening and warming, until our water bottle was empty, until we had no remaining secrets to empty into the restless waves.

Before heading back over the sand dune toward my white-shuttered house, we'd walk up to the edge of the waves and let the frigid Atlantic numb our toes.

*Dear Diary,*

Fire itself is not loud. It does not make sound. What makes sound are the things torn apart by fire.

When I was nine years old, my parents had a bonfire at our beach house. The fire was taller and wider than me with large flames that moved carelessly into the summer air. In the darkness of that night, a glow enveloped our house. No one had portable speakers then, so we blasted the radio inside the house and opened the windows. From the wire screens, Portuguese folk music seeped into the salty air. Humidity cradled it in its thick embrace and carried the sound to our ears. That night, unlike Cape Cod, there were no marshmallows to roast or s'mores to make. All we had was a large pile of wood to feed the fire's flames.

By 10 o'clock most of my parents' friends were drunk. Men were jumping over the fire, shouting Wepa!, while their wives chanted. I was scared: not of all the people but of the fire itself. To protect myself, I crawled behind bodies and beach chairs, creating a barrier between me and the sparks that sprayed from the fire's center. While I hid, I entertained myself with dolls and make believe.

From my place on the sand, I stretched my ears, trying to hear the ocean's whispers, but it was impossible with all the voices, the fire and the music. At some point past by bedtime, I saw from the corner of my eye, my father with his hands around a woman's waist. At that same moment, my uncle threw a bottle of liquor into the fire, making glass shatter and flames burst wildly into the air. My eyes shot away from my father and toward the pyre. I was young then with eyes that tended to forget quickly, and so it's hard for me to recall the face of the woman that my father's hands were touching. Maybe it was my mother's, but maybe it wasn't.

*Dear Diary,*

Let them in. And then let them. And let them. Then scream.

When I first found out about my father, I was four states away visiting Tay at her college in New York City. Because of that summer, we thought we knew how to dull that type of pain, and so the first thing we did after hearing the news was go to the nearest Mexican restaurant and start drinking margaritas. Tay looked at me with nostalgia in her rounded face, "Bottoms up." Tay made me laugh. When my mother called me again an hour later, I was already three drinks in.

Through the phone, my mother recounted the details; of the woman, of what had been done and when it started. I sat there listening, one ear to the blaring mariachi music and the other to my mother's voice giving me a play by play of my father's infidelity. In the crackling of the noise through the speaker, I heard her say, "He brought her to the beach house." In the middle of the Mexican restaurant four states away, far away from the ocean, my stomach plummeted into my intestines. My veins wrapped tightly around my lungs, while my heart twisted in my chest, pushing outward against my rib cage. The phone slipped from my hands and landed under the wooden table, and I fell to the ground, hyperventilating. Tay rushed to my side and tried to calm me, but I couldn't stop the feeling of drowning; salt water suffocating my esophagus, sand burying me. Panicking Tay said that she was going to call an ambulance. I grabbed her by the arm and, gasping for air, I said, "I can feel my heart breaking. God! It's breaking! My heart!"

*Dear Diary,*

And so all the men in America staring at other grass found other bodies,  
and all the women waiting at their windows kept praying to the same old God.

And I... well, I was still waiting for Joey at that tiny little beach.

To drown two people in one night may seem like a lot. It may very well be a lot, but my father couldn't help the way his desire worked. It was shy, guilt-ridden. It wasn't sorry enough to say I'm sorry. It gave us an excuse, something about a woman being broken and needing to be fixed. We asked him to take it back, but he wouldn't. He said he just wanted to sleep in his bed again. We told him too bad. But a week later, I returned home from my trip, and there he was with his body laying next to her. Even on top of her. My mother thought she could fix it, but she was not my father.

At midnight, from my bedroom, I could hear my mother sobbing and desperately praying for all of this to be undone. I listened for a response to her pleas, but all I heard were salty tears falling from her eyes onto the wooden floor. There was nothing I could do to help her. So I took another swing from the bottle, laid on top of my covers, stared into the light, and made my thoughts go blind. Maybe, if I stayed like this long enough, God would answer my mother's prayers.

*Dear Diary,*

We can stretch or shorten time with our brains. You just have to learn how to work the clock.

It was a Friday night when I laid still, breathing on my bed in my childhood bedroom. If I did it carefully enough, in through the nose, out and up through the mouth, I could inhale the whiskey on my breathe. As the clock was about to strike midnight,

announcing my 21st birthday, I looked up at the ceiling and saw a fly stuck in my chandelier. The bug was panicking, hitting the frosty boundary over and over again, trying to get out. It banged and banged its body against the glass until finally, right before the clock hit 12:01 AM, the fly escaped through a narrow crack and flew into the room. This is a metaphor.

*Dear Diary,*

A home is made of happy memories. A house is made of every memory.

They tried. No, my mother tried. She tried while my father kept scanning the house for things that needed fixing. He couldn't comprehend that the problem at hand couldn't be found in metal pipes or woodwork, couldn't be fixed with his toolbox or his hands. He didn't understand how every time he spoke, we imagined him breathing into her neck; how every time we stepped into our house by the sea, we pictured him walking that woman over the Crayola remnants and letting her into that safari-decorated bedroom, letting her sleep in between the sheets that my mother had picked out. He didn't understand these things. He didn't even try to understand them. My father was a problem solver. He could fix everything except his marriage.

A year after my heart broke, I couldn't stare at the light any longer. I couldn't bear to hear my mother's unanswered prayers and my father's footsteps circling the house. So I packed my things and moved away. On a cold fall afternoon, I stood on my new rooftop in a city four states away and looked down into the neighbor's backyard. A child's bike. Metal chairs. A stone walkway. A fire pit that reminded me of Joey. A fire-pit that reminded me of how much I missed the sound of the ocean. It was odd for me: to see into a neighbor's yard without glass in between, with a bird's eye view. I thought, this is how God feels, but I didn't know if God really felt anything. I thought

maybe he was unfazed by the things that we did to one another, like he just watched us from above with a blank stare. Or maybe, more probably, I thought, he had stopped watching us altogether. Like maybe, God was too busy looking out his own white-shuttered window at a neighbor's world.

Still staring at the unlit fire pit, I started to hum my favorite song, but I hated the sound that reached my ears. How can something feel so good at its moment of release and so awful when it returns? The weight of this question brought me to my knees, and so I stayed there on the black tar and did what I hadn't done since I was a little girl. I began to pray. I prayed for all the flies in the world. For all the wood and the marshmallows. For each wave and grain of sand that crashes against the shoreline. And of course, for all the fences: that they may be taller than ever and unscalable. Then I prayed for God; I prayed that he would turn away from the window and look into the home that he had created.

A tear fell from a cloud above me and onto the back of my head. Another hit the sole of my shoe. The third hit my curved spine. I opened my eyes and looked into the black tar below me. A piece of paper laid crumpled next to my knees. Using my hands to smooth the wrinkles, I shielded the white paper from the rain and read the words that were scribbled across it:

If a body meets a body in thick air like summer, how long does it take for the flashbacks to begin? A week? A year? Is it enough time for the comedown to finally come down? And in that thick air if I see a glimmer on my eyelash, like a nucleus or an amoeba, will I return to a time that I wish I knew now?

I closed my eyes and breathed in through my nose, filling my lungs completely with the city's air. I waited for an answer to the cryptic questions that laid below me, but nothing came to mind: nothing except for the smell of Cape Cod that summer, hitting

me just as intensely as it had that June afternoon when I stepped out of the car and looked at Tay's beach house for the first time. At first glance, I remember never wanting to leave, never wanting to smell anything except the Atlantic ocean ever again. But by the end of that summer, after the blonde and Joey, Cape Cod looked and smelled a little differently, a little bit more like a bottle of alcohol violently crashing into a fire. You see, in the scheme of things, Joey was no one. He was just a pale, freckled boy who grew up by the sea. In the heat of that July, he promised 8th-grade-me excitement, hand holding, maybe even a kiss, but when the time came, he didn't meet me at the little beach by the ice cream shop. That summer, separated by streets and biology, Joey and I became the poster children for failed young love, but, as I know now, young love always fails. In the end, all love does. Sometimes even in the beginning. Or worse: in the middle.

With my knees pressed up against the tar with the burden of memory, I thought of Joey and felt my body overflow with anger: not because he mattered, but because of what he had turned me into. That sunny summer day when I left the beach in tears and Joey simultaneously sat comfortably and indifferently in his house, the day after having dinner with Tay's dad and the blonde, I became my mother. Not just mine, but Tay's too and my mother's mother and her mother. I became each of them in their relentless man-made misery, and it was all Joey's fault. In the scheme of things, Joey was no one, but that summer he was everything.

As the rain began to fall harder on the back of my head, I knew that it was time to go inside. It was time to leave a lifetime of summer secrets there amongst the buildings, far away from where they were created. The ocean, even with its come and go waves, never managed to take the heartbreak away. I hoped that maybe this concrete place could. I placed the piece of paper in my jeans and lifted my body off the tar toward

the leaking sky, the sky that my father probably could have fixed. I took one last look into the neighbor's yard, and then, with a pocket full of memories, I walked out of the rain and into my new home.

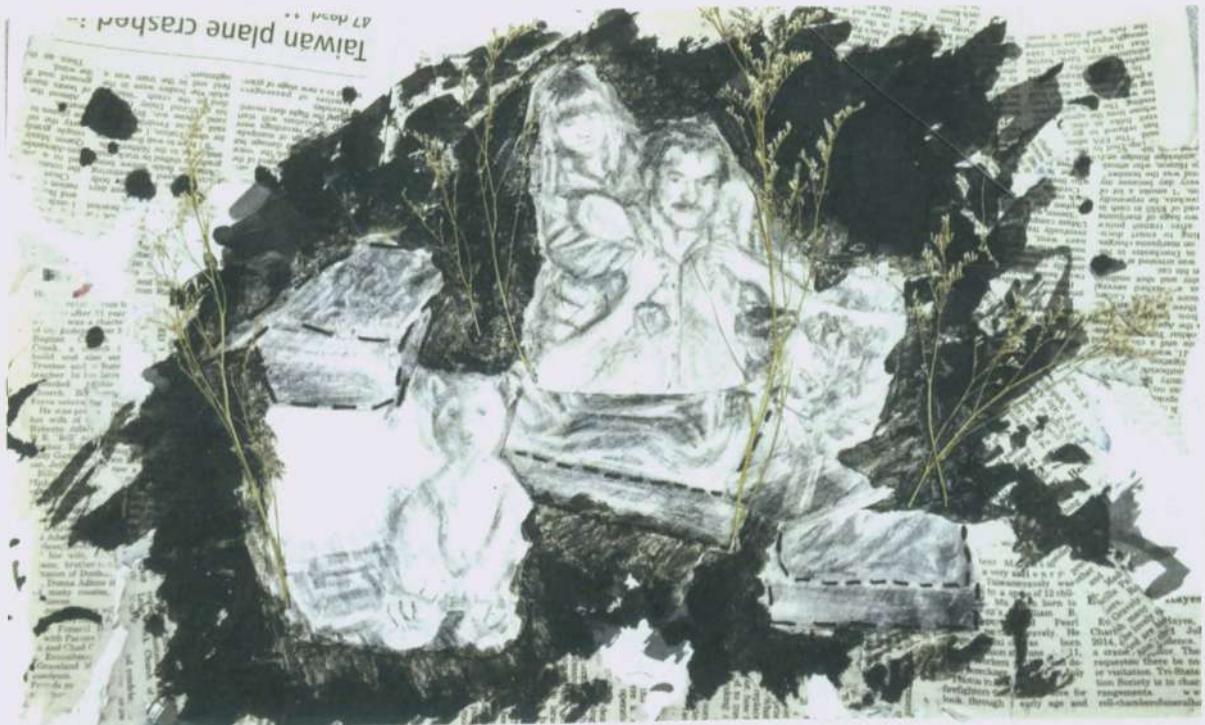
*Dear Diary,*

Fire began and then fire ended. Fire burns to its own end. Eventually but always, (I tried to tell you this from the start). Fire's leftovers, the ash, came here long ago. It first settled on airplanes, ones that flew northeast and southwest. From the planes' wings, ash sprinkled onto the clouds. Rain cradled it in droplets that landed on black and brown roofs. We didn't even know it was there. Ash hid in king sized beds that were scapegoats for bodies that didn't work; for bad love. It clustered in the corners of white rooms. It turned to clutter, and we mistook it for dust.

But where did it come from? Ash came from gold, from white, from wood and metal. From tears, excuses and so-called forgiveness. From a too-friendly neighbor and a formidable doorway. From wet grass, sandy surfaces and a sliding door that creaked from the salty air. Ash came not from lack of faith, but from a lack of understanding. From an ill-equipped tool box and hands that felt the need to keep busy. It came from white shuttered windows, make believe and a man-made hell.

Ash came from love. At least that's what they called it.

Taiwan plane crashed -  
at door +



**Picking Flowers**  
Stacie Carte



**Photograph #1**  
Mike Naideau

# /bə'kəmīNG/

Genevieve Raftery

{9:13:19} Nearness is an anatomic Thing. (Likened to the rid of appendage.)

{7:4:15} And preying done to become emptiful.

{9:15:19} Un-altered in the beginning; those knees on the carpet.

And darkness of facedeep in it. Submersion of the Spirit.

(The depths like light touching.)

{9:16:19} Drink the Waters; the dust embed-  
ded is salty.

You may be paerched  
on the ledge.

{1:5:17} Water falls on chest, behind belly button, between legs.

{1:7:17} Spinal Shake rearranges the insides further, every place  
untouched, purposely

is the path of pangs who enter and then leave.

Enter and then leave. Then leave. Leaving more.

{7:14:97} Patron of an island off the coast of Apathy. {7:14:19} Your supposed suffering, to  
your own court, casts all other's Formless.

{6:20:15} Gaps between two selves spread. {6:21:15} Wishes to come together.

{6:22:15} And other parts =\= scathed. {6:23:15} Guts were to be rearigned.

{9:16:19} New place to be entered and then left; entered more. Your belly becomes Angry;  
catching hope. The fall from it, the void, absorbing other anguish, the mist of the earth. A living  
soul.

# My Religious Experience So Far

$\text{J} = 260$

SAJ

**A1 Break**  
F.7

Dotted Quarter Feel  
5 A.7

Dotted Quarter notes setting up the following line

Normal Swing  
9 C.7

All the notes in this system have the same rhythmic value, but the line ends just before you fully get comfortable with it

D. don't want the swing line to feel too normal and resolved so I added how many bars

**A2 Break**  
13 (F.7)

Dotted Quarter Feel  
17 (A.7)

Normal Swing  
21 (C.7)

25 B.7 Bb.7 Bb.7 C.7 D.7 D.7 E.7

Harmony in 5ths  
27 F.7 F.7 G.7 Bb.7 F.7 F.7 A.7 C.7 B.7 F.7 A.7

Harmony in 5ths  
Slowly build improv, ending with quarter note triplets leading back to A

The first eleven measures have a modal cycle that follows  
the blues cycle with the first two chords being the same.  
The last three chords are the same, but the last one is different.

## The Bear on the Top Shelf

Chelsea Carney

When I was thirteen years old, I was sitting in the car with my dad. His favorite morning game was to ask me questions; it was our ritual. Coffee, Q&A, school. Today was just more of the same.

"So now that you're officially a teenager, what do you think you want to do in the world?" he asked.

"Change it," I replied automatically, though I couldn't quite pinpoint how. It was an abstract idea, and like most thirteen-year-olds, I was unsure which direction it would take. I turned on the radio and rested my head against the window to try to get some sleep before class.

On October 12th, 1998, only a few months before my father asked me that question, a twenty-one year old boy named Matthew Shepard was dragged into a remote area

of Laramie, Wyoming. He was beaten and strung up to a fence then set on fire and left to die. His attackers didn't like that he was gay. I was twelve when I saw that story. My mom had only come out a few years before, and because of so many incidents like this one, had asked my brothers and I to keep it quiet. I would see Matthew Shepard's sweet face, round and cherubic with blonde hair and blue eyes, and I'd think of her. I'd think of the fear she kept wound like spiked barbed wire, lodged in the center of her chest, desperate to protect us. So I kept my mom's secret. Because I was afraid, too; afraid that someone would string her up to a fence and set her on fire and leave her to die.

When I was nine, my mother's best friend, Michael, passed away. He was tall and skinny, and because of it, walked a bit like he couldn't quite figure out how his arms and legs should work together. Michael was kind and gentle. He took me to the Renaissance Fair and bought me all the things my mom wouldn't. On Wednesdays, we'd go for ice cream. Michael made me laugh constantly, and when I didn't feel like laughing, he'd wrap those gangly arms around me, kiss my hair, and whisper life lessons I wish I still remembered.

One afternoon, we drove to Michael's house. He wasn't feeling well and had asked my mom, a nurse, to come over. When we got there I started to run into his room, but my mother stopped me.

"Sit out here," she said, pointing to the beige couch in the living room. "Put these on."

She handed me a pair of gloves and a face mask, then she disappeared into Michael's room where I could hear him coughing and sobbing behind the closed door. I didn't

understand, so I stood up and poked my head into his bedroom. My mom was in scrubs. She was holding a needle to Michael's arm and drawing blood, but he didn't look like himself. He was skinnier and pale, yellow almost, and the skin around his cheekbones was so thin I could see the veins pumping under his bones, now rigid and angular.

"I have to puke," he said. And then before my mom could take the needle from his arm, shot up and ran past me to the bathroom. The blood from the vial sprayed across the carpet. That's when my mother saw me standing there.

"Get back, Chelsea!" she screamed. "Sit down! Don't touch anything!" Terrified, I ran back to my seat and didn't move for the next hour.

When it was over, and Michael was in bed, I poked my head into the door again. His back was against the headboard, his shoulders slumped. His hands hung low to the ground, brushing a trashcan full of red tissues.

"Can I come in?" I asked. Michael smiled at me in that goofy way he always did, his eyes full of light, and so I stepped forward only to have my mom stop me again.

"You can stand there. But don't come any closer, okay? There's still some blood on the sheets that needs to be cleaned."

I froze, angry that she'd keep me from him, and went to take another step toward the bed. But Michael held up his hand.

"Your mother's right, sweetheart. Stay where you are." If I hadn't spent a childhood

dissecting every movement of his face—the wide smile reserved for his cat; the raised eyebrows given to close friends—I wouldn't have noticed that light in his eyes dim, but I did. Even if it was just for a second, there was unease playing out painfully across his face.

"Hey kid," he said, still smiling. "You know I love you, right?"

I nodded.

Michael pointed to a teddy bear on his desk and told me I could have it. It was small and brown with a blue ribbon tied around its neck. Someone had given it to him once—now I can't remember who—but it meant something to him and he wanted me to have it.

Later that same night, when I was tucked into my own bed, Michael died of AIDS.

My mother and I stitched his quilt together and brought it to the Phoenix Civic Center where it became a panel attached to thousands. I named my teddy bear Michael and set it on the highest shelf in my bedroom where I could keep it safe.

Michael once told me something. I don't remember the quote exactly, but I remember the lesson (it was the one that stuck with me): We love who we love, and it's our responsibility to bring that love into the world so that when others are searching, our authenticity is what guides them.

Only a few years after my mother came out and after Michael died—only a few months after Matthew Shepard—my father dropped me off at school when I was thirteen.

"Changing the world is a good idea, Chelsea," he said, adding, "just try to change it for the better, okay?"

I smiled and went to class. I sat in the same chair I always sat in, behind the same group of boys that were always there and listened to them mock each other, watching as their faces turned red with embarrassment.

"God, you're so gay!" they were saying. "Watch. You're so gay you'll probably gets AIDS and die!"

I wasn't much for standing out back then. But suddenly, I stood up angrily—angry for all the kids who heard this and felt like something was wrong with them; angry for all of the Matthew Shepards that had been hurt and all the Michaels that were still hurting; angry for my mother, because she thought her love was something she needed to hide.

I stepped between them.

"What's gay about it?" I asked.

"What?" they replied.

"You heard me. What makes him so gay? Why does someone deserve to die? Especially of AIDS?" The boys froze and stared at me like I had two heads, but I pressed. "If it's so funny, maybe you can explain it to me."

# R con R

Hannah Nishat-Botero

Learnt to roll my Rs

R con R cigarro

to reduce any vocalized traces of difference

R con R barril

to fall into a language

Rapido ruedan los carros

become a language

Ferrocarril.

Never well enough.

learnt to neutralize As and Os.

to soften.

R con R — softened.

to speak inglés:

Recording grammatical equations

And conjugation

and the arrangement of well formed phrases.

eloquent syntax:

Learnt.

Learned to have a language.

no language is mine.

Learnt to hide traces of other vernaculars,  
traces of my geographies

Learnt speech without nonnative modulation  
speech without inflection

speech without corporeal enactments

without physical performance.

gestural hand movements concealed  
because they are:

— too bodily for the language

— too much for the right language

Learned:

language as formulaic,

language as absolute,

language as parameter.

Language as extrabodily.

Learnt to reject the poetics of my father's  
language

to resist its lyricism,

Swallowing its subcontinental ontology.

Sub continent, Sub language.

Learnt to resist a language,  
for dexterity in the preeminent dialect.

— Enunciate.



*The Double*  
Hannah Nishat-Botero

## **Granny**

Lucy Bent

I remember her most on summer nights. On the nights where the sky turns from orange to purple, and the sun disappears below the water. On the nights where everyone sits on the porch, and I can hear her laugh ring out into the dark. I remember her in the late August afternoons, when the air tastes like the end of summer, sweet and sticky like honey. Everyone comes back for the summer, my cousins and aunts and uncles, and it feels like she is still there.

We called her Granny. She loved summer, and she could sit in the sun for hours. I don't think anything was too hot for her. When we got too hot, she would make us iced tea. It was sweet because she added lemonade, but not too sweet. She used mint leaves, and I used to be disgusted by the green clumps at the bottom of the pitcher, but now it's all I can think about. We drank it so fast that Granny would have to make

another pitcher the next day, but she never minded. We had an abundance of frozen lemonade just for that purpose, and she made sure we never ran out. To this day, I never order iced tea at restaurants, because I know it will never live up to Granny's. Of course, someone's entire existence cannot be condensed into one memory of a cold drink in the summer, but it is where my mind always wanders when thinking of her. Last summer, I was walking along the river and stopped at one of the benches. It was early July, and the sun was beating down on my face. The sailboats were passing by, a breeze coming from the water. I swear, I could feel her in the wind. She belonged in the summer sun, on the water. I wasn't ready for her to go when she did. I had more to ask her, more to tell her, but I tell myself death is inevitable like that. I am left with memories of iced tea and sunsets, and the quiet moments on the porch alone with her and her laugh. And I am left with her stories.

For me, stories are a way to hold onto someone who is gone, a way to confront my own feelings about her death by focusing on her life. In the "The Gift of Shared Grief", Renkl talks about the significance of continuing to learn about her mother through others. She writes, "I needed to be reminded that my own memories were not the only ones keeping her in the world." I needed to be reminded of this as well. I wanted to learn more about her, a part of her life that I had grown up hearing stories about, a part of her life that I took for granted.

When she traveled around the world with my grandfather, she wrote lots of letters home. She wrote so many that she had them compiled into a journal-like book afterwards. I had grown up listening to stories about her travels, but I didn't know about the journals until after she died, when my grandfather asked me to pick a few passages from her letters to put in the funeral program. It felt like a treasure, a prize I had earned. My father told me to be careful with them, and I was nervous I would

somehow do something to damage them. When I called my mom to ask if the letters were still at our house, I thought she would say no. I honestly thought I had lost them in the mess of papers and notebooks crowding my bookshelf, and I had been too afraid to tell anyone. When she told me that they were still sitting on the bookshelf, and that she would send them to me, my heart almost stopped, relief flooding over me.

I got the package the other day, and they were just how I remembered them. The cover is beige, a few stains across the front, and softer around the edges. A picture of lolanthe—my grandparents boat—in the middle of the blue sea sits right in the center of the page. Above the picture reads the words “Tatty’s Letters From Around The World, Panama to Thailand, April 1993 to November 1995.” I didn’t want to think about the funeral, and that was all I could think of when I flipped through the pages, but they were not a burden to read. In fact, they were quite the opposite. They were fun, and they took me to a land far away from my own. Rereading the letters brought me back to a place that I hadn’t been to in a long time. I was on the porch all over again, sitting on a lawn chair to make space for the adults. I could hear her voice, telling stories about a time before me. She laughed at herself, which made all of us laugh. Her letters sounded exactly like her voice, and I found myself smiling uncontrollably. I think I wanted to understand why I was feeling an emptiness where my grandmother used to be. I wanted to figure out what made her so compassionate and caring, and what made her so adventurous and willing to learn. Not everyone is so empathetic.

When you are so close with someone, it is hard to think of them any differently when they pass away. It was like this with my grandma. Her charisma always intrigued me, but I thought about it as a fact of life. I never wondered why she cared so much about

other people, or why she spent her life taking care of others. She took care of her younger siblings when her mother died. She was only 15. She took care of her own children, her husband, and all of her grandkids. She spent a lot of time volunteering in old folk's homes and participated in Meals on Wheels. She told us all the time that she would rather die than to be put in a retirement home. She wanted to live life to its fullest extent, but she had also taken care of others for so long that it was unusual for others to be taking care of her. I think she felt uncomfortable with people pitying her, and she didn't like to complain about her life.

My grandfather told me a story about how they used to go to a roller coaster ride at the beach when they were first dating. He hated it: the height, the speed, everything. But my grandmother loved it. I asked him if she was ever scared of anything, and before I could finish, he started laughing and said, "No, no. I think that's something that was just part of her. She loved adventure, she loved excitement, and there was very little that scared her. She was always willing to just go for it, that was the kind of personality she had." And it makes sense. She never had fear, even when it came to traveling the world.

I don't think her acceptance of all people was due to her upbringing or a specific event in her life; rather, it went hand in hand with her desire for adventure and her curiosity about people. She loved learning, and to me, it seemed like she knew everything. For one thing, she was a big reader.

"She read about five or six books a day," my grandfather said. "I mean, our Amazon bill was incredible." He started laughing.

She read novels, she read medical books, there was really nothing that she wouldn't read. She was curious about everything.

"I think people were like books to her. She was absolutely fascinated with other people and what they were like," my grandfather told me.

Her curiosity was evident in the way that she did not hesitate to ask a stranger on the street for directions, and in the way that she would walk up to a man peeling sugar cane in the back of his car in Martinique and have a short conversation with him. She told us what she found out about him, and despite her limited knowledge of French, she managed to figure out that he spoke Spanish as well as French and he made sugarcane juice to sell at the market in town. I loved going on walks with her because I knew we would always run into someone and she would start talking to them. It was more than small talk. She would talk about that new book she was reading, the one about cancer. She would ask about that woman who had just died in the house at the top of the road. My grandmother never shied away from heavy topics, and I would listen along, thinking I was part of "grown-up" conversations.

In a way, she included all the kids in "grown-up" conversations, in the sense that she was always honest with us, too. It was another lazy day in August, and all of the kids were sitting on the porch with Granny. I think I was about 11 or 12. She had a cigarette in her mouth, her legs dangling off the couch. She blew the smoke out, clouding the air for a few seconds.

"Granny, why don't you stop smoking," my cousin Ellie asked her.  
"I'm trying," she replied. "I've only had a few today."  
"Why doesn't Papa stop smoking?"

We all wanted to know the answer, because he smoked a lot more than Granny.

"It's harder for him," she told us. "Cigarettes are addictive, and his body is addicted to them more than mine is. He's tried, but it's hard for him." We didn't really know what addiction was back then, but she explained it to us in a way that helped us understand, without placing judgment on people with addiction.

"I've never known anybody that could frame things for children depending on how old they were, and then explain it to them," my grandfather said when I asked him about Granny's honesty.

I called my dad to talk about her, and asked about her honesty while he was growing up. He remembered her in the same light as me. He laughed and said, "She loved telling and listening to stories about her faults and failures. The more embarrassing the better, and especially during big family gatherings. He told me a story about when he was younger, and Granny decided to make a casserole before one of my uncle's friends came over for the first time. She was going to use an old pan, but it you have figured them out. She was always very open about mental illness, and talked about the need for more discussion surrounding it. I remember having conversations about mental health, specifically depression, and she would explain what it meant and that there were methods to treat it, or to help people who suffered from it. She always talked about my grandfather's mother, who had bipolar disorder, but it never occurred to me that she could be talking about herself as well. She told enough of the truth to help us understand, but she would make sure she only told us what we were ready to bear. Or maybe she knew we were ready to hear it, but didn't want us to think of her any differently. I always thought it was unlike her to care about what people thought of her, but everyone has a sense of self-consciousness, especially when it comes to family. My brother told me that she used to sneak cigarettes when she went off on her own, after we all thought she had quit smoking. I didn't believe him at first. He saw her from the marsh, her sandals hitting the wooden boardwalk as she went further into

the distance, the smoke leaving a trail where her footsteps once were. I wanted to believe that I knew everything about her. I wanted to believe that she had answered all my questions and there was nothing else to be asked. Learning about her depression made me wonder what else I didn't know about her. I think this is something I will always be left with questions about. There are always going to be blind spots, spaces that cannot be filled.

I tried not to think about her for a while, after she died. It was unexpected, her body sort of shut down out of nowhere. From what, I am not sure, but nobody knew it was going to happen. She was 73. She died while sailing with her cousins, and I am happy that at least she got to spend her last moments on the sea, her second home. I remember the day so vividly. It was May 25th. I was a junior in high school. It was raining, the skies cloudy and gray, and it was sort of warm, but not enough to take off my jacket. My mom called me while I was leaving school. I don't remember starting to cry, but after a few minutes I could feel tears rolling down my cheeks, hot and sticky. I walked home, the rain replacing my tears, and after a while it didn't matter because my face was going to get wet no matter what. We drove to my grandparents' house, but the drive felt different. The roads were soaked, and I remember watching my mom cry as she tried to keep her eyes on the road.

Right after she died, I didn't want to think, and I didn't want to move. I stayed in bed for as long as I could because I didn't know how to do anything else. It felt wrong to be there without her. There was a gaping hole in the house where she used to be. When I go there now, it still feels like there is something missing. But I guess that's what happens when you lose someone you love. Places don't feel like themselves anymore, and you find yourself wondering what you are supposed to feel. Is it sadness, longing, grief, heartbreak, melancholy? Maybe it is all of those feelings at once, or maybe it is

something else entirely.

The emptiness in our hearts somehow translated to the house, and when it creaks I think it is trying to let out a cry. Sometimes it feels like she has just been gone for a while, and is going to come back soon. Of course, I know that's not the case, but I think it is a way that my mind tries to make sense of her being gone. In the end, there is no way to stop death, but there is a way to create life from death. Telling a story does not bring someone back to life, but it preserves the memories.

We are on the porch again, back where we started. This time, Granny isn't here, but I know she is somewhere near. It is pitch black now, and we can see the stars. It's not like the city, where the street lights dull them. Here, they are a bright, sparkly white. The breeze blows by, that end-of-August breeze, not too hot, but not completely cool yet. It is just us, just the kids, and everything feels light. The gaping hole in the house is not heavy anymore. The air smells like wet grass and iced tea. I know she is here. Everyone smiles but I know they can feel it too. The breeze is gone, and the air feels sticky again. My head feels heavy again, but it is a satisfying heaviness, knowing that my head is full of these moments. I am left with a feeling that I can't recall, but it really doesn't matter anymore. Now I am left with her memories and stories.





## **to decide i wish to dig and to begin digging**

Daniel Tahoun

and excited to be angry, and determined to remain this way, away and awake, and to add honey to the floodwaters, to stir it, to sip it, to add a little more, and to make something, but to make something mine, and to find it, to keep finding it, and for the heat to be the closest thing, and to dig deeper into my skin, to sway slow and slower, to turn motion into a thought, to have to be reminded, to follow the direction the lines tangle and then sprint to, to remember the idea, and to remember getting the idea, and to billow in green and lighter green and darker green, to want to follow the smoke unfurling, gaseous thread sewn into the spacious, to dissipate into darkness, to want to follow the lips rippling, and to forget the words dissonance or comfort, to decide someday and to have made decisions, to write like music and to sing like writing, to want it, to want it, to be it, to try and become it until I am it and to continue wanting further.

and asides and insides, outsides and bedsides, belonging to no sound or sequence of sound, to decide I wish to dig and then to begin digging, to adorn myself with purple flowers and to believe I am myself, to decipher my thoughts with new words, to design new words, to scream and release the sound of fluttering wings, to flower and to pluck, to ripen and to masticate, and to tear off my antennae, to bleed in the hive, and to berate and weigh the options, and to disassemble, to break each part, to build something broken, and to be new and more and more to look forward to, and to wind like a river winds, to sink like an ocean sinks, to carry nothing towards home and to realize it was a dream, laying back or crying out accordingly.

and to not talk, to wonder and be seized by what is created and what has created itself, immiscible in a minute of character.

and to deny, flung into the war, holding with emptying hands, between an endlessness and at a sudden sky.

to wither, to see everything and still not remember, to be already ahead of myself, to live trying and to give up, to lather it away, to run keys up and down my body, unable to accept the recollection, ready to reject the recollected, a fever of nostalgia and the memory's melody capsizing, to let the hope out in fumes, to laugh through the plastic, to not know where to go, and to not hear the soft parts of the song because it's too loud, and to hate lust and to lust after the hatred, to believe I can say many words at once like a chord, to believe I can learn to do it, to find more places and to go back, to find out how, to never and never again.

to carry it out, but to carry it out well.

## **INTERVIEW WITH ANNA DUNN**

Conducted by Sarah Callery, Hal Pitt-Cort, and Eva Silverman

In the years since Anna Dunn graduated from Lang, they've put their creative writing degree to good use. Their creative and professional endeavors—launching their own small press and reading series, editing Diner Journal, and coordinating the production of a zine by inmates at Riker's Island—have consistently challenged the idea that writing is a solitary profession, forging communities around literary practice. We spoke to them about all of these projects, what they got out of their time at Lang, and the importance of community.

**Q: How did your time studying at Lang guide you towards the endeavors you've pursued since graduating?**

A: My time at Lang directly guided me to the work I do now. Sekou Sundiata was a teacher at Lang who had a profound effect on me. He spoke of teaching, or maybe it was performing at Rikers with his band. He taught me that being a writer didn't mean I had to lock myself away or "know" something. That writing was living. I left Lang with a group of poets and we started self publishing, and reading at galleries. Through this work I met people in the art and publishing world, but more importantly I learned that though I am a writer I love to work with people, and that as an editor I love to help people express themselves.

**Q: What is your favorite thing you read during your time at Lang?**

A: There was an anthology that centered around elegy that had some incredible work in it. I also remember reading a book about singers Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith and the complicated and possible queer lives of blues singers of the 1920s. I was incredibly moved by one of Sekou's one man shows. Kamiko Hahn's poetry. Lynda Schor was my fiction teacher and I loved her books.

**Q: How did Diner Journal come into being?**

A: I was hired as a weekend barista at a place called Marlow & Sons. I lied and said I was a morning person. I would do readings down the road at an art gallery with my group of poets from Lang. Around the same time Andrew and Mark, the owners of Diner and Marlow, and Caroline the chef wanted to write a cookbook but they thought it would be easier to make a Journal. Sometimes writing is a way of learning about the life you are living. So they started a small Journal with recipes and stories

about our farmers and ethical practices. They handed a draft of the first copy over the barista counter to me on a slow day. I gave it an edit and then took over. Ten years later we make about one a year, and are on our second book!

**Q: What were the inspirations that informed your vision for Diner Journal?**

A: Hmm good question. Well, journals such as The Art of Eating influenced us, but also pur rock zines, and art we loved. We influenced each other. We made one Journal completely based on the objects in a painting by a bartender at Roman's named Ryan Schnieder. The painting was commissioned by writer and Mexico City restaurant owner Scarlett Lindeman who was the sous chef at the time, for her partner at the time Dave Gould the chef of Romans. The objects were things he loved. In turn the whole Journal kind of centered on love.

**Q: What did your position as the editor-in-chief entail?**

A: A lot of wrangling. And imagining. And dreaming. And typos. And listening. And editing. And designing. And wrangling.

**Q: How did you end up teaching your class at Riker's?**

A: I was trying to change my life. You know, it happens periodically, and we have to learn to listening to it. A fellow Lang person Anna Calabrese was working at Rikers Island and posted an opening for an Arts Coordinator. I responded something frivolous like, "too bad it's not a poetry coordinator." This sparked a conversation between the two of us. She invited me to visit the facility and took me to a cooking class and to a very special program where the ASPCA works with groups of incarcerated people to

train dogs. I pitched a kind of version of the Diner Journal, a kind of zine and as fate would have it they had a publishing initiative in the works.

**Q: What were some of your favorite things that you published as part of the magazine you put together at Rikers?**

A: My favorite work by far was by transwomen. One poem told the story of a small bird falling from the nest. Another was of the many different names one woman had had over her life time. One very brave transwoman interviewed people about how they felt about transwomen being integrated into Rosie's, the women's facility on the island. There was also an incredible story of a Long Island Madame, and her life growing up, being raped and giving birth to a child, working at the Hustler Club, wanting to make a safer place for women in sex work. The jail would not let me publish it because they deemed it to related to her current case.

**Q: What has the experience of working at publications either affiliated with or funded by other institutions been like? How did the experience of working with an institution like Diner and an institution like Rikers differ from one another?**

A: Well there was freedom in both of them for me. At Rikers I was helping marginalized people tell, and own and explore their own stories. I was working for the jail so I had to pass it through a kind of mysterious public relations department, that had no particular rhyme or reason. Except that it wanted Rikers to look good. Part of the paradox of the project was that it wanted people incarcerated by Rikers to report positively about Rikers, which is virtually impossible because they are being oppressed and abused and having their rights taken away by Rikers. I was able to shift the focus to be more like personal essay, story telling and that was something people really

enjoyed. Publication day was really so fun, and something to look forward to and trust me they need something to look forward to. Diner Journal was really a gift. Because we were self publishing through the restaurant we could do what ever we wanted. We made wild magazines. No one was like the other. One we even called Goats, Gods, and Gays. Try getting Conde Nast to publish that ten years ago.

**Q: What motivated you to start the DrunknSailor press? What did you learn in the process of expanding the press?**

A: DrunknSailor Press I can clearly see now as the beginning of my creative process. I will continue to do and make collaboratively this way for the rest of my career, no matter where I am or who I am with. At first I felt there was maybe something stagnant about that, repetitive, but then I realized it's how I managed all sorts of things, my need to create community, battle loneliness, access joy, be inspired, help people, it's how I learn. I've also never believed in the gate keeping element of publishing. If you pitch me and we start talking I'm going to publish you and I'm going to help you get what you want to say out. I've never cut something I cared about because it wasn't up to par. I've committed to the persona and the process. That works in direct opposition to the way publishing companies typically work, so that was also an important element in creating DnS, and maintaining that practice through each subsequent project.

**Q: Why do you feel like it's important to cultivate a literary community within the city? What has drawn you towards the particular communities that you have participated in? Have you always felt like you had access to a community in New York, and if not, was there a moment that felt like a breakthrough in terms of finding one?**

A: I think that being a queer and trans person I came to the city because I intuited that it is where I would find access to community. I wasn't like people outside the city. So for me it's never been a challenge, it's been the point. That said, it ebbs and flows. It's why I chose Lang. It's why I chose Diner. And to some degree why I chose Rikers, once I could see just how isolated incarceration is I knew I wanted to try and work against that. Part of what draws people to restaurant work is that they don't like to be alone. This is an important things for me, because as a writer you can really isolate oneself, or be told that you must. Almost all of my chosen family I met working at Diner. Working at Diner was and is a collaborative creative act. I know that New York can be isolating but for me it's always been home.

**Q: What is your favorite restaurant and what draws you to it?**

A: Achilles Heel because I know and can tell that people who work there love to work there. Second is Bernie's because I secretly always want to eat mozzarella sticks and drink martinis. But when I get the chance I fly to Mexico City to sit at Cicatriz, drink mezcal and write crime fiction in the land that created the sun.

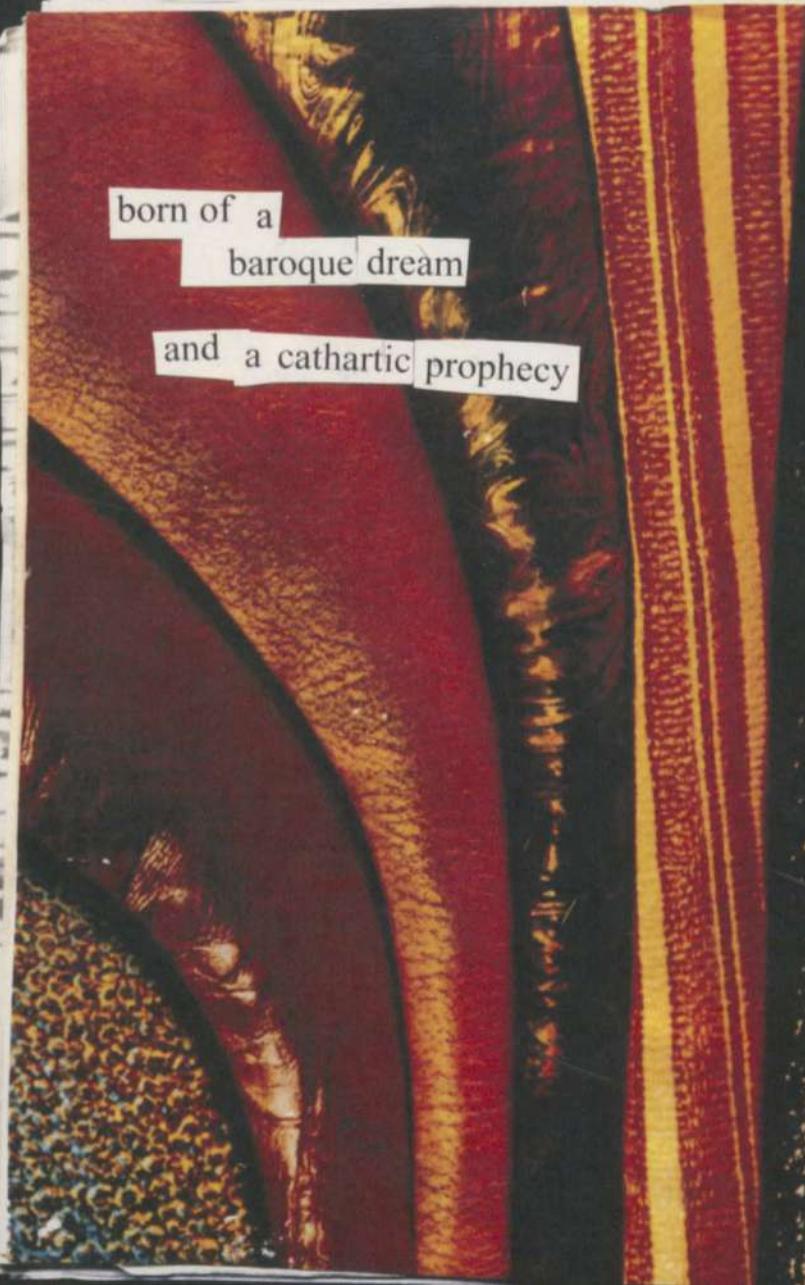
# DIY Mysticism

A Zine by Katherine Iwagami



The material in this  
zine was withdrawn from  
the New Zealand Archives  
and Library Service due to  
copyright or other rights.

do-it-your-  
self mysticism.



born of a  
baroque dream

and a cathartic prophecy

I invite you

stick your hands into  
the residues

How did you hear about these nostalgic theatrics?





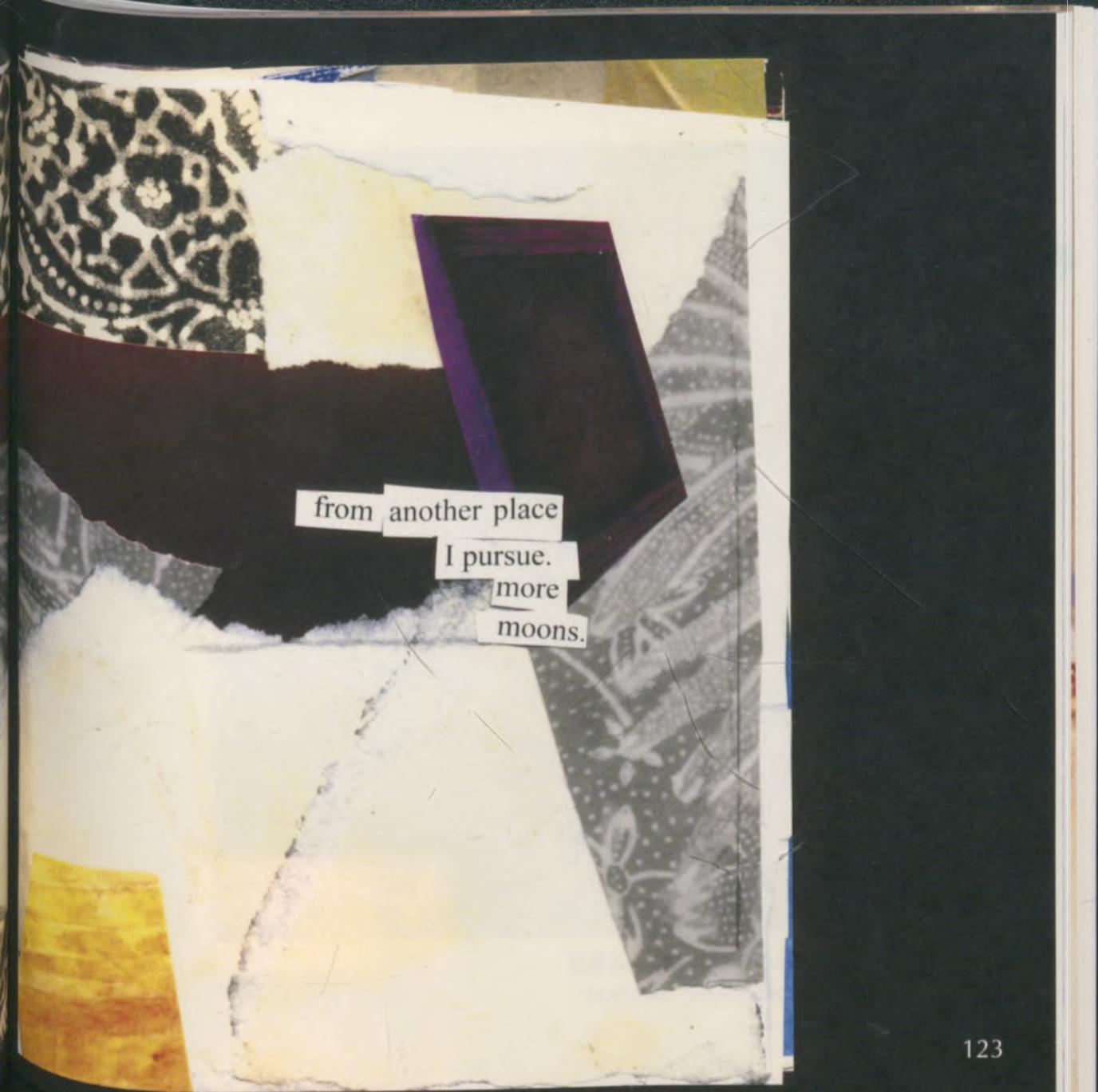
121



Somewhere between you and the viewer  
a lover,

I beckon your friends to take your hand

They honor celebrating the grotesque garden

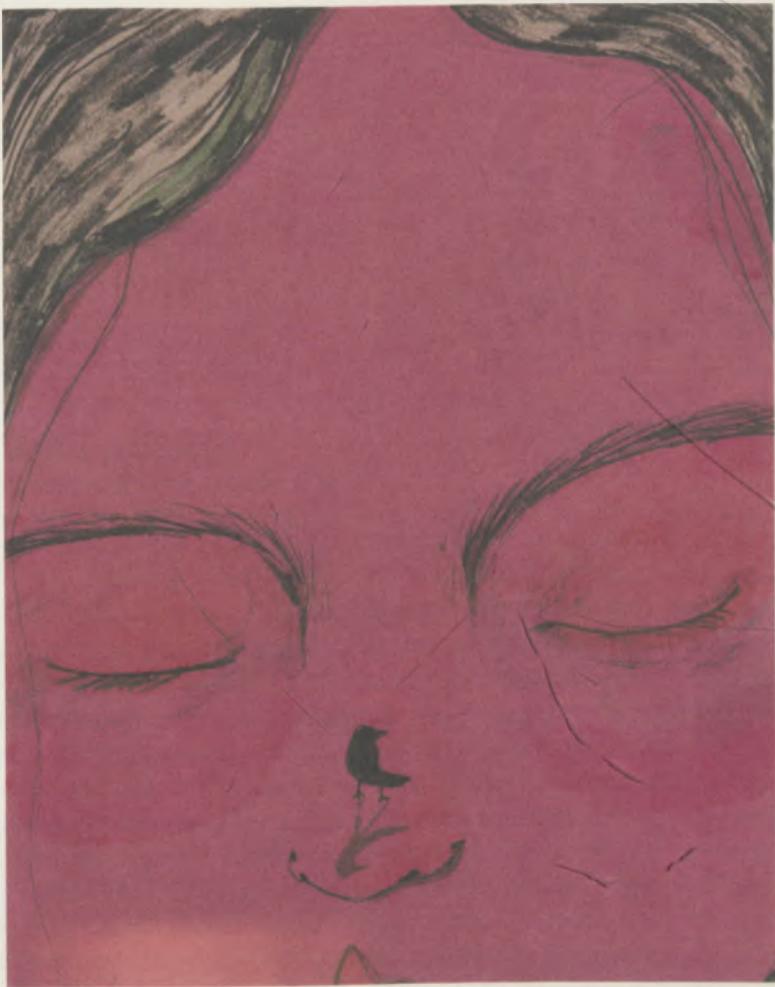


from another place  
I pursue.  
more  
moons.

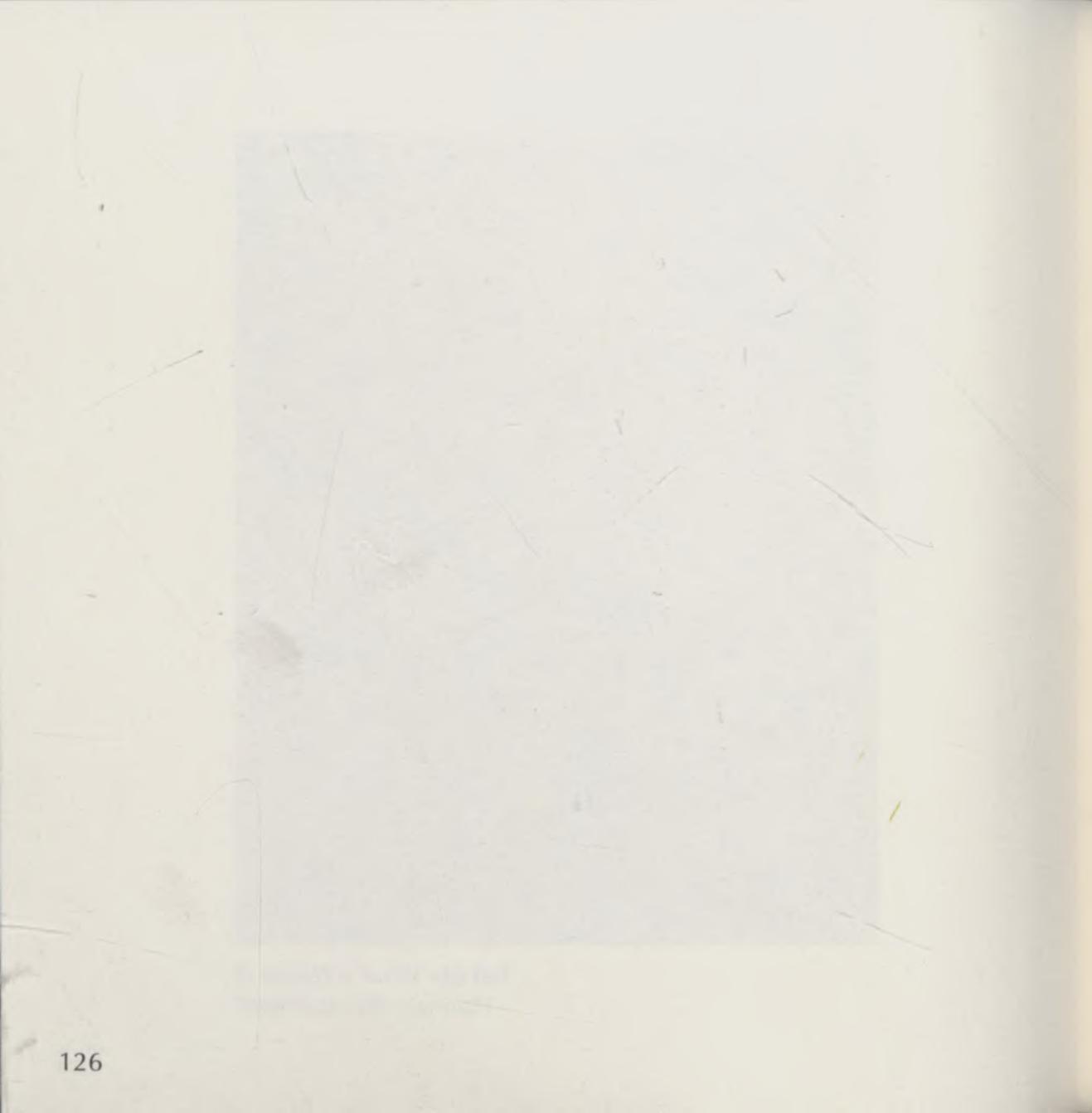
## **for, The Shangri-Las**

Isabella Kazanecki

There's a whole world of hot pink swirlies  
and cat eye babes that we just haven't torn  
the plastic from, yet. Perfect square with  
rounder shape inside. Oh Johnny! I'd crack  
& crawl to be the single(Let me be the 45)  
tear abject to that single curl (tears of gaso  
line, tears to make you scream). A tear to  
tare a satin dress. A tear apart, a tear will  
part the fabric from left leg to right. Your  
cells are sipping cosmopolitans. Your crisp  
lime green heel has snapped. You've fallen  
now, between tree debris. Thin, bleached.  
Your mouth makes sounds that rhyme with  
fashion, harmonize with the movies. Your  
voice is not the sighing of the wind. It is the  
is. Ooeygooey lipgloss sealing mouths shut.  
Otherwise odorous. All together now, go



***Tell Me What a Home Is***  
Hannah Nishat-Botero



## **Her Own Wild Animal**

*The Monstrous Humanity of Julia Ducournau's Raw*

Eva Silverman

When *Raw*, the debut feature film of French director Julia Ducournau, premiered at Toronto Film Festival in 2016, paramedics had to be called. The film's content was so gory and grotesque that multiple audience members fainted at one midnight screening. Audience members reported getting dizzy, gagging uncontrollably, vomiting, and medical attention was nothing short of necessary. By the time of the film's theatrical release in early 2017, the stories of people's visceral reactions to the movie had overshadowed the movie's actual content, and although the film received near-unanimous praise from critics, nearly every review zeroed in on the film's apparent grossness above all else. While this is not the kind of critical response any filmmaker wants for their first film, even if body horror is their genre of choice, and the excess focus on the spectacle surrounding the film's release evinced a certain laziness on the

part of many critics, there was something apt about the film's fluid-drenched origin story.

The audience members who fainted and vomited were not passive spectators. Those who experienced such visceral responses to the film's scenes of gushing blood and bikini waxes gone awry were forced into active engagement with what they were seeing unfold on screen-- every swell of nausea was a reminder of their own embodiment, their status as spectators. It's easy to lose yourself in a good film, to forget for its duration that you exist. The viewers of *Raw* couldn't detach themselves from their own existence as they watched. They couldn't help being reminded of their own humanity, of all their psychic and physical sensitivities. They were reminded of all that is disgusting and discomfiting about the body, both through the mutilated bodies shown onscreen and the reactions these images provoked in their own personage.

Focusing too heavily on the story of people's extreme reactions to the film is doing a disservice to the complexity of Ducournau's vision and the deftness of her execution, but I can't help but find the Toronto story compelling. *Raw* is a movie about the parts of being human that we don't want to acknowledge, about the boundaries between what is human and what is not, about the visceral things inside us that we don't understand and don't always want to understand. The response that early screenings of *Raw* provoked isn't evidence of the film's grotesque nature as much as it is a testament to the film's success in calling attention to the themes that under gird its story, to the horror that can lie in the simple experience of being human.

The debacle at *Raw*'s Toronto debut may tell a story of how contemporary audiences perceive body horror, but *Raw* itself tells the story of one particular person's descent into body horror: that of Justine, a semi-militant vegetarian raised in a family of semi-

militant vegetarians. When the film begins, Justine is preparing to begin her first year at veterinary school—the same veterinary school both of her parents attended, and where her sister, Alexia, is currently studying. Justine kicks off the film as a star student, meek and unassuming but set in her convictions. She carries her stuff in a hot pink suitcase and calls her mother “mommy,” and when she is swept up into a brutal hazing process upon arriving on campus, she is disturbed by her fellow classmates’ willingness to degrade themselves in the name of the social order. When she is forced by upperclassmen to eat a raw rabbit kidney, she puts up a righteous fight, but her sister, who turns out to be one of the most merciless hazers of the bunch, forces the kidney into her mouth to shut her up, tainting her otherwise perfect record of vegetarianism.

After this first encounter with meat, Justine finds herself overcome with a craving for more. Slowly but surely, she abandons her plant-based diet, indulging in a hamburger stolen from the school cafeteria and gas station shawarma. Once the door is opened, her desires rapidly morph into something more extreme than those of your typical meat-eater. She begins feasting on raw meat she keeps in her dorm’s mini fridge and chewing up and swallowing her own hair. Her hunger is less for the specific culinary delights closed off to her by the dietary restriction she grew up with, like steak or Thanksgiving turkey, and more for flesh, plain and simple. And when the flesh of animals ceases to satiate her, she turns to the flesh of humans, a desire for which she gives herself into fully as the film progresses.

As Justine becomes acquainted with her cannibalistic appetites, she begins to indulge in other appetites as well, leaving her teacher’s pet persona behind and throwing herself headlong into the debauched activities of her peers. Many of Raw’s scenes take place at parties that toe the line between rager and full-on bacchanalia. Late-adolescent bodies

writhe against one another in fuchsia lit rooms while synth-heavy music pounds, liquor in ample supply. At the first of these parties, Justine enters the crowd with trepidation, staying only long enough to find her sister, staying away from the mind-altering substances being passed around through the room. But by the time she's eaten a human finger, someone else's tooth, and a bit of her own arm, she's chugging clear liquor by the cupful and making out with strangers. She seeks out sex wherever she can find it, be it with random classmates or her gay roommate, approaching it with the same voracity with which she hurls herself at other pleasures of the flesh.

Throughout all this—her experimentation with cannibalism and with everything else—she looks to her sister Alexia as a guide. Alexia has always been the more reckless, outspoken member of the family, the one who is willing to break the rules and buck convention. When we first see her, she's "so wasted," gyrating on top of a table at one of the aforementioned parties, a model of collegiate recklessness. She teaches Justine how to dress sexier, to pee standing up, and to get rid of body hair. While Justine weathers her early cravings for meat alone, she soon finds out that Alexia has the exact same ones, and they are simultaneously bonded and torn apart by this commonality. Alexia serves as both a model and a foil for Justine—someone who gives herself up fully to her desires and gains confidence through doing so, but risks notching up her intensity to a genuinely dangerous level. Ducournau makes it abundantly clear that Justine and Alexia were fundamentally different people before they came to college. The question that lies behind much of Raw's action is whether Justine's increasingly carnal behavior will make her and Alexia one in the same.

The juxtaposition of Justine's desire to feed on human beings and her desire for sex places Raw in dialogue with a lineage of other movies that explore the parallels between the coming of age process and various kinds of monstrosity. Over half of

the reviews of *Raw* published in the wake of its theatrical release compare the film to Brian de Palma's *Carrie* at least once, and parallels can also be made to films like *Ginger Snaps*, in which a girl gets bitten by a werewolf on the same night she gets her period and has to navigate hormonal fluctuations and bloodlust all at once, or TV shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which makes literal the idea that "high school is hell" by populating its heroine's world with cheerleaders who moonlight as witches and satanic frat boys. *Raw* is part of a long line of films in which the urge to fuck isn't all that different from the urge to kill and it doesn't matter if the blood pooling on the ground came from menstruation or a fatal wound, because ultimately, blood is blood.

But *Raw* also stands apart from movies like *Carrie* or *Ginger Snaps* in several significant ways. For one, it is absent of many of the tropes that characterize both the horror genre and the *bildungsroman*—its characters don't trade in snarky quips, there's not a jump scare to be seen, and authority figures, both benevolent and evil, are almost entirely absent from the action. Rather than being comprised of rapid-fire dialogue and explosive action, *Raw* is built on slow panning shots, disarming silences, and scenes where the camera lingers on its unseemly subjects for just a little too long.

More than its stylistic differences, though, what sets *Raw* apart from the films many are calling its predecessors is its lack of reliance on the supernatural. In almost every horror film that's focused on a young person's coming of age, the horror has come from paranormal forces. The adolescents who begin to behave violently do so because they have been possessed by some sort of external force—bit by a vampire or a werewolf or a zombie, cursed by a witch, killed but then resuscitated. In her book, *The Monstrous Feminine*, film critic Barbara Creed attempts to develop a taxonomy of the various feminized monsters that have appeared in films throughout the medium's history. The monstrous-feminine, Creed believes, can be encompassed by eleven different kinds of

monsters, among them the vampire, the “woman as monstrous womb,” and “woman as non-human animal.”

These various kinds of feminine monsters allow us to confront “what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, [and] abject” from a distance. It’s easier to process the frightening elements of the desires and impulses of young women when we think of them as coming from an outside source. Rather than accepting that sometimes girls are capable of doing ugly things, that a desire for rough sex or rowdy behavior can coexist with all of their other qualities, we take the traits we see as monstrous and create literal monsters to attribute them to. It’s the monster that’s making them act out, not really them.

In *Raw*, there is no supernatural reason given for Justine’s cannibalism, and none of the iterations of the monstrous-feminine laid out by Creed truly articulate her condition. She’s not a demon, she’s not undead, and she can’t be stopped with a stake to the heart or a silver bullet. The desire to consume human flesh comes from inside her: no mythology can explain it, either to her nor to us. Justine and Alexia’s cannibalism doesn’t make either of them any less human. They may be humans with horrifying, inexplicable urges, urges that may be pathological, but they are human all the same. The scenes in which the sisters attempt to feed on their peers are reminiscent of scenes in other films where zombies gorge on brains or vampires suck down blood, but in many ways, they are more disturbing, because we as viewers know that there is nothing about Justine or Alexia that makes them empirically different from us.

This is a discomfort that Ducournau was attuned to when she began working on the film; in an interview with The A.V. Club, she revealed that the question that inspired the movie was “why are we quick to dismiss some people from humanity when they

are human?" "I thought," she reveals, "what if I try to understand how someone who looks like me and is not a supernatural creature can [become a cannibal]?" What was the difference between me and them? Why do we think that we are entitled to dismiss some people?" Ducournau presents Justine and Alexia's cannibalism with relatively little fanfare—as though it is just another vice someone might pick up in college, like chain-smoking or getting blackout drunk every weekend. Rather than using the strange to justify the familiar, she uses the familiar to justify the strange.

Justine's first time eating human flesh is presented as just one first among many—first college party, first joint, first sexual experience. Your college years are the time where you're forced to confront your appetites head-on—without your parents there to set curfews, portion out your meals, or bar you from having sex under their roof, it is up to you to set your own limits, to delineate your wants from your needs, to make sure you don't end up hurting yourself or someone else. Like her peers, Justine is experimenting, the difference lies in the fact that while her peers indulgences are self-destructive at worst, hers are literally murderous.

There's one scene in which, after chewing off her split ends, Justine vomits up a long rope of hair. The camera spares the viewer no details, and neither does Garance Marillier, the actress who plays Justine. We see every drop of saliva that coats the matted braid coming out of her mouth and hear the retching noises as she pulls it out. It's one of the scenes that earned *Raw* its reputation as being one of the grossest movies of the year, and a clear sign to the viewer that something has become very wrong with Justine. But when she leaves the stall to wash her hands, one of her classmates taps her on the shoulder. "Two fingers will make it come up faster," she tells Justine in a soft voice, and offers her a gentle smile. To this girl, hearing someone get sick in the bathroom is an unremarkable occurrence; bulimia a disease she is used

to encountering, that she may be subject to herself. This girl is oblivious to the virulent form of hunger that plagues Justine, but she is well aware that destructive appetites of all sorts are far from uncommon amongst her peers, and she recognizes something familiar to her in Justine's abject state.

Rather than framing Justine and Alexia as anomalies, non-human creatures in a world full of humans, Ducournau attempts to show that there is something inherently animalistic about what we call humanity. By setting the film at a veterinary school, she sets up ample opportunities for the parallels between animal behavior and human behavior to be pointed out. As part of their hazing, the freshmen are forced to crawl through the school's basement on all fours and chant songs with lyrics like "help me, help me, the rabbit said, or the hunter will shoot me dead," the implication being that they themselves are the rabbits. A big rig driver that Justine and her roommate encounter when they go to get shawarma tells them that "pigs are just like humans." Even the language the characters use in casual conversation hammers in this point—students toss around metaphors like "don't chicken out" and "did a wolf raise you?"

As the film progresses and Justine sheds her inhibitions, she begins to court these comparisons, whether she intends to or not. At a party where she drinks herself into oblivion, she escapes briefly to one of the building's classrooms and flops down onto a lab table. In this moment, she looks like an animal prepped for dissection, splayed out inert, incapable of control. When she returns to the party, she crouches on all fours in the back of the room as Alexia dangles another person's arm at her, daring her to eat it. Too inebriated to care about the people all over the room with their phones held out to film her, gazing at her with disgust and amazement, she lunges for the arm, swinging her head back and forth and gnashing her teeth. "Go fetch!," one observer taunts. Sweaty and salivating, Justine does indeed look a bit canine. Not a cuddly,

lovable "man's best friend" kind of canine, but in a state akin to that of a rabid dog: who is dangerous, who can kill.

The next day, her memory of the previous night a void, Justine sees a video of herself in rabid-dog-mode that is being shared amongst the entire student body and seeks out Alexia. As she strides through campus in search of her sister, her fury is palpable-- it is obvious that she is not seeking Alexia out in hopes of having a measured conversation. The confrontation she is gearing up for will be enacted through brute force. And by this point in the film, we are familiar enough with Alexia to know that if Justine is spoiling for a fight, she'll fight back, hard. But when they do find each other, both girls are feral enough to shock even viewers who had a sense of what was coming.

Their fight is almost entirely non-verbal, without any dialogic exchanges to separate the sisters from two beasts of prey duking it out in the animal kingdom. Justine pushes Alexia to the ground immediately upon spotting her, and Alexia doesn't protest or ask why. Instead, she jumps back up and puts her sister in a headlock. They go on like this, throwing punches with all the force they can muster and no regard for the other's safety, no words exchanged besides "you taste like shit." The fight ends with the two of them digging their teeth into each other's forearms, their eyes wild, pained but also delighted by the taste of the blood they so crave. When they finally separate, they are each restrained by two of their fellow lab coat clad students, an ironic twist. One of the things they came to vet school for was to learn to restrain unruly animals when necessary, but have found themselves in the animals' position.

After their brawl has ended and they've both cooled down, Alexia accompanies Justine to her room and helps tend to the wounds her bites caused. Her animal instincts, like Justine's, coexist with human ones. She feels the need to devour, but she also feels

the need to nurture—both are primal instincts, but one can be seen as appropriately human and the other can't. In many ways, these two instincts are inextricable from one another. Ducournau was not just inspired by films like *Carrie*; while she was developing the script for *Raw*, she was heavily influenced by Greek myths and biblical tales of sisterhood and brotherhood. “[These texts are] all people eating each other up, or killing each other because there's too much love and one of them can't bear it so the other has to disappear,” she explained in the A.V. Club interview. “Of course [the cannibalism] stands for sex, it stands for violence, it stands for rebelling against the establishment,” she continues. “But I also wanted it to stand for love, and an excess of love.”

This is what keeps both Justine and Alexia from being true monsters—they are too full of love. Like a puppy who growls at anyone who speaks to their owner in the interests of protecting them, they don't know what to do with that love and express it in misguided ways. In many horror movies that take on teenage girlhood as a subject, all the love in the movie is expressed on the part of the monstrous girl's sidekick, the one who must use that love to save her friend from the demon possessing her. The monstrous girl, on the other hand, finds herself growing more and more detached from the people and things she cares for, any love she may have previously felt mutating into lust or just pure hate. But in *Raw*, people are allowed to be monstrous and loving at the same time. They are all at once humans, monsters, and animals. This is most obvious in the case of Justine and Alexia, but it can be said of the rest of their hard-partying, hazing-happy classmates, and probably all young people in general. And although *Raw* focuses its attention on the tribulations of an almost exclusively youthful cohort, the film's final moments suggest to viewers that this liminal state of being isn't something you grow out of—being part-monster, it seems, might simply be the human condition.



*Prosopometamorphopsia*  
Lili Price

# I Wish I Could Love Like My Kid-Self

Alice Makwaia

Underneath my kid-self's bed is a shoe box. It sits in the back-most corner, shouldering a pile of our mother's summer linens.

My kid-self is already tucked in, toes peaking out from beneath the sheets, the night our father finds the box.

Our father slides the box across the floor and opens it.

The only light spills in from the kitchen. It is just enough for our father to see what's inside: tens upon tens of dead ants.

My kid-self sits up. She peers down at him.

The warm, kitchen-glow settles only on the highest points of her upturned face. The shadows beneath each cheekbone resemble yawning maws. But her smile finds the light—it's brilliant—like she has somehow opened her trove of childhood sentiments, and that most innocent type of joy is brimming over the sides of her lips.

Our father disposes of the ants down the bathroom sink. Twice, the drain retches them back up. Twice—and then nothing. My kid-self stands behind him and weeps. It isn't fair. Those are *her* ants. Her cries collect in the corners of the ceiling and hang there.

The night before our father finds the box, my kid-self slides it out from underneath her bed for me to see. On her knees, one by one, she pulls out the ants—their heads smashed in, legs like coiled wire. Placing them on their bumpy backs, she names them all.



## **Millennium Baby** *After Eileen Myles's "An American Poem"*

Vanessa Genao

I was born in Flushing in  
the year the world  
was supposed to  
end. We are  
strung together  
by ones and zeros and  
drink blue light like  
it's the last drop  
of water in the only  
cactus on the edge of  
the desert. We deserved  
to have the screens  
shatter into pieces so fine  
they became grains of sand  
and have our cries drowned  
out by a digital symphony  
and be damned by our  
hubris. Yet there was no  
glitch in the matrix  
and on the darkest hour  
of the shortest month  
a girl was born. I was

welcomed into a  
world without sun  
and as a result  
my crown of hair  
shone black as  
calligraphy ink.  
My mother  
enveloped me in arms  
heavy from long  
nights overseeing the  
production of  
espresso makers  
at the Cecilware factory in  
Astoria. Her wrist was  
bound and the cord  
captured the galloping  
of her pulse and  
displayed it on the  
monitor. All the while  
my heart raced free.  
My father  
the last son of seven

one of eleven  
who grew alongside  
coffee trees and bronzed  
beneath a shameless  
Caribbean sun remained  
static suspended  
in silence until he whispered  
mi chiquita  
and I opened my eyes for  
the first time to look  
up at him because  
that was the voice who  
sang melancholy  
ballads close to the belly  
so they echoed like melodies in a  
ballroom. It was the dead  
of winter. It was  
the start of the  
world. It was  
starting to  
snow.

## **House of Sharks**

KG Newman

We moved in months ago  
but she refuses to hang anything on the walls.  
In the family room, I suggest this oil ship painting  
but she says it conveys  
fabricated turbulence, as if static ocean foam  
somehow suggests a quick forgiveness.  
She also sees two black whales somewhere  
in the distance behind the ship,  
balancing on a tiny striped buoy.  
Around the mammals, a circle of white sharks.  
And the most disturbing thing about this painting,  
she says while leaning in close  
and calculating our debt,  
is the whales remain astounded  
knowing full well the encroaching nomads  
have no need for oil lamps.



## We All Fall Down *An Excerpt*

Chelsea Carney

Duke was close. Nikki could always tell.

His body would stiffen, the veins in his neck popping out like rigid worms, and then he'd make that noise-- that deep, guttural groan like someone was stabbing him—and he'd collapse on top of her, wet and heavy like a sack of used towels.

Duke moaned. It would be any minute now. Nikki leaned into him and slid her fingers across the smooth muscle of his backside, momentarily mesmerized by the contrast of her pale flesh pushing hard against his caramel torso.

He clenched. His teeth sunk gently into the skin around her collarbone and as she closed her eyes, ready to hold him after his energy went temperate, she suddenly felt his body lift off hers. Surprised, Nikki blinked and saw his hand in front of her face. He was gripping the round stiffness of himself, all nine inches sliding abruptly through

his fingers like he was trying to hold onto a wild animal. He tugged himself one more time, those worm veins popping from his neck, and suddenly the bed shook and Duke shuddered. He sprayed himself onto Nikki's face, stringy and hot, then groaned and collapsed while Nikki lay there with his orgasm splattered across her eyelids.

What the actual fuck?

But instead she said,  
"Well that was new."

Duke rolled off her, his breathing labored as he leaned over the bed.

"Right? It was hot." He pinched one of her nipples while his other hand fished for something below. There was a clink. "Hey, you want to grab a drink downstairs?"

"I can't. I have to bartend tonight." Nikki could still feel the string of semen splashed over her eyelashes and was desperate for something to wipe it off.

"Is there a towel near you somewhere?"

Duke rolled back over and tugged the top off the bottle of whiskey he kept near his nightstand. He took a big sip and then threw Nikki a dirty Rag and Bone tee-shirt from the floor. Nikki wiped her face, but the fabric wasn't absorbent, and instead of getting it off, all she seemed to be doing was smearing it around her cheeks like lotion. Duke lifted himself from the bed and Nikki watched his naked body wander to the leather Chesterfield sofa, collapsing in front of the TV as he turned on the news. He had the whiskey with him and was taking intermittent sips between channels.

Nikki quietly stood up and tugged her pants back on as she hopped to the bathroom to wash her face. The faucet spit out lukewarm water and she splashed it into her eyes until they no longer burned. After a few minutes, she looked at her reflection in the mirror and groaned. Her eyes were bright red and there was still a feeling of intrusion under the right lid. She blinked three or four times, finally feeling the sticky glob slide out of her and into the sink.

"You want to meet up later?" Duke shouted from the living room. Nikki ran his toothbrush over her teeth and spit into the porcelain.

"Isn't that always the plan?" She yelled back.

"I don't know. You might be doing something later. Or someone."

Nikki sighed and poked her head out of the door.

"You know that out of two of us you'd be the one doing someone else."

Duke grinned at her and narrowed his eyes. He stood up, letting the three hundred dollar pillow she had helped him pick out last week fall off of his lap and onto the ground. Somehow he was rock hard again.

"There's only one thing I want to do now."

He took another sip of whiskey and stood, walking pointedly toward the bathroom. Nikki quickly shook her head.

"No, no. I don't have time. Not again."

"Fuck that."

She had to remember that the word 'no' turned him on. Not in an assaultive way, but in the way that powerful men liked to be refused. He was so accustomed to getting his way that when someone denied him, he'd find it a challenge—like climbing Mount Everest with Nikki as the tippy top. Normally she would use this to her advantage, but today was different. She had to work, and money was tight already.

Duke was inches away now and his eyes had gone dark and feral. Nikki could feel that tingling sensation in her toes, the one she always got when he looked at her like that, but she didn't have time. She was already late.

"I can't, Duke."

She tried to turn but he grabbed her by the waist and picked her up, kissing her hard. He always used too much tongue and smelled like Maker's Mark and aftershave, but there was something about him that made her animalistic.

"No time," Nikki whispered pulling back, but she already sounded breathy—a dead giveaway that her no had turned into a yes. Duke moved his lips to her neck and Nikki instinctively wrapped her legs around his torso. She always marveled at how strong he was. She wasn't exactly a waif, and here he was pushing her up against the wall, then swinging her swiftly onto the couch and bending over to pull off her pants with his teeth. He treated her like a feather.

"You're going to get me fired," Nikki persisted weakly.

"Perfect. Then you can spend your days here, naked."

"And what will the rest of your harem say?" Nikki's voice broke as her heart pounded. She could feel the deep pulsing inside of her belly like he was igniting her.

"No harem today," he whispered into her ear before biting down on the lobes and simultaneously sticking his fingers deep inside of her. "Just you."

Nikki couldn't help from moaning, and Duke was grinning that wicked, mischievous grin that she fucking loved, and she couldn't help from moaning louder. Suddenly he leaned forward and withdrew his hands.

"Duke--" she fake protested.

But he was already inside of her again, and she felt those deep, thick pumps filling her up, forcing her to bite down on the pillow to keep from screaming. Duke stiffened. Nikki shuddered, and they came together hard, like they had been both been set to a timer. When it was done, he kissed Nikki's neck and she quickly crawled out from underneath him, tugging her shirt on as she scrambled out the door twenty-three minutes late for work.

"I'll see you tonight gorgeous," Duke yelled behind her as the automatic door locked, leaving the last image of him naked and sweaty with that bottle of whiskey pressed once more to his mouth.

## **ASK AN ARCHETYPAL LANG STUDENT**

**An Advice Column**

## ASK A PHILOSOPHY BRO

*Dear Philosophy Bro,*

*I'm almost finished with my freshman year at Lang and I still don't feel like I've found my people. All of my friends from high school seem to have found a community that they fit into so easily, but I have no idea how to do that here. Do you have any advice on how to find a community at Lang, or even just in the city in general?*

*Sincerely, Kant be Alone*

DEAR KANT BE ALONE, Wow, what a wonderful question. I understand why you might feel burdened by a lack of feeling amongst your fellow students—in fact, I was once in your shoes myself. I remember being a naive, hapless freshman, wandering around the West Village with no destination in sight, just searching for a glimmer of meaning. I buried myself in my studies, concerned that I would never find a friend, but eventually, friendship found me. In my second semester, I signed up for a class that ended up changing my life entirely: Introduction to Nietzsche. In that class, I found a group of existentialists

whose passions mirrored my own, and we became fast friends. The group of us began attending DSA meetings (Democratic Socialists of America, if you're not familiar), where I met my girlfriend, Vickie, a beautiful, intelligent force of nature who I absolutely adore. I still get lonely sometimes but let me tell you something—loneliness is ephemeral and socially produced, and if you feel isolated from your peers, this may be because isolation is simply the dominant structure of feeling in the late capitalist imagination. Under the precarious conditions in which we live, "community" may be nothing more than a mirage. To seek it out so avidly will only lead to disappointment. Instead, seek out joy, seek out intellectual fulfillment, seek out camaraderie wherever you may find it. And your search fails, me and Vickie are in an open relationship, and I'd love to get a drink with you sometime—you sound quite charming, and I feel that we may have quite a bit in common

### ASK A FRIEND WHO LIVES OUTSIDE OF BUSHWICK

*Dear Friend Who Lives Outside of Bushwick,*

*I live in Ridgewood and I'm seeing someone who lives in Greenpoint... I just don't know if we can stay together. The physical and cultural barriers are too trying. What do you think?*

*Sincerely, Still on My Way*

DEAR, STILL ON MY WAY, If you think that commute is bad, you just try getting from your side of Brooklyn to mine. IMO, if you don't have to go into The City just to end up on the same side of the East River that you came from, then, trust me, its possible. Of course, you and your lover have to travel great lengths to see each other—As you well know, the L train reeks of Kombucha and Glossier's solid perfume: daunting for sure. It seems to me like you wanna keep this simple so I suggest logging on to Tinder and find another copy of them that lives off of Myrtle-Wycoff.

## ASK A FEMINIST FILM GUY

*Dear Feminist Film Guy,*

*I didn't take out enough money in student loans this semester and there's a remaining balance on my account. I can't register for classes until I get the difference paid. Help! What can I do to raise the money, and fast?*

*Sincerely, If I had a Dollar...*

DEAR IF I HAD A DOLLAR, That shit is real life. You should try crowdfunding. That's how I financed my thesis short film. Sure, my parents helped get the project off the ground with a small loan, but isn't that what parents are for? I'll send you the Vimeo link, actually. Real DIY stuff—you'll love it. It features a female lead. She doesn't have any lines, and only gets 00.94 seconds of screen time, but astute watchers will realize that she's the film's true protagonist. I have a feeling you'd get it. You ever see *Gummo*?

## ASK A JAZZ SCHOOL ATTENDEE

*Dear Jazz School Attendee,*

*I feel like I've exhausted my dating pool here at the New School and I haven't even gone on any dates yet. Do you think that I can get a boyfriend at the Jazz school? When I see them smoking at the corner of 13th and 6th, my heart flutters. You're an insider! What do you recommend I do?*

*Sincerely, Can I Get a Love Supreme*

DEAR CAN I GET A LOVE SUPREME, I get why the school of Jazz might seem like the place to find your potential love interest at the New School. Considering the dating climate at this university, I think we'd all benefit from the opportunity to be held like a saxophone. Dipped and swayed, if you will. But in that metaphor, you find your answer. You and I are not Saxophones. Take it from me, any single musicians here—emotionally or otherwise—are a mirage. If you are resilient you might find luck amongst the Juilliard crop.



*Crossing of the Sea*  
Maria Carla Genovesi

# **Before Dawn**

Daryn Coates

Before Dawn

Black woman sits at 8:30 in the morning

Black woman sits in fancy apartment

Black woman sits for job interview

Black woman sits and kisses up the white woman

Black woman sits and acts shocked for the white woman's woes

Black woman sits and gets coughed on by child that's not hers

Black woman sits and feeds child from breast but child not hers

Black woman sits and smiles

Black woman sits and listens

Black woman sits and watches white woman drinks her latte while she hasn't had breakfast

Whew I'm tired!

Black woman sits and throws her head back and laughs with white woman

Black woman sits and makes a breathe less sigh

Black woman sits with arms folded in her lap while white woman is Ms. personality

Black woman sits and smiles while worrying about her children she barely sees

Black woman sits at 8:30 in the morning

Black woman sits at 8:30 in the

Black woman sits at 8:30 in

Black woman sits at 8:30

Whew this load that we carry.....

Black woman sits

Black woman sits

Black woman

Black

Whew this load that we carry.....





## Couplets 11-14 and 82-47

*Erased pages from The Sign of the Four by Arthur Conan Doyle*

Rebecca Resinski and David Koehn

11

rubbed eyes

hawklike

facts

14

exact

glances

break

us

82

circumstances

trap-doors

some  
left

47

Why

you never

arrived







*Inside*

Maria Carla Genovesi

## **Flatbush Avenue to Peckham's Rye Lane**

Simone Allen

Sundays work just like how you and I remember them in places like these.  
Dawn cracks open with a layer of laze and yet it is anything but still.  
Sedimented into ritual, even for those who forgo a service.  
At high noon the swarm lets out.  
Scuffed patent leather shoes race each other ahead of trailing gossip.  
And the after church crowds accumulate to queue for food.  
I'll get dished out an extra helping, along with an address of endearment my ears  
have never heard me referred to by until now.  
Somebody's Naija aunty will ask if I need a braid up from the shop window  
and say she's seen me before  
Attempting to usher me in with palm oil covered hands that make her look like  
She's got new shellac.  
Here people think my parents come from somewhere farther than Bishop street.  
Farther than 99th and Wallace, Grenada, Lexington, or Worcester.  
Someplace where I'd need a calling card to reach home.



## LITERARY PICK UP LINES

Have you always wanted to pick up your crush but thought that throwing a line would be too corny and crass? Never fear, we have come up with pickup lines inspired by your favorite (and least favorite) authors and the books they have written that will guarantee you success in the art of love, or at least show how terribly sophisticated you are. Either way, win-win!

## SIR THOMAS MALORY

••••• AT&T LTE

3:54 AM

80%

Back

Call me Tom

Contact

Tue, May 24 2016, 8:54 PM

I know you like tournaments,  
so how about we joust around  
like Lancelot and Guinevere ;)

## JANE AUSTEN

••••• 11.5 Mobil LTE

7:56 PM

75%

Back Messages Jane Austen

Details

I don't mean to be  
prideful but I'm  
prejudiced to your type of  
romance writing.

### Where you should try it:

At a sporting event with lots of sweaty  
jocks screaming "Go Nicks!!!!" Ah, they  
remind you of your father. Are you into  
that? You shudder.

### Rate of success:

100% and free nachos.

### Where you should try it:

A deli with decent sushi.

### Rate of success:

A romantic evening. When you guys start  
rolling in the sheets together, you'll realize  
that both of your mouths smell like  
wasabi. Ah, love.

## GEORGE ORWELL

••••• AT&T LTE

1:22 AM

80%

[Back](#)

**George Orwell**

[Contact](#)

Today 1:16 AM

1984 is not just the title of a George Orwell novel. It is also the number of times we are going to do it tonight.

Let's do a reprint of the book and make that number 2020.

### Where you should try it:

Before your crush gets on the subway.

#### *Rate of success:*

- Will not get on the subway. Will go straight to your dorm/apartment.

## MALCOLM X

••••• Vodafone LTE

3:23 AM

80%

[Back](#)

**Malcolm X**

[Contact](#)

Monday 8:12 AM

Are you Malcolm X? Because you are exactly who I've been looking for all my life.

I would convert to Islam for you

The future belongs to those who prepare for it today. It looks like you came prepared to woo me

### Where you should try it:

At a student protest.

#### *Rate of success:*

The woke crowd that does not believe in pick up lines will start protesting for you to go away. But maybe your crush will like it.

## VIRGINIA WOOLF

••••• Sprint

1:07 AM

99%

[Back](#)

Virginia Woolf

Contact

Tue, Mar 12, 3:05 PM

Would you like to go see the  
lighthouse? It's inside my  
pants

Blocked

**Where you should try it:**  
Nowhere.

*Rate of success:*

*We aren't going to lie to you.  
Odds are not good.*

## HARPER LEE

••••• 11.5 Mobil

LTE 3:27 A.M.

14%

[Messages](#) Harper Lee

[Details](#)

You're a real hidden  
Jem.

Wanna link up?

**Where you should try it:**  
When you are bored in your hometown  
and looking to get down with someone  
for the week.

*Rate of success:*

*It won't be casual sex. It will become a  
long-distance relationship that will fizzle  
out after two years. Oops!*

## FRANZ KAFKA

••••• AT&T LTE

8:30 PM

80%

Back

Kafka

Contact

Today 2:40 AM.



Let me help you put the cock  
in cockroach

### Where you should try it:

At a family reunion with your  
older cousin's hot new boo.

### Rate of success:

*Disowned by your family. Duh.*

## J.K ROWLING

••••• 11.5 Mobil LTE 8:01 PM

75%

Messages JK Rowling

Details

I know you say it's not all  
wandwork. But tonight it  
is.

### Where you should try it:

At a theme park, preferably Harry  
Potter themed, but could be just  
Space Mountain.

### Rate of success:

*A round of applause from everyone on the  
Space Mountain ride. A small child asks  
his mother what you meant when you said  
that. She kisses his forehead and says, "I'll  
tell you when you get older. Right now,  
look at that. Now that is love."*

## STEPHEN KING

••••• Cricket LTE    4:07 AM    80%

Back

Stephen King

Contact

Today 4:01 AM

Are you a Stephen King novel?  
Because you are shining

You can be IT for me

I'll let you dump blood on me

Please stop

### Where you should try it:

In a library.

#### *Rate of success:*

*You'll be checked out. Checked out faster than a bestseller. Or whatever the kids read these days. Do the youth use libraries anymore? Is it all Amazon now?*

## WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS

••••• 11.5 Mobil LTE 7:57 PM 75%

Back Messages William S Burro... Details

u up?

naked lunch sound  
good?

### Where you should try it:

Before lunch.

#### *Rate of success:*

*50% win for you. 50% your crush loses their appetite. Well, more food for you.*

## DR. SEUSS

●●●○○ In a Box 4G

6:43 PM

16%

Messages

Seuss

Details

Let's get to know each  
other over Green Eggs  
and Ham.

### Where you should try it:

When your little cousin asks you how to  
approach their crush.

#### *Rate of success:*

*Your cousin is winning over the entire  
playground. Even the boys by the monkey  
bars who don't talk to anyone younger than  
six want your cousin. Everybody does.*

## ISABEL ALLENDE

●●●○○ AT&T LTE

7:30 PM

80%

Back

Isabel Allende

Contact

Today 7:25 PM

In a City of Beasts, you are a  
Beauty <3

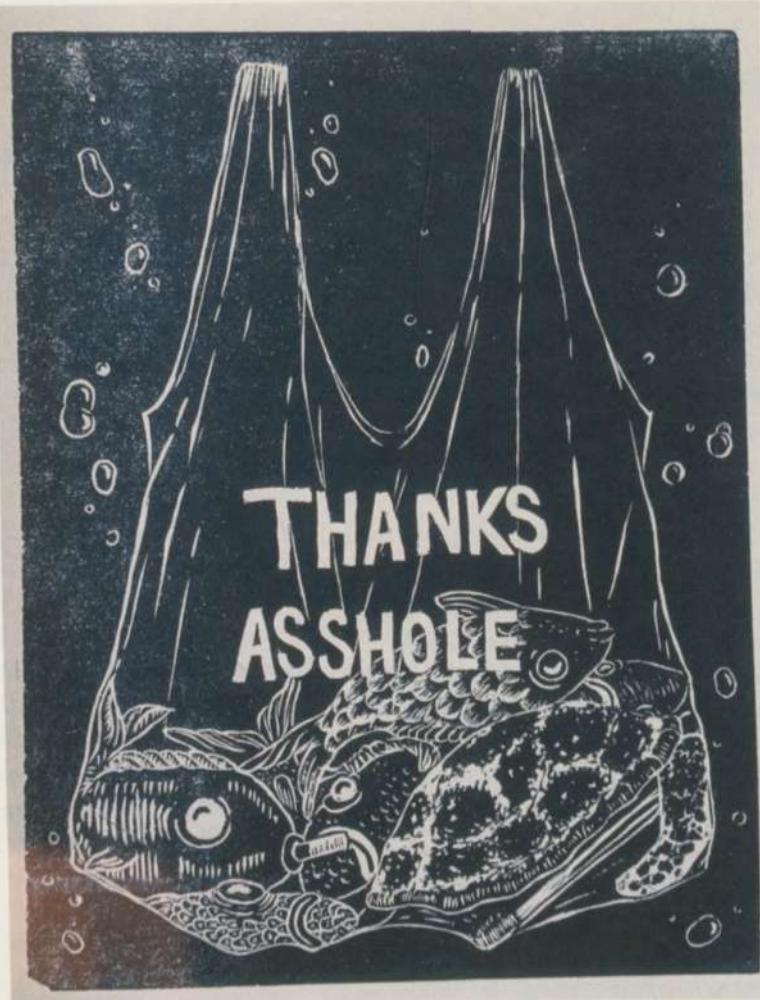
### Where you should try it:

When you feel lonely in a big city.

#### *Rate of success:*

*The city doesn't feel so big or  
lonely anymore.*





*Thank You*  
Diana Victoreen

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

### FICTION

**Carmen Major** is currently finishing a degree in Literature and Philosophy and The New School. She fell in love with writing and the world of literature at an early age, and is thankful for every opportunity she receives to exist in it.

**Darren Sung** spends more time reading and critiquing work than he will ever spend writing. He was born in California but raised in Shanghai, and as a result constantly feels out of place. He can only write under influence, and is inspired by stories that invoke a lingering, crushing sadness.

**Katherine Marciniak** is a senior at Lang studying literature and writing. When she does finally commit to sitting down and writing, she enjoys

the sensation of her 80's music idols screaming in her ears at full blast as she types away at her laptop. You can expect fiction from her if you chain her to a deadline.

**Alice Makwaia** is a musician and writer based in New York City. Previously a student at Oberlin Conservatory, Alice is now studying to become a poet. She is a lover of the uncanny and the bizarre.

**Alana Saab** is a writer and multimedia artist, exploring profound relations of love, desperation and confusion: from one person to another, from the psyche to the heart, from humans to a higher power. She has studied with spiritual healers and lucid dreamers around the world and currently lives in New York City with her cat, Blu, and spider plants.

**Chelsea M. Carney** is a writer living in Brooklyn, New York with her husband and their two cats, George Michael and Maeby. She has been published in Teen Ink Poetry Journal, won the #pg70pit contest in 2016, and attends The New School, as part of their Riggio Honors Writing Program. When she's not writing, you can find her camped out in her living room, guzzling coffee, and binging far too much television.

## NONFICTION

**Edgie Amisial** is a Haitian-American multidisciplinary artist, writer, and experimental filmmaker, studying Liberal Arts at Lang. Most of her work aims to challenge xenophobia, homophobia, racism and misogyny by exploring the many ways in which current systems of oppression force personal identity and political identity to overlap. Her self-designed Liberal Arts major specifically focuses on using personal storytelling and various

art mediums as tools for activism and political discourse.

**Isabela Cordero** is an undergraduate student at Eugene Lang, The New School, majoring in literary studies and minoring in history. Her primary genre is fiction, with a secondary genre of poetry. She's passionate about the art of storytelling and hopes to one day publish a novel. You can read more of work on Instagram at @cordero\_isabela

**Jane Dangel** is a sophomore at Lang studying Culture and Media and Film Production. Her preferred topics of exploration include indigenous and minority rights, immigration, and popular culture. Immigrant Ingenuity was written as part of the preliminary essay writing courses at Lang, and selected as a winner for First Year Writers.

**Lucy Bent** is in her second year at Lang College. She is studying culture and media with a minor in writing. She wrote Granny for her first year writing

the essay class, and was selected as a winner for First Year Writers. She enjoys storytelling in all forms, and wants to continue working on creative writing.

**Eva Silverman** is a senior studying Literature and Culture + Media at Lang. She primarily writes nonfiction, though she occasionally dabbles in poetry. Her writing has previously been published in Bandcamp Daily, The Le Sigh, The Media, and The Chapess, and she has self-published a chapbook of poetry and a zine made up of interviews she conducted with a variety of musicians and artists. At any given moment, you can probably find her gushing about her love of '80s pop music, subjecting everyone around her to her genius wordplay, or making a list.

## POETRY

### **Emily Hirschtick**

Ode to Rodeo Clown

**Emma Dowhie** is a writer from New York, who currently resides in Alphabet City with her two dogs. She is a senior at The New School and has previously been published by Fake Curator. Future endeavors can be followed @dowhi.

**Sae Feurtado** is a writer out of Brooklyn NY. Her writings consist of Short Stories, Concrete & Erasure Poetry. Which is inspired by personal emotions and memories.

**Giancarlo Castro Salas**, currently visiting grad student at The New School for Social Research. Peruvian and avid devourer of poetry. He found his essence in reading, writing, wine and jazz.

**Lauren Kate Hurlocker** is a writer in her third year at the New School. She focuses on poetry, but also expresses her thoughts

through non fiction. Her writing looks at the relationship between self and presented self, as well as what it means to be honest through writing.

**Ozra Yazdani** is a poet, playwright, and fiction writer. She is a third year Literary Studies major at Lang. She has previously been published in Conflux Magazine.

**Odin Scherer** is a guitarist, composer, and improviser who loves the music of Ali Farka Toure, Ornette Coleman, and Derek Bailey. Through studies with drummer Craig Weinrib he has realized his love for rhythm and has recently started expressing this through poetry as well as his music. A junior at the New School, this is his first written publication.

**Grace Adamczyk** is an interdisciplinary artist who considers writing to be a necessary component of her work. As with art, her poetry and short fiction is created instinctively as an exploration of an emotional state and bodily reaction. Writing allows for her to play with

language and imagery, creating space for abstraction in new forms, and she is excited to see where it will take her.

### **Genevieve Raftery /bə'kəmīNG/**

**Hannah Nishat-Botero** is half Colombian and half Pakistani, but was born and raised in the United Arab Emirates. Growing up her mother never let Hannah or her siblings say they were bored — few things bothered her more than that. So when she wasn't playing outdoors, Hannah spent most of her time sitting in her room painting, cutting up paper to make puppets, or writing in one of her many notebooks. Little has changed since then. She is currently completing her BFA in Illustration and BA in Culture and Media Studies at The New School.

**Daniel Tahoun** is a sophomore student at Lang from Miami, Florida, writing in his primary medium of poetry. His work aims to confront accountability and one's self in the midst of growing

cityscapes and nearing climate catastrophes that affect his hometown and the rest of the world.

**Katherine Iwagami** is a performer whose determination is to marry poetry and the sartorial self. The piece, 'DIY Mysticism' was a product of gratitude for those who have continued to want to hold her hand while she seeks out the incandescent insects in grotesque gardens. If you care to reach out and tune in to future meditations on diy mysticisms, Katherine may be reached here: @kt\_scarfweaver\_extraordinaire.

**Isabella Kazanecki** is a writer from Brooklyn and Staten Island, NY in the Arts in Context program at The New School. She writes poetry, non-fiction, and short fiction stories in addition to taking dance classes, petting her cat Marcel Duchamp, and working at a local restaurant. Her reviews, features, and flash fiction stories have been published in Musée Magazine.

**Vanessa Genao** is a writer of fiction and poetry based in New York City. She's majoring in Literary Studies at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts. When she's not writing, she can be found caring for her many plants, all named after Shakespeare's characters, or poorly dancing along to French pop.

**KG Newman** is a poet who believes there's a bit of honesty in everybody — it just takes the right woman, daughter, son or Sunday doubleheader at Coors Field in order to bring it out. In addition to hiking, camping, cycling, skiing and living out a lost dream in men's summer league baseball, he's quick to shoot in pickup hoops and always swings the driver way too hard on the back nine. He dreams in words, the projector long broken. And he's still waiting to paint the perfect poem.

**Madison Major** is a musician and writer. She lives in Brooklyn and grew up in Savannah, Georgia. Her work is ruled by nature and derived from many years

of sticking her toes down in the deep and dark marsh mud.

**Daryn Coates** is a multi-genre writer attending The New School, currently in her junior year. Her work primarily focuses on black womxn's role in the shaping and re-imagining of this country and their role in building its narratives.

**Rebecca Resinski** is a professor of Classics at Hendrix College and one of the editors of Heron Tree, an online poetry journal. She also designs and produces pamphlets and chapbooks under the imprint Cuckoo Grey.

**David Koehn's** first full-length manuscript, *Twine*, now available from Bauhan Publishing, won the 2013 May Sarton Poetry Prize. David co-edited *Compendium* (Omnidawn Publishing 2017), a collection of Donald Justice's take on prosody. David's second full-length collection, *Scatterplot*, is out from Omnidawn Publishing in 2020.

**Simone Azana Allen** is a writer from Chicago residing in Brooklyn. She is a senior studying Nonfiction writing and Race and Ethnicity at Lang. Her work thematically chronicles cities, cuisine, and the body as a means of speaking to ancestry and archive, ruminations on homecoming, and the idea of being both rooted + rootless.

**Sebastian Alexander** is a vibraphonist from San Francisco currently studying at the New School Jazz Program. He aspired to be a multi-instrumentalist until he arrived in New York and realized that that was both too hard and too expensive and settled on the cheaper (and less profitable) alternative of composing. Today he spends most of his days wandering the 5th and 6th floors of Arnhold hall looking for musical inspiration and jams to crash, but probably not practicing.

## ART

### **Maya Eapen** Between Time

**Diana Victoreen** is a designer and writer based in New York. Her practice involves everything from lithography and hand-carved relief printing to 3D Animation. In her work she is interested in creating narrative through the combination of image and text.

### **Snow Xuecan Ye** Untitled

**Jinghan Hu** is a junior graphic designer from China. She cautiously observes the changing world and boldly dreams about future possibilities on the daily. Jinghan plans to lead a life-long pursuit in integrating the conceptual and emotional aspects of visual design into effective communication.

### **Ryan Webb** Shade of Our Broken Bones

**Ting-En Tsai** As a first year Parsons student, Ting-En Tsai draws illustra-

tion often with ink. Her works are mostly line-based, simplifying the gradient of the shadow, and the characters' body and facial features. She came up with this way to illustrate faces as simple as faces in this work, *Mythologist and Mythologies*, years ago. Since then, she has considered it a drawing habit because she thinks it is cute.

**Elif Gecyatan** is an enthusiastic illustrator who still tries to find her style. She is from Turkey, her background is in sociology and design, and she continues her studies in Anthropology at The New School. Her class notes mostly filled with illustrations. She hopes to use her drawings as a "research method" because ... why not?

**Celeste Hutchings** is a multi-disciplinary artist whose practice includes, photography, moving image, collage, painting, drawing, and writing. In "Influence of Creation" she is contemplating the influence of her upbringing on her visual sensibility and connection to creativity.

## **Stacie Carlo** Picking Flowers

**Mike Naideau** is an artist living in Brooklyn, New York. His work is both emotionally heavy, like a stone sinking in dark water, and meditative, like the long breaths of lapping waves.

**Oliver Myles Mashburn** is a musician and visual artist based in Brooklyn, currently studying Environmental Studies at the New School. His work explores environmental themes through the lens of abstract expressionism, with a particular influence on stark contrasts and lines that evoke skeletal forms and marine life. He loves sharks, rock n' roll, and horror films.

## **Santo Jacobsson** Spaced Out

## **Yuco Li** Installation – Modern

## **Maria Carla Genovesi** Crossing of the Sea, Inside

# **FEATURES**

**Photographs for A Remembrance of Toni Morrison by Yetunde Sapp**, a multimedia artist, mainly focusing on visual art and fashion. Her work has been shown in restaurants, galleries and small businesses. Her work mainly focuses on black expression and styles that show the deepness of black life. Sapp can be found on Instagram @yaytuneday.

**Cover art by Jah'China De Leon**, an illustrator and visual artist and who is currently a junior at Parsons School of Design. Her work is currently showing at the Joan Mitchell Foundation in Manhattan. You can contact her at sunnymind-state@gmail.com or @sunny\_mind\_state on Instagram for commissions.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The staff of Eleven and a Half would like to express our gratitude to everyone who offered guidance to our staff throughout the process of putting this issue of the magazine together: Rose D'Amora of The Nation, Anna Dunn of Diner Journal, Alan Gilbert of Bomb Magazine, Brigid Hughes of A Public Space, and Stephanie Leone of The New School's Digital Engagement team for visiting our staff and sharing insights on their areas of expertise with us. We'd also like to offer a special thanks to everyone who contributed art to the issue, to Jah'China De Leon for designing its front cover, and to Katherine Marciak and Diana Victoreen for designing its back cover. And finally, to Albert Mobilio, our faculty advisor and an invaluable source of wisdom, whose insight and support made working on Eleven and a Half a truly special experience.





**11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>**

**CLAIM CHECK  
IN CASE OF ANY LOSS  
CLAIM BEFORE LEAVING**

Not Responsible for  
Contents of Garments or  
anything left overnight