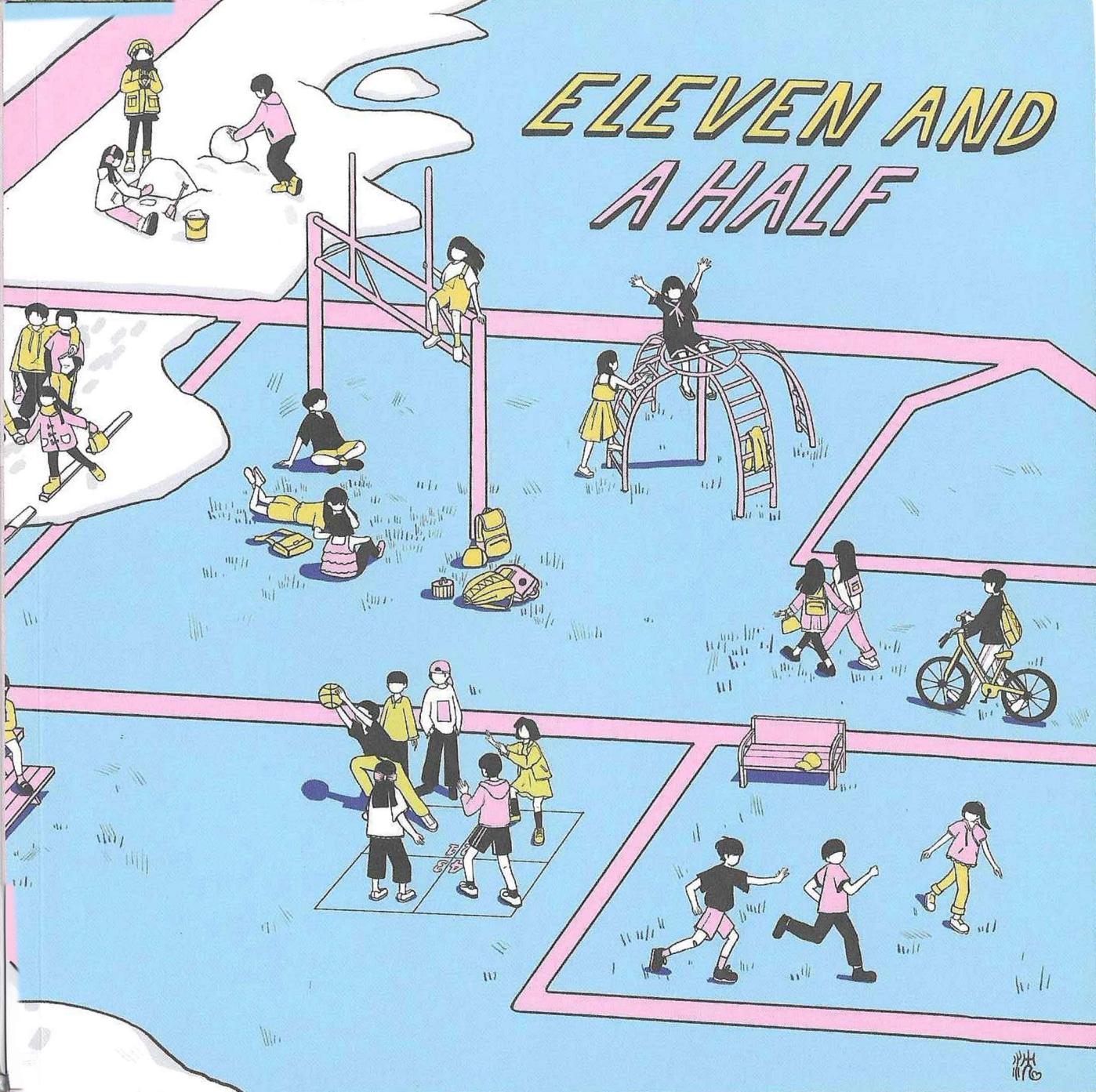


# ELEVEN AND A HALF





Volume 10



**Eleven and a Half**  
Eugene Lang College Literary Journal

Spring 2022



## From the Editors

From our very first meeting, we were apprehensive of the response we would receive for submissions of this year's issue. Having been through over a year of disconnect from the physical world, we worried that reforming a collective would prove to be a challenge. However, our community of writers and artists came together with an unprecedented volume of submissions, and genuine enthusiasm to be a part of our magazine. We are so proud to present our 10th issue of Eleven and a Half, and even more grateful to everyone in the process who have reminded us that there are few experiences that rival the closeness of an expressive and talented community. We can assure you that after our little year of unrest and un-relaxation so much self expression has blossomed out of isolation, culminating in something we hope will inspire and something we all can be proud of. Here's to a decade of our artistic collection, and here's to many, many decades more to come.



# Masthead

## Managing Editors

Claudia Langella  
Libby Markham  
Sydney Merydith  
Pia Mulleady  
Cecelia Sagun

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Cecelia Sagun

## Poetry

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Oli Armstrong  
Margaux Bouchegnies  
Em DeVincentis  
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# Verba Septem

Andrew Kamel

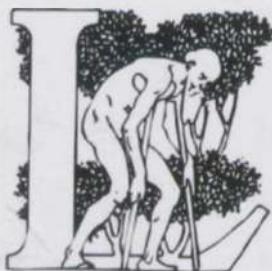
**hodie mecum eris in paradiso**



urrounded I'm at times  
like Christ at the supper

by admirers and yet  
my heart breaks for the scupperer

**sitio**



ike a parched Christ on the cross  
I drink up your sour wine

so the last of our blunders  
are but yours, my dear, not mine

in manus tuas, domine, commendo spiritum meum



f my remains were scattered  
like stars across the sky

would you contrive some constellation  
to remember my deeds of love by?

pater, dimitte illis, quia nesciunt, quid faciunt



aybe the serpent of Eden  
was lonely

and the trespassing nudists  
rude and unhomely

# Oyster Shells

Yi Du Zhao

My mother liked oysters.

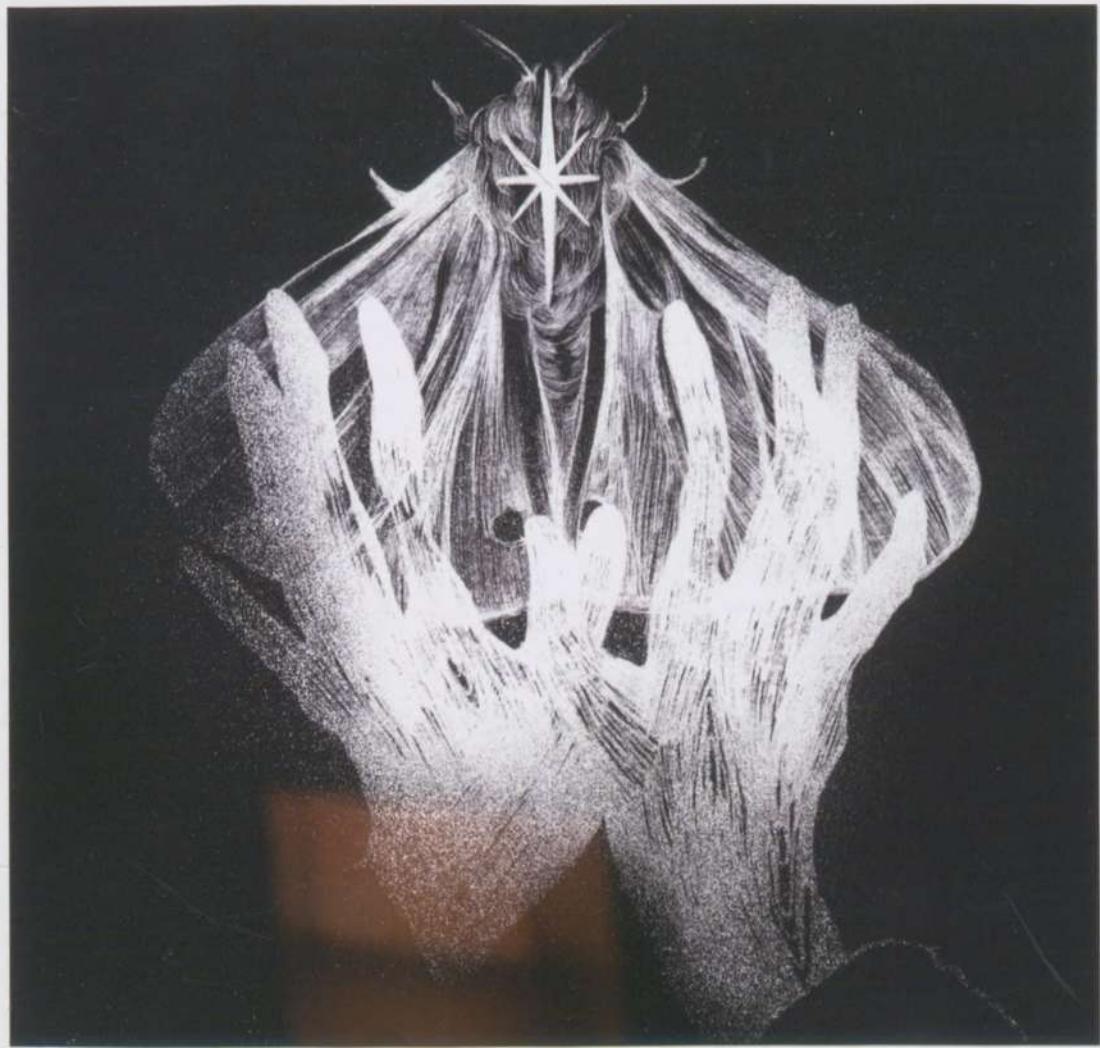
We used to order them fresh at the Farmer's Market and wonder at the sight, captivated by the ice and glass walls surrounding them. Their shells would glisten underneath the sunlight, and the opal rings on my mother's hands would reflect the same colors as the ripples of the oyster shells. The blues and greens intertwined with each other as I watched the lines on my mother's hands twirl and wrinkled like the folds of my oysters on my grandma-chic plate. Noises upon noises layered around me as I took another sip out of my clear jug of Asahi beer. Mom never liked to drink beer with oysters. She would have

chosen the 2009 Pinot Noir and teased me about my childish choice in alcohol. Sometimes if I closed my eyes and tuned into my memories, I could hear her voice calling out to me. I could feel her worn hands on top of mine, and she would tell me she's proud of me. Maybe that's the reason I found myself at The Cloak Bar; I just wanted to hear her voice again.

The bartender flashes me a kind nod as he hands me the slices of lemons for my oysters. I know he's begun to take pity on me from the way he sympathetically gives me more napkins than any other customer at the bar counter. Peter is his name; I remember the signature on his name tag tucked underneath his uniform's white pocket. Perhaps Peter thinks I also take pity on him, but he doesn't know just how much he reminds me of the person I was 20 years ago. I look back on that version of me sometimes, the naive teenager I used to be. I think about protecting her, putting her in a jar, and shielding her from the world. I can't reminisce about my past self for too long because her face starts to merge with my daughter. I imagine the world harming her the same way it hurt me, and the pain is almost as un-bearable as her first cries in my arms. I can't help what has already occurred and what is bound to happen. I know my baby bears witness to every bruise and wound her dad has ever given me.

I bite down on the lemon-coated oyster. It still stings just like it used to.

I wince as the tangy citrus washes over me. A foreign hand reaches for one of my napkins. The stranger beside me has pretty knuckles. His fingers are slim and slender, just like his silhouette. The faint lines of the blue and green veins on his hands illuminate underneath gleaming bottles of alcohol. He seems fragile and kind as if he's never used his hands to hurt another being. I want to hold them. It's been years since the last time I was able to touch another person's hand without the sense of preparing to flinch away. I try to remember what it was like to be caressed lovingly. The thought of being held seems like such a distant memory. The discomfort of pain almost came naturally to me; self-pity came to me only after I began to recognize the discolorations on my skin. I took a glance at my empty oyster shells. Whatever pearls and flesh they used to hold have been ripped and stolen from them. The warmth from the beer calms my nerves as I delicately put the empty shells on my plate. I take another sip of the cold beer, the ice cubes clink gently against the glass. I'm reminded again of the fresh oysters at the Farmer's Market. The way their hard shells glistened underneath the ice and protected their frail, wrinkled bodies.



**Cottonmouth**  
Yidu Du Zhao

# The Butterfly Garden

Elena Saviano

To concern yourself  
with the migration of butterflies  
is to breathe the blacks and blues  
of a growing pain  
If flight does not sustain you  
take to water  
or      wind  
or      wine  
You cannot smell the fumes  
from a bed of flowers  
inside a parachute of butterflies.

# From miệng to mouth

Lananh Chu

I open this piece with “there is”  
a dislocated body  
a vietnamese woman or a woman vietnamese  
which is adjective? which is noun?  
a queer woman or a woman queer  
which is noun? which is adjective?

Present and past  
my mother tongue not split them two  
not splited, not splitting  
past—present—past—present  
there is a dash  
which is head? which is tail?  
or neither head nor tail  
vietnamese—english—vietnamese—english  
which is past? which is present?  
or there is a dash

Rivers and the sea | rivers—the sea  
someone says every river comes to the sea  
A-world-body  
which is which water?  
you teach me to trace back my/our/your rivers  
by your/our/my tongue(s)  
taste of waters

Someone said my voice was soft  
“A masculine country”, they explained  
I am muted if you cut my tongue

In the supermarket  
my tongue tastes new flavors  
too salty, too sweet, too sour

On the train, someone stared at me  
They spoke something I didn't get it  
I was deaf, yes, “ignorance is strength”

In front of the church, I ask  
God in America, are you protecting me?

You know, New York's rain is soft  
A storm here, just the spring rain there  
Rain falls on metal roofs  
Hà Nội - I used to live inside rivers

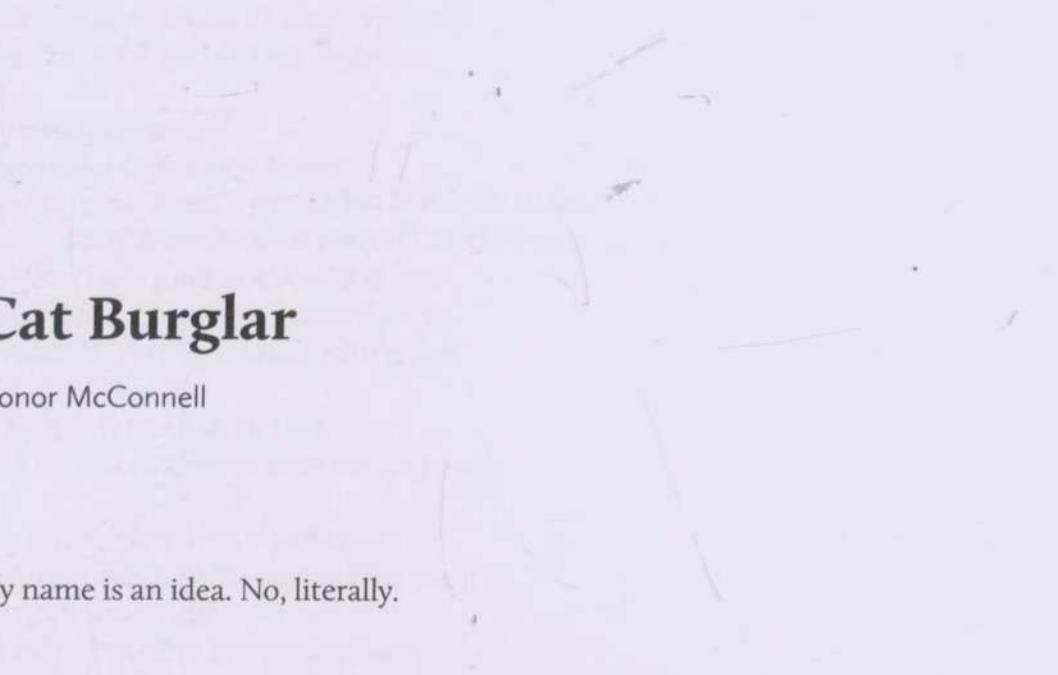
My baby rosemary, the balcony, Hà Nội  
surrounded by life plants multiplying evermore  
me, here, NYC  
surrounded by rosemary bushes evermore

In the hospital, someone asked  
my name  
why the last comes before the first?

I write  
a poem is fiction or non-fiction?  
No one asks its origin.

**Notes:**

1. "miệng" means mouth in Vietnamese.
2. "Ignorance is strength" by George Orwell in his novel 1984.
3. "Taste of waters" is also the title of a poem by Nha Thuyen, a Vietnamese poet.



# Cat Burglar

Honor McConnell

My name is an idea. No, literally.

It's a big idea that people either hate or they love. A monumental, weighted concept. People kill themselves, and others, over it. It can destroy families, countries, societies and shatter religions and gender norms. But here I am, the word written carefully in black ink on my passports and birth certificate with its two O's and grand H staring back, isolated from the meaning it holds to anyone but me. Honor.

When I was twelve I googled my name on a baby name website, curious to see what

mothers-to-be thought of my traditionally Irish and sometimes-Puritan name. To my surprise, they all hated it – it's too much weight on a baby! Sounds too masculine! I could never, it's too lofty for a little girl! The pink serif text on my screen spoke truth to my name I had never thought about before. I suddenly felt embarrassed, not just for me but for my parents as well. Why had they chosen such a name? Were they daft? Had they cursed me from day one? I thought it sounded nice.

To be clear, I had never hated my name before – sure, it's sometimes a little irritating to explain to friends, strangers, and baristas anxious to jot down a name on my cup. But I've created a tried and true phrase I repeat every time that usually gets the point across:

“H-O-N-O-R. Honor. Like the word.”

Pause.

“Anna?”

“No. Honor. Like honorable?”

“Oh.”

Sometimes the conversation continues further and the explanation circles around words such as dishonorable. If I don't explain clearly enough I'm tagged with Anna (ah-nah), Onher (is that even a word?), Onner, and my favorite: Otter. Of course, with such an

interesting and uncommon name also comes the jokes. From the very first hour I was born I've been the butt of the creative and gentlemanly joke of –

“It's an honor to meet you, Honor!”

Often paired with a bow or a formal handshake, a cheeky and smug grin. As I get older, it's usually now followed with an understanding and good-natured apology of “you must hear that a lot, huh?” Yes, I say. You have no idea.

But with things like your name – things you hear every day and never think twice about – to see something like the text on the computer screen stating my name was just frankly too much for one person to have, shook me to my core and stayed with me for years.

I felt burdened with the knowledge of my name, especially as the clinical anxiety settled deep into the crevices of my teenage brain. Was I an honor? An honor to have around? Did people think it was too pretentious? Highschool confirmed a couple of fears when one boy in my class snorted that my name was insanely pretentious. Okay, well I was just showing my powerpoint with my name on it. Thanks.

Eventually I broke down and asked my mom the childish and simple question. Why did you choose Honor?

"Oh. Yeah, I was going to call you Harriet, but while I was pregnant I saw Honor in a magazine."

"What do you mean you 'saw Honor?'"

"An article about this actress named Honor Blackman. I don't really know much about her, but I thought the name was nice."

"Oh."

One Google search later and I was knee deep in a study of Honor Blackman. Blonde-haired, blue-eyed, the classic 60's British heartthrob. I dug deeper, bewildered that the name I had fought so hard over had, in actuality, been so simple as something that sounded nice. To no surprise her claim to fame had been her role as a Bond Girl, opposite of Sean Connery in the 1964 Goldfinger. Neat, I guess?

But the thing about classic Bond Girls is that they have names. Not regular names like you or I, but the ever-questionable, overtly "Bond Girl" names that insinuate some otherworldly prowess and appeal. So naturally, Honor Blackman also had her particular name.

Pussy Galore.

See, apparently it's because she's the only woman in the United States of America to run an organized gang of cat burglars. Sure.

Years later when I reconnected with my father, I walked into his new farmhouse apartment tucked away in the rural countryside of England and found a surprise. Sitting on the floor opposite me was a large vintage James Bond poster from the sixties. JAMES BOND: 007 it read in that type of vintage font that begs you to look. Sleek, yet over the top.

"You like James Bond?" I asked nonchalantly.

"Yeah! I love it." He replied.

"Oh."

Curiosity had just killed the cat burglar, but satisfaction brought her back.

# Body as a Canvas

Out of all of the art forms, none may be as intimate as ink on flesh. Through tattooing, the body shifts from being merely a subject in art, to a tangible piece of the art itself. Tattooists create permanent artworks, forever present on the skin of those that wish to be inked. We interviewed three tattoo artists to learn more about the process of creating art on a living, breathing canvas.

Here's what they had to say:



# Maddie Su



Maddie Su is a Parsons students and tattoo artist in Brooklyn. You can find her on instagram @maddie.su

The first tattoo I ever did in the shop was a five hour chest piece of a heart with wings and full color and shape



To me what's most important is doing work that's meaningful to me. I love tattooing because I feel like it's like the most meaningful creative field when my artwork literally walked out the door and lives a whole life.



After exploring my passions of fine arts and fashion I mainly focused on tattooing.



Tattooing  
someone is  
so intimate



I started tattooing on myself  
My legs looked like a sketchbook  
It's just documentation of what



On temporary tattoos:  
I wouldn't want to go through  
the tattoo pain for something  
that's gonna fade away.

# Roni Haziza



Roni Haziza is a hand-poke tattoo artist from the LA area. You can find her on instagram @all\_theolives



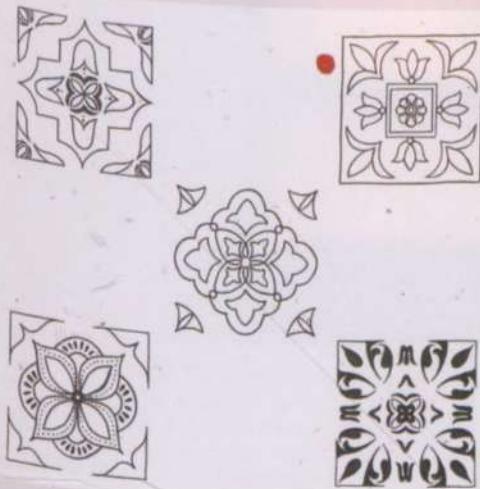
"I like (stick and poke) so much more (than machine tattooing). It's relaxing, it's like a grownup game of connect the dots in a way. I think it also feels a lot more personal. Experiences I've had with that have been way more relaxing and less stressful than like, a loud machine."



On having her art on people's bodies : "I think about it all the time, it's definitely kept me up at night. It's wild that people choose to have my art on them forever, it honestly means a lot to me."

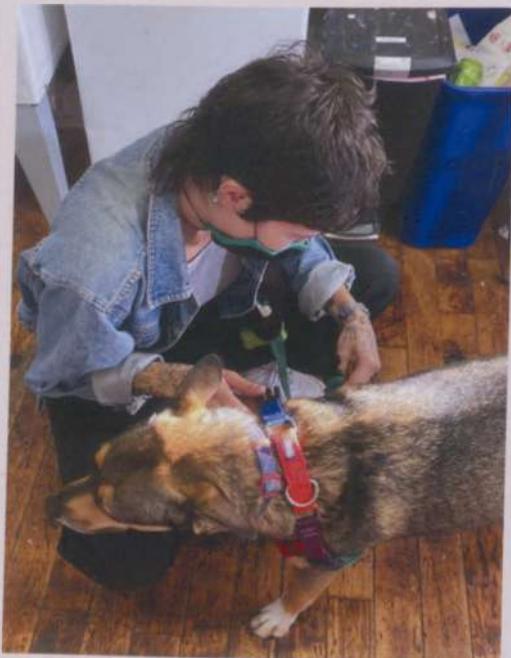


"At the end of the day, tattoos are like therapy for some people. It's a really personal experience."



On Inspiration: "I don't think there's one specific thing. It's keeping an eye out for things that I think would really look cool. A lot of vintage postcards, vintage embroidery. I'm really into patterns... I'm moroccan so I recently did moroccan tiles."

# Kit McDonough



Tattoo Artist Kit McDonough is based in Brooklyn. She does both hand-poke and machine work. Find her @coolfriendtattoos.png on Instagram.



On her tattoo studio (Nice Try Tattoo): "I didn't even know how important it was going to feel to have this space... You come here and you're going to be taken care of."

"It's different than just a piece of paper... people's bodies carry all of the history of their life. Tattoos get to live on someone's skin and stretch and age and live that life with them."



"A lot of people are community taught. Through (tattoo) trades and sharing techniques with other self-taught artists you can learn so much."



"This process is based on consent. That someone came in, and they said, I trust you to do this for me... every time I'm humbled by it"

# The Pain Scale Speaks

Katelyn Baker

*"How would you rate your pain from 1 to 10?"*

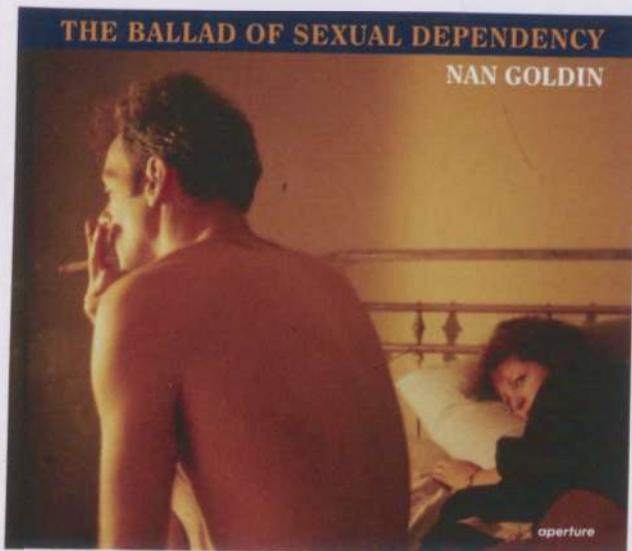
- 1- On Tuesday morning your mother's headache bounces off the counter. She winces in pain like a spiritual possession; exorcises the aching at the base of her spine.
- 2- The rosary, which hangs off the fireplace table promises hands that have used it wisely. It whispers to you and the glass reverberates. It seduces you through fear of recent prayers.
- 3- The secret scent of sickness in the bathroom has an affair with what's not said. You take showers down the hall for months and don't feel clean till mid December.
- 4- A seizure, which acts as an awakening.
- 5- Meet the ghosts that lounge on your mother's tongue.
- 6- The hospital faintly smells of something familiar. Lysol in the Hamptons, cleaning supplies in your choir room closet. You pause and it ruminates the senses.
- 7- Rub your mother's back until she falls asleep, her body contorted in agony.
- 8- Watch the Empire State undress. Roll over and kiss the darkness. Suffering is scripted and you act accordingly; a scene which you keep to yourself.
9. Hours melt like wax, slow and generous. You're restless. You bury yourself in regret.
- 10- Rang out like a warning when life loosens the leash.  
"Doctor, let me die."



Reflection  
Lara Agrawal

# Nan Goldin's Ballad of Sexual Dependency

Naomi Liechty



The first time I ever saw *The Ballad* was at MoMA in New York City. It was my first solo trip to New York City and I was touring art schools, alone. It was one of those dark rainy September days that was way too humid. I'd accidentally scheduled my visit to MoMA on their free admission night and the line circled around the block. The weather was

awful and I didn't know a soul that lived in Manhattan. I finally got into the museum, with my wet hair and wet purse, and wet everything. I walked into Goldin's exhibition. I had no idea who Nan Goldin was. There was a little plaque outside of the doors that suggested viewer discretion. What did that mean? I walked into the room feeling like I utterly did not belong in this place.

There were 16x 20-inch photographs lining the white walls every two feet and a long, thin artifact case in the back with some memorabilia in it. Diagonal to the case was a tall entryway covered in black velvet curtains. I made my way through the photographs and got stuck: David with Butch crying at Tin Pan Alley, New York City, 1981. Both figures in the photograph are leaning against a dark wooden bar that is almost out of frame. Their bodies are being swallowed by the black background, only illuminated by the pop of the camera flash. The burst of light highlights the tears glistening in the corners of their eyes. Butch has her fingers interlaced, her chin resting on top of them, elbows on the bar. David's hand extends across the frame, holding an invisible drink. They both have smiles on their faces. I stood in front of this photograph for several minutes, my own tears glistening in the corners of my eyes. There's something about people smiling with tears in their eyes, some-how not negating either the happiness or sadness of the situation. Happy with the sad. This style of image-making was foreign to me at the time but it still

hit me hard. I felt like I was the third person in this photograph. They were looking at me, including me. Goldin incorporated me in this photograph through her absolutely killer skill of making her subjects equal with her, the photographer. She doesn't have authority over them. By putting herself on the same plane as her subjects she blurs the distinction between subject, photographer, and viewer.

Nan Goldin's Ballad of Sexual Dependency is a photography project that took over five years of her life to create. "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency is the diary I let people read," Goldin wrote. "The diary is my form of control over my life. It allows me to obsessively record every detail. It enables me to remember" (MoMA). The Ballad was first shown in 1985 as a slide show at the Whitney Museum of Art, then in 1986 Aperture printed as a book. Since then it has been shown countless times in different museums around the world and was republished in 2012. At times The Ballad is graphic: nudity, sex, and violence take up the pages along with smiles, disdainful looks, and laughter. "Real memory, which these pictures trigger, is an invocation of the color, smell, sound, and physical presence, the density, and flavor of life" (Aperture). The love in this work doesn't have to look like a Hollywood romance of properness. It is messy and true, which makes it all the more powerful. The Ballad hops back and forth between mediums, sometimes being a slide show and sometimes a book, but Goldin much prefers the projected slideshow. It creates fleeting moments, just like the photographs themselves. The only reason The

Ballad exists as a book is because of the pressure put on Goldin from the Publishers at Aperture.

Three years after my first encounter with The Ballad, I stumbled upon it at The Tate Modern in London. It was a work of art I was already familiar with and bumping into it again felt like running into an old friend. I sat down and watched the entire slide show twice. Images flash by, accompanied by music by artists like James Brown and The Velvet Underground. Goldin's images shine in a slide show format. Seeing her photographs staring back at you, ten times your size, surrounded by darkness and accompanied by music is much more compelling than a small print on a wall.

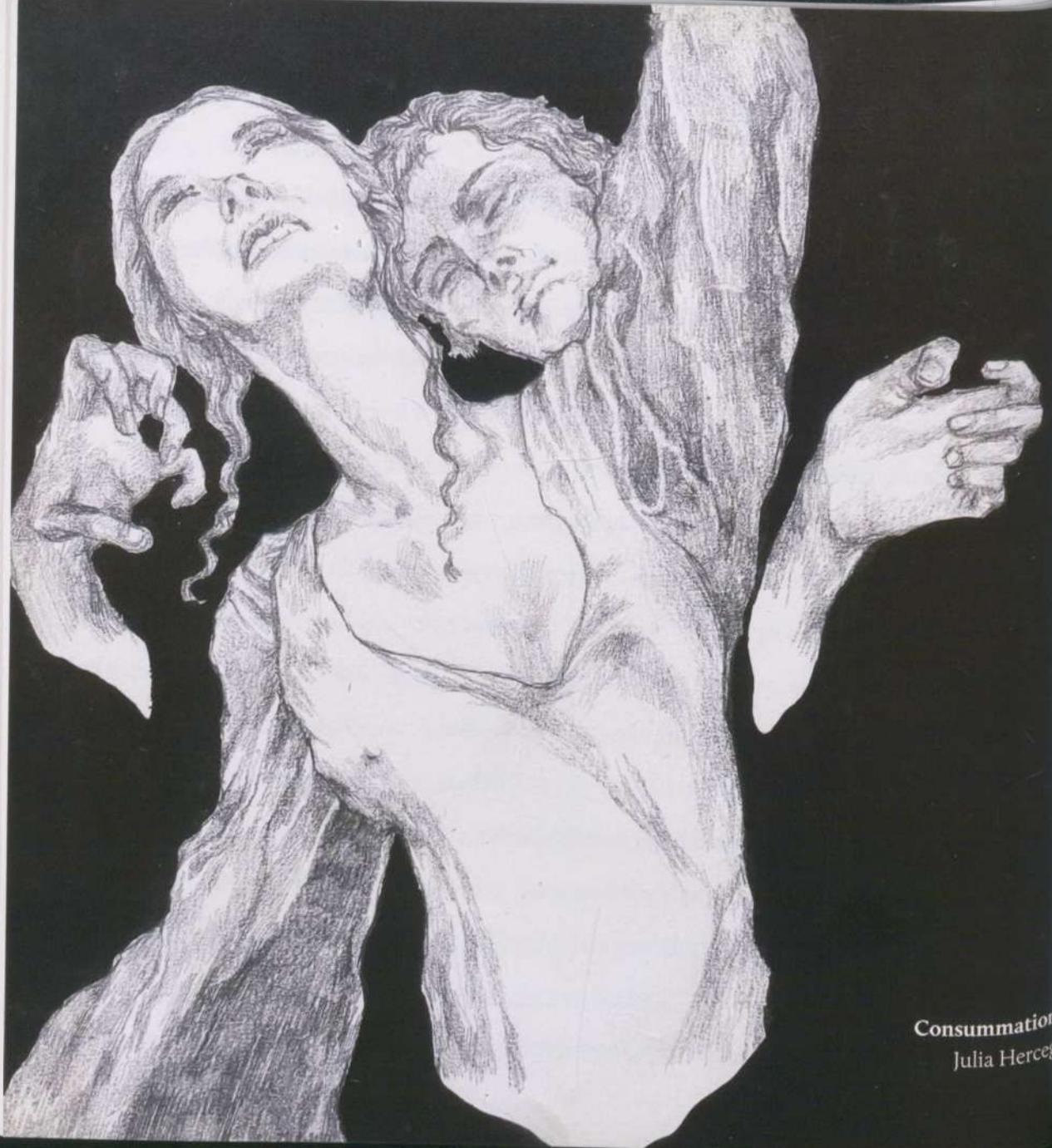
A couple of months after my visit to the Tate, I came back to New York City. I felt lost inside, not even able to recognize myself in a mirror. I decided to try to spend a day in my favorite part of The New School Library; the artist book section. Hidden in the back of the 7th floor of the University Center I found The Ballad of Sexual Dependency in a nondescript mustard cover. I flipped the book open and it landed on the picture that made me cry three years earlier on my first visit to New York: David with Butch crying at Tin Pan

Alley, 1981. I took a picture of it, printed it, and promptly framed it with yellow tape on the cover of my sketchbook.

One other photograph that particularly stuck with me from this most recent viewing of The Ballad was Nan One Month After Being Battered 1984. In this self-portrait, just as with David and Butch, Nan is fully illuminated against a dark background. She's staring into the camera, her right eye penetrating the viewer with two sharp red marks below it. Her left eye is glazed red and looks glassily beyond the camera. The plaque next to the photograph at the Tate Modern read, "In 1984 Goldin was physically assaulted by her then lover in a Berlin hotel, requiring major surgery as a result. Her self-portrait after the event reflects Goldin's honest approach, which never avoided showing personal trauma. Marking the end of a long-term relationship, the image acts as the emotional climax of the Ballad. Goldin says, 'I took this picture so that I would never go back to him'". Later I printed out the picture I took of the photograph with another image of the text piece next to it on my wall. I also added a quote describing the photograph from Olivia Laing, "Her right iris is clear but the left is suffused with blood, the same scarlet as her painted lips. She stares into the camera, damaged eye to eye, not so much letting herself be seen as willing herself to look, conducting her own act of remembrance, adding herself to the archive of what goes on between human bodies" (*The Lonely City*). This idea of photographing yourself adds another element between the conflict of power between

photographer and subject. Turning the camera on yourself in a time of in-tense pain is a powerful choice to make.

All of this isn't to say that I love every photograph in *The Ballad Honestly*, some of them make me uncomfortable. Partly because the version of New York City shown in *The Ballad* is dead. Partly because I don't lounge around naked with my friends. And partly because right now I don't have anyone to love me the way that the people in this book love each other.



**Consummation**  
Julia Herceg

# Thread

Cecelia Sagun

I have a cracking spine and cold toes and a too-big nose. You have a snappy ankle and Bambi eyes. You run warm but your pillows are shit. My blanket was too short to cover us both, so fair is fair.

We could live on the beach, you and I. Sunsets over water and doors open, waves roll in. Today I am sand and surf and kelp in the entryway. Do not get salt crust on my shoes, stomp your boots before you track seawater on the wood floors, dinner is at seven-thirty. I am making kare-kare, and would you pick up mango juice from the store? Tomorrow we could go to the movies, or we could knock the walls of this cottage down. Either way, let's make time to see the fireflies.

Drink black coffee for your eyes, kiss me with your whiskey mouth, I will pour orange juice in the morning. I'm the one who knows how to cook: you brought me breakfast in bed. Blueberries and a double shot, I watched the sunrise in your blue pajamas. I don't have synesthesia and I wish I knew what color March was with you. Cities on cities on pavement and I wonder what's down beneath the bedrock.

If you peeled away my skin, what lingers underneath? Am I apricot, sweet flesh and juice? Am I earth and vine or am I fossilized seashells, am I insects in amber? What are you? You remind me of petals, not a rose or hyacinth, but something honey-sweet and velvet. Antler fur or dove wings, whatever lies inside of you came from the woods, enchanted or not, and tomorrow is only a hope to get through tonight but you make it easier to hold on to. Last night I locked myself in the bathroom, lights off, and learned that my acrylics glow in the dark.

Your voice got me to get up off the ground and avoid the knives in the kitchen.

Like grenadine in champagne, you are cherry.

My professor said that "You have the right to demand something beautiful." I never asked for you, but I do believe that you are indigo. I will bring you a bowl of mango to eat while you study, and you bring me coffee while I'm at work. You make me think of my grandmother's raspberry bushes: I'd crouch beneath them for ages searching for a perfect berry. You are just the right type of tart and sweet to crack my ribs open.

*Galing galing, mahal kita.*

# Dear ,

Zein Bseiso

Dear ,

your grave unmarked  
your body unaccounted for

your limbs lay restless a grave for one  
built for hundreds

you have lost all blood  
your body was drained long ago  
the dam your mother built to hold her tears  
breaks leaks waterfalls

blood has stained the  
people walk around you  
In the bullet holes in the ground  
grows the Palestinian poppy

Love,

# Pace

Kamila Young

In the morning  
my last smell was of lily and first,  
a faulty coffee  
in which I've thrown in four  
spices and lit a homework candle.  
How I am alone today is a relief  
listening to cement and birds, hopeful  
that like a disease it will fade  
and you continue trusting. But I want  
to cry, impatient when  
there are people that love you  
just for showing up on time  
with frozen hair and crinkled hands,  
they don't question adaptation.  
Benny writes down the different ways  
you can pronounce chu cha che  
he is telling me to count the seconds  
it takes to walk down a street.



WHISPERING ANGELS PROMPT  
HER GOLDEN DREAMS

Elisha Parsons

# SUPERFLOWERMOON

Vanessa Genao

hold water / on tongues / for tides / become magnets /  
as shall you / bones push past tendons / charging  
down banks / up goes the current / celery and sweetfish  
perturbed / gravity / disturbed / all rises / to meet perigee /  
behind blue cedars / she glows / cryptic and cream /  
taking seas as sacrifice / obey her / and when skin breaks /  
drain marrow like nectar / and pray / to become full //



Cocoon

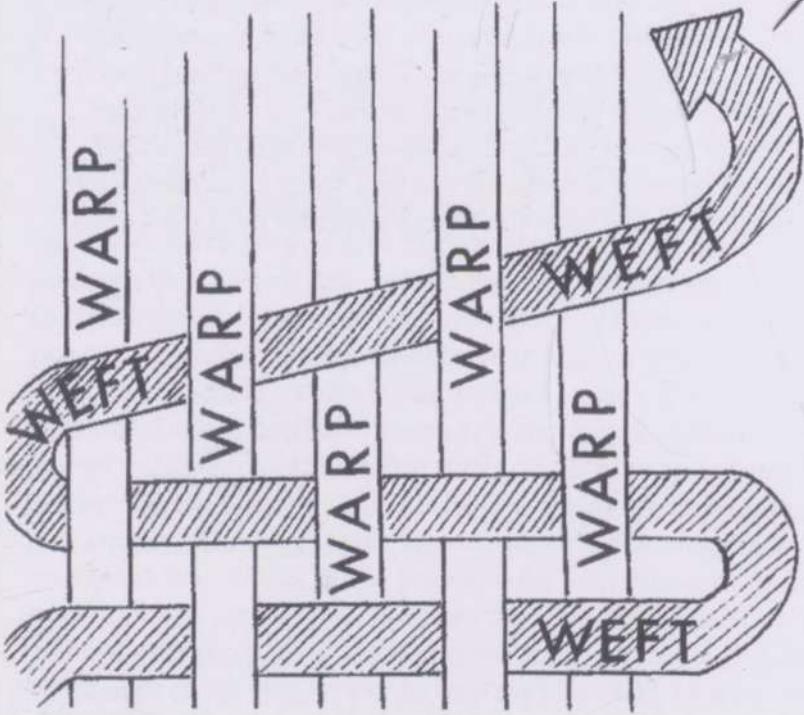
Elena Saviano

# *Altar Boy after Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl"*

A. J. Vitiello

Set the fork on the left and on top of the napkin; set the spoon on the right and next to the knife; don't bite your nails at the dinner table, or I'll polish them with deterrent; melt a Kraft Single in the microwave on your bagel if you really want to taste God; dump your dishes in the dishwasher after you finish eating; when blowing leaves to make yourself a nice pile, be sure to stand clear of the hydrangeas, because that way you'll preserve their bluish tint; rest on the cushion and not on the edge of the couch; is it true that you still write in your mother's diary?; always say thank you when the nuns remark how much you've grown; sit with your legs un-crossed and not like the faggot you are so bent on becoming; stop writing and get a real job; you mustn't flick your wrist, especially in conversation; don't rub your eyes, you'll look stoned or worse the devil; but I've worked five jobs and three at the same time; this is how to say a prayer; this is how to say a prayer before the evening meal; this is how you stay silent when your father is drunk because he's afraid of the faggot you are so bent on becoming; this is how you fill your father's cup so that it's not all ice; this is how you fill your father's cup so that it's not all water; this is how you pick raspberries, far from the house, because pesticides coat the bushes; when you are printing papers, do it at the library, or else we'll have to sell the car; this is how to be an only child; this is how to be a middle child; this is how you move to a new home; this is how you share a room in a new home; this is how you tie a tie; this is how you tie a tie for your uniform; this is how you bury your grandfather; this is how you bury your grandfather who isn't really your grandfather; this is how you wash your grandmother; this is how you wash your grandmother who isn't really your grandmother; this is how you wash your soul; this is how you dress in the presence of the Lord, so as not to tempt the priests who are seduced by the faggot you are so bent on becoming; be sure to close the closet door, even if the lock is broken; don't redefine marriage—you are not a wordsmith, you know; don't use both feet while driving—you will die; don't reject any stones, because it might be the cornerstone; this is why you vote pro-life; this is why you save your

money; this is why your friends are scum; this is why I am the parent; this is why you are the child; this is why I am the stepparent and you are the stepchild; this is why you leave the gate up, so I won't be forced to clean the tiles that your dog sprayed with piss; this is how to tell a lie; this is how you tell a lie to me; this is how you tell a lie to yourself; and if this doesn't work there are other ways, and if they don't work don't feel too bad about telling the truth; this is why you stay so-ber, so you don't end up like your birthmother who you're so bent on becoming; this is how to stay alive; always carry the cross above your chin; but what if the pastor won't let me carry the cross?; you mean to say that after all you're really going to be the kind of altar boy who the pastor won't let near the cross?



## Spiral Time

Margaux Bouchegnies

chronoquilt keeps  
you in time and  
me in time with  
each other

so that  
your body and  
my body becomes  
*our* body

so that  
your name and  
my name becomes  
*our* name

chronoquilt protects from  
deviations and drifting  
so that together  
we can make  
the most  
and continue  
making the most

# The Varied and Undulating Literary Time Experi- ience:

Interviewing Anna Archibald, Wendy Xu, and Emily Lee Luan, Em DeVincentis and Margaux Bouchegnies ask these poets what writing means to them. One has just graduated, another is about to publish their first collection, and the third is a distinguished poet and professor. Taking into consideration their various positions within the literary world, we consider their craft, their thoughts on the future, and solicit advice to create realistic depictions of what various forms of publishing and poetry can take.

# Anna Archibald



Illustration by Christina Napolitano

## interview

**Anna Archibald** is a recent Parsons graduate, holding a BFA in Fine Arts. She is the founder of *pan-pan Press*, an online literary magazine hosting poetry, prose, zines, and other text-based projects. Founded in early 2021, Anna's press is committed to independently publishing artists' work by housing each piece with care and legibility in mind, intentionally being an inclusive and accessible digital resource. Apropos bold design choices of green lettering and bread graphics, *pan-pan* becomes a unique space for readers and writers to connect, whether through archival or ephemeral effect.

Anna herself is from Honolulu, Hawaii, and currently resides in Brooklyn, NY, where she bartends and is working on a book of poetry.

### **What prompted you to start your own press?**

I was prompted to start *pan-pan* as motivation for my own writing practice, as I was finding it difficult to find places online where I could read work by writers who felt adjacent to me, or productive ways to share my own writing beyond social media. I was definitely inspired by my friendship with Remi [Hirschtick] and their reading series *Drafts On Tap*. The space they had created let me know that I had a lot of peers who might have a similar desire to both read and share their work in a digital space. My original idea for *pan-pan* was very much focused on publishing pre-existing zines and artist books digitally, and when we first launched it was with four small publications in this way, but it quickly became apparent that publishing individual poems was going to be our bread and butter (ha ha) because it was much easier and quicker to keep content flowing that way.

### **What obstacles did you encounter when finalizing this project?**

The project didn't start coming to fruition until I was laid off from my job during the pandemic. At the time, I was bartending full time and had been doing so since graduating college. I started sharing the idea for the site with friends that gave me feedback and ultimately the confidence to publish it. And the entirety of content entering the site is based on collaboration now; the generosity of people submitting their work and those engaging with the project online is what motivates me to keep working on it most days, so I'm immensely grateful for any drop of interest I receive and the enthusiasm people have shown me.

### **How did you decide on the creative direction/digital design for pan-pan?**

Design is an important element of the site to me, but also one that I don't fuss over. My initial thought on the visual direction of the site was just that I didn't want it to look like any online literary mag/website I'd seen before, and I think I achieved that as soon as the rippling bread slices were introduced.

I want the space to be fun to look at, but not overpowering to its contents. Just a more fun container for words on a page, and hopefully a space where people want to see their work. I think my design sensibilities are simple, but silly, as the design of the site has changed over time, but I'm proud that I have landed on somewhat of a brand identity that people can now recognize.

### **Is there any advice you can offer to graduating students / your past self?**

Graduating is always terrifying I think because you suddenly need to self-direct a bit more, and it can be much harder to feel like anything you're doing is productive, especially when you don't have a "job in your field" from the get-go. When I would look for more relevant work I always found myself weighing out the value of entry level jobs in the art world that paid less than what I made as a bartender or server, which could make it hard to feel confident in the path I'd chosen.

When you grow up without a lot of financial stability, your brain is always in survival mode, and it's been really difficult for me to break out of that mindset. But I've been slowly teaching myself to create the balance I want. There will always be more work that could be done or chased or money that could be made, but my day to day happiness depends on giving myself the things I want. That I can afford to take days off, to work as much as I need to and no more sometimes, to splurge on vacations or on dinners with friends that will give me a lot of joy. I feel like a lot of creative abundance in my life has come from being open to life and new experiences, and taking the time to connect with people, so I allow myself to lean into those things now.

### **Do you have any plans for the future of pan-pan?**

There are a lot of ideas I have for the future of *pan-pan*. I'd like to produce a printed anthology of curated works from the site. I think it would be really amazing to connect all the writers I've gotten to know and love through this

project into one book, and commemorate the first year or so of pan-pan. In my art practice I was always focused on analog materials and practices, tangible objects, and I actually started the site during a time when I was challenging myself to think about digital legibility and documentation of my work. We have published a few longer works, some hybrid in medium like a song/poem hybrid piece, and we have a few more currently in works that I'm excited about. I do want to continue thinking about the ways in which digital space can be a container for new iterations of preexisting work. My goal is to increasingly have these projects feel more site specific, and to embrace the possibilities of the web that aren't offered by the printed page, even if they exist in that way too.

### **What's your favorite type of bread?**

I'm always a savory > sweet person when it comes to breads, pastries, snacks in general. Likely a controversial opinion, but my favorite bread is probably a good olive loaf, like a sourdough or focaccia with lots of stuff in it. Mmm.-

wendy xu



Illustration by Christina Napolitano

## interview

Wendy Xu is an assistant professor at The New School, teaching poetry and writing. She defines herself as a poet, editor, and professor, and has three collections of published poetry, including *Phrasis* (2017) and *You Are Not Dead* (2013). Born in Shandong, China, she holds an MFA from the Program for Poets & Writers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Among awards, Wendy has been awarded a Ruth Lilly Fellowship, and the Patricia Goedicke Prize in Poetry. Her newest book, *The Past*, was published in September of 2021. In this interview, we focus on what visibility means in the context of her work, and how time plays a key role in this most recent collection.

**When and how did you start seeing your work as publishable? In other words, how did you grapple with the idea of needing your work to be seen?**

I love this great alternative framing of the desire to publish, that it's not necessarily about needing to throw one's work into the arena of evaluation, or about crossing an identity threshold from unpublished to publish, but ultimately it's about starting to find one's audience. I was always lucky to have some early captive audiences—my parents had no choice but to listen to my little stories and poems at the dinner table, and close friends knew I liked to write, and to journal. It was in college at the University of Iowa that I began to consider how a larger audience might make me feel—the validation it could bring to what is sometimes a lonely endeavor (writing poetry), and the new kinds of poems it might push me to try writing. It's really not that you wake up one day supremely confident about the value and publishable quality of your poetry, but more that you slowly and carefully start to believe the people around you when they tell you to your face that hey that poem was pretty good, you allow yourself to believe that maybe they're not lying to you, that they wouldn't set you up knowingly for disappointment like that—and when their combined confidence in you inspires your own (at least this was the case for me), you give it a try. You send out 3 poems to some little magazine and you wait, and you hope, and in the meantime you keep writing new poems that are exciting to you. It's a long process, but for me I'd say it began with trusting the folks around me at a time that (as a young writer!) it was hard to trust myself.

**How has your experience been working with AAWW? What advice might you give to Asian American writers who are looking to begin publishing their work?**

The Asian American Writers Workshop has always made me feel safe. Part of that feeling of safety is the non-reductive approach they have towards their work as an identity-based affinity space. My experience working with them in various ways has always been careful and centered on mentoring, the sharing of inter-generational knowledge, and removing barriers to access for Asian American writers. Their

programs are refreshingly uninterested in credentialing, legitimizing through gatekeeping, and prestige politics. I encourage everybody to attend a virtual or in-person event at AAWW, or apply for one of their mentorship programs, or read something written by one of their fellows, or attend one of their legendary open-mic nights! That's my advice for Asian American writers wanting to publish or not quite there yet—seek out these affinity spaces but check in with yourself about how you like the vibe. Do you feel comfortable, relaxed, or do you feel scrutinized, tokenized, surveilled? Do you feel like you're being asked to prove your marginalization in order to be embraced? Is the emphasis on connection and mutual creative exchange, or is it competing for resources from an abstract institution? Find your people, and then ask one another: how do we bring someone else into this space?

**Was there anything that surprised you about seeing your work published? (does it ever get any less surreal?)**

It never gets any less surreal, and, hopefully, I will never take it for granted. But what does change over time is my relationship to publishing, and what the process means to me. Publishing a poem or a book is of course still validating, encouraging, and affirming, but over time the pages of magazine and journals have become more of an experimental space for me—where once I might have been afraid of writing outside my comfort zone for fear of not being “publishable” (and I want to normalize this as a fear for emerging writers!), now I’m lucky to be able to share new and experimental and weird things with editors in order to ask: what do you think about this? Is this exciting, odd or new in a good way? Does this resonate with you? And to have a conversation with the future of my work in this way.

**How do you deal with the past (your collection literally being named that) and how do you ground yourself in the present?**

I very literally deal with the past in poetry. That's what it's, largely, for me. I think through the past, I sit with those I didn't have enough time to sit with in life, I try to

teach myself something about language and time and the melancholy that comes with the inescapability of the past. It's all becoming the past, all the time. Oddly, this fact grounds me in the present—the textural and emotional experience of being IN the writing of the poem, even if it's thinking about the past, is the most present and meditative state for me. I love it. I am most firmly myself, thinking in real time, in this moment, choosing a word, or sounding out the music of a line, there is nowhere else I could possibly be in that moment.

# Emily Lee Luan



Illustration by Christina Napolitano

## interview

Emily Lee Luan is a Taiwanese American poet and essayist. She is the author of *I Watch the Boughs*, selected by Gabrielle Calvocoressi for a 2020 Poetry Society of America Chapbook Fellowship. A 2020 Margins Fellow at the Asian American Writers' Workshop and the recipient of a 2022 Pushcart Prize, her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Best American Poetry* (2021), *Best New Poets* (2019), *American Poetry Review*, *The Offing*, and elsewhere. She holds an MFA iPoetry from Rutgers University-Newark and lives in Brooklyn.

**When and how did you start seeing your work as publishable? In other words, moving from writing for school into writing that you knew needed to be seen.**

Of all the questions that you sent me this one is weirdly the hardest because I can't really mark it? There was a long time that I was very much just writing for myself and for school. After college I worked at a literary magazine for two years and I was reading a lot of other people's stuff and I wasn't really writing. I was in the space of not really knowing what my poems do in relation to people's poems and comparing my work a lot. I think I just didn't have a very clear sense of what my own work did, but I guess I felt that way for maybe the first year of my MFA as well where I was very much starting to formulate, or have a sense of my poetic voice, whatever that means. I think at some point I realized that I wouldn't ever figure out what my poems did or which ones were the ones that were "publishable," and that it was all kind of arbitrary. The only way to actually get a sense of it was to try and send stuff out. As I got acceptances very slowly here and there, I was at least able to have the experience of seeing something published and not necessarily aspire to that but realize that no matter what I write, it can live in the world in some way. I also just stopped trying to figure out what was "publishable" or not and just sent out whatever I liked that I was writing at the time.

**What has your experience been like working with the AAWW? What advice might you give to Asian American writers who are looking to begin publishing their work?**

I received the AAWW margins fellowship in January of 2020, which was great despite it being right before the pandemic. My relationship with the workshop started way before that though; I used to live in the Bay and followed them from afar for a really long time and always thought of them as such an amazing non-profit. When I moved to New York in 2017 I started going to their events so I feel like my relationship with them really predicated getting the fellowship. I think that a lot of the work that they do is very very selfless . . . Once you're in their orbit they're always pulling on

writers in their community to contribute to programming or to their magazine. I think that relationship is really wonderful... I've done some interviews with them over Instagram live which is really cool. What's great about their organization is that they're very expansive in the way that they define Asian-American identity and they're constantly evolving what Asian-American writing is, which is I think really important as a literary institution.

As far as advice goes, I think I used to think that the Asian-American writing community, or any kind of more specific writing community, were really impenetrable or that I had to get a fellowship in order to be part of it. Now that I've been in New York a little bit longer I'm starting to realize people want to support other writers and that it's not more complicated beyond that. Especially in the Asian-American writing community for example, the history of Asian-American literature in the US is still quite new, so there's a lot of generosity and wanting to pull people up and advocate for other writers. I think Alexander Chi is a really great example of an amazing literary citizen that's constantly promoting anybody and everybody's work. There's a lot more of that generosity in these various communities than I initially thought. Now I think about being a part of the AAWW community as predating the fellowship because once I got the fellowship I was like, 'oh, I actually know a lot of these faces and people because I attended their events and was sort of in their orbit,' so I should have considered myself part of that community the entire time.

### **Was there anything that surprised you about seeing your work published?**

I used to be really fixated on all the minutiae of my poems which of course are all important, but you can't really control how the poem lives in the world. At the end of the day that's not the impact that the poem has in the world. The takeaways from it can be so vast and I don't think I expected that. I think seeing even just a single poem published somewhere and the responses that I got from that really broadened my perception of my poetry.

**Has your process as a writer been affected by now having a piece of published work?  
What do you see for yourself next?**

Initially I was trying to grasp at what about a poem made it publishable and whether I could replicate that and only send out those poems just to have that idea be dismissed again and again. I couldn't ever predict what was going to get published, and over time I kind of learned to not allow that to shape my process. Sometimes there will be poems that are a little more visual or should be read in context of other work, which I know not to send out. It feels like I'm plugging away now in a kind of pattern... sometimes I'm writing stuff, sometimes I don't write, sometimes I write a lot, I send it out, a lot of it gets rejected, some of it gets taken. I'm more so now working toward a bigger thing, which is my book that I'm hoping to get published after my chapbook . . . So that feels more on the horizon of putting together bigger work, which makes the smaller wins more tangible and part of a larger process.

# Delivery

Anmy Lee

Theresa Lin can feel that something is off as she pulls into her driveway. She squints anxiously out the pristine windshield of the Jeep Wrangler she had gotten herself as a gift after completing grad school. Her wife had begged her to get rid of it after they adopted their daughter Stevie, saying they had the SUV anyway and, besides, it made them look like such grotesque stereotypes. But Theresa refused, and now their family has swollen to two kids and three cats, and she's bringing her beloved Jeep back from the shop after its seasonal tuneup.

The first thing she notices after straining past the gleam of the newly polished hood is that the front door isn't fully closed. Eleanor wouldn't have been so careless as to leave

the door open when she left to pick up the kids from soccer practice earlier, with their wayward cats always looking for an easy escape.

Theresa checks the date on her watch. The movers aren't supposed to be here for another week, and living in a gated community, the guards at the front entrance wouldn't have let them in anyway without first checking with Theresa or Eleanor. Since the fortified entryway also renders a break-in practically impossible, Theresa concludes that their cats probably figured out a way to work the door handle, and she whistles for them as she sweeps into the house and slams the door resolutely.

"Luna! Caram – Oh fuck!"

Feeling as if her heart has stopped, Theresa finds herself staring at a man standing in the middle of her living room. His entire head is engulfed in an eerie contraption that resembles a motorcycle helmet, but has no discernible face opening or a visor. He's dressed in all black, making him appear no more than a shadow at first glance. The intruder is facing the window, as if he had watched Theresa pull up in the driveway and come into the house. As Theresa stares at him, completely at a loss for words, he slowly turns towards her, and she notices that he's holding something that looks a lot like a gun. She screams, violently flinching backwards, tripping over a misplaced cardboard box and landing sharply on her elbows.

The new angle allows her to register that the intruder is actually holding a briefcase,

which he languidly unclasps. As he pulls out an unmarked white envelope, Theresa catches a glimpse of a gun barrel poking out of the briefcase, and even as panic once again starts to clench up her throat, she feels slightly less ridiculous for her unceremonious fall.

The man standing before her starts opening the envelope with the same unhurried movements as before, and--finding her legs paralyzed with fear--Theresa scrabbles for her phone to dial 911, only to feel her heart drop as her fingers brush over her empty back pocket. She must have left it in the car, distracted by the open door. As she tries to gulp enough air back into her lungs to ask the intruder just what the hell he's doing in her house, he finishes looking over a piece of paper he'd retrieved from the envelope, and tosses it aside. In a single fluid motion, he reaches into the briefcase and pulls out the gun.

Everything is happening too fast. Theresa hasn't even fully processed that there is a strange man in her living room when the barrel, tipped with a silencer that she recognizes only from movies, is pressed against her forehead. The rush of adrenaline at the contact sets off a loud ringing in her head, drowning out any coherent thoughts of escape. And somewhere within this limbo, a distant memory starts to take shape; the faint growl of a motorcycle engine, the stickiness of her tears clumping her eyelashes like thick mascara, a strange sensation that all this is vaguely familiar -- that it has somehow happened before.

The slam of a car door, sounding almost like a gunshot, snaps her back to reality. There is no bullet in her head, but the blood drains out of her face as Theresa hears the

muffled laughter of children—her children—coming from the driveway.

It feels like a year passes before the door finally swings open, and Theresa at last finds her voice back in her throat, scratchy, barely a croak. “El, don’t come into the living room.”

And Eleanor must have been able to hear the way her voice was wavering, so different from its usual unblemished intonation, because she charges immediately into the living room, their two kids following right behind.

“What’s going on?” They stop behind Theresa, standing right in the line of fire.

Theresa looks back up at the intruder, tears now staining her voice as she sobs, “Please, please don’t hurt them!”

“Who are you talking to?”

Theresa is so focused on the man in front of her, who has now lowered his gun slightly, that she doesn’t register what Eleanor said at first.

“Honey, why are you sitting on the floor?”

Theresa finally turns around and is met with three sets of furrowed brows and frowning mouths.

“Mama, why are you crying?” Stevie stares at Theresa, and then up at Eleanor.

Theresa looks back up at the intruder again, who has not moved in the meantime. “Y—you mean...” She stutters to no one in particular, trailing off as dread trickles down her

spine.

Behind her, Eleanor manages to regain her composure. "Guys, Mama is just crying from watching a sad movie. Everything's okay. Go work on your packing, we don't have much time left until moving day." With one last worried look cast Theresa's way, the kids bound up the stairs, and Eleanor turns to face Theresa. "What's the matter with you?"

It takes everything in Theresa's willpower to tear her eyes away from the intruder and onto Eleanor. "N-n-nothing."

"Are you drunk?"

"What? No!" Theresa's indignation at the accusation clears her head a little. Eleanor knows she hasn't had a drink for nearly eight years now, so why is she even bringing it up?

"Do you need to call Dr. Cohen again?"

Theresa now climbs to her feet, annoyance twisting her features. "Look, I'm fine. I just...I was actually watching a movie." She peers back at the intruder, who is still just standing there. Why can't Eleanor see him?

Eleanor, meanwhile, looks pointedly at the TV, dark screen discounting Theresa's half-baked excuse. Theresa follows, glancing at it and – oh god. Anxiety turns to horror as Theresa stares at herself in the reflection.

There is no one else in the room other than her and Eleanor.

Behind her, Eleanor just shakes her head, resolving to go check on the kids. Once

she has left, Theresa turns back to the intruder, and whispers, "Are... are you real?" No reply, not even a twitch to indicate that he's heard her.

"What are you doing here? What do you want?"

Without a word, the intruder abruptly turns and sits down in an armchair, laying the gun across his lap. After staring at him incredulously, Theresa catches a glimpse of the paper from the white envelope that he had discarded on the coffee table, and picks it up cautiously. Across the top, in bold square letters, is the heading "Order 7004." Below, something that almost looks like a criminal record, with all of Theresa's personal information, and to the right, a picture of her unsmiling face, except about thirty years younger.

And suddenly it's all rushing back. The strange website promising a quick and painless job. The receipt in her inbox discreetly labelled with only a four-digit number and a delivery date. The days spent waiting, stewing in guilt and regret. The afternoon, when she ran out of her house right before it was scheduled to happen, and hid in the library at her high school until she was sure she could no longer hear the rev of a motorcycle engine somewhere in the distance, phantom or otherwise.

And then the days after. Always looking over her shoulder, jumping at any sudden noise, trying to survive with a frantic desperation that she never had before. Later, going to college thousands of miles from home, learning to forget, failing, drinking to forget. Failing

to learn, drinking to learn, swimming against sepia currents swishing around the bottom of glass bottles until finally breaking through the surface, clinging to a Communications degree and a resolve to start afresh, to become a new person. Someone who went to grad school and patiently worked up the company ladder for a six figure job. Someone who had a beautiful family and a house in the suburbs. Someone who never again had to think about the decision she made all those years ago.

Someone who no longer exists, as Theresa stands in front of the hitman sitting silently in her living room.

It's Sunday night - Movie Night, and Theresa and Eleanor are occupying opposite ends of the couch, their kids climbing up and down the ladder rungs of their legs as an animated movie about some princess or another plays in the back-ground. It'd be like any usual Sunday, except the armchair in the corner is still occupied by a strange man that no one other than Theresa seems to be able to see.

He hasn't said anything, or even moved at all since he sat down two days ago, no matter how many times Theresa snuck by and hissed at him that he needed to get out and that she thought she'd made it clear that she wanted her order cancelled.

And now, as he sits there, an uninvited guest to Movie Night, Theresa's eye begins to twitch with annoyance. She was doing just fine; had built this life for herself, had fought tooth and nail to get to where she was, and now this thing shows up. An anachronism,

a stubborn reminder of who she once was, a trail of smoke searing across the idyllic landscape of her domestic sanctuary.

When Eleanor goes to put the kids to bed after the movie ends, Theresa glares at the hitman. She desperately hopes to look into his eyes, to figure out just what he wants from her, but even if he isn't wearing his helmet, he seems to be facing straight ahead, his line of sight not quite landing on Theresa or the TV, as if he has no interest in either. Theresa deflates.

"I really don't know why you're still here," she mutters, breaking her stare and studying the popcorn kernels and cat hair strewn across her oversized T-shirt. "I'm not the person I used to be." She begins flicking the kernels off. "I'm doing much better now." Flick. "I don't drink anymore." Flick. "I'm a mother now." Theresa stands up and lets all the remaining kernels fall from her shirt. "And we're moving soon. But I guess you know that. I hope you don't intend on following us, because obviously, I'm very happy now."

Theresa doesn't even realize she's crying until Eleanor comes back into the living room and gapes at her in alarm.

"Okay, that's it." Eleanor's voice sounds the way it did that time they were summoned to the kids' school because Stevie got into a fight with another girl. "What's the matter? And don't blame it on the movie again because you've been moping around for the last few days and even the kids are getting worried. If you're drinking again, you need to

tell me right now."

"I'm not. I-I swear." Theresa sniffles and buries her face in her hands.

"Is it the promotion? You don't have to take it if it's stressing you out this much."

"No, no. It's got nothing to do with that... Besides, we've already taken out the loan for the new house. I need this job."

"Then what is it?" Eleanor settles into the couch, and gently tugs on Theresa's elbow, urging her to come sit next to her. "I'm really worried about you. I feel like you don't talk to me about anything anymore. Even when we first met, you'd always just say that you were okay, and that you'd just see Dr. Cohen if you needed to. But you never tell me what for. And it's not that I think I'm entitled to an explanation, but I'm your wife. You don't have to pretend with me. I'm not going to judge—"

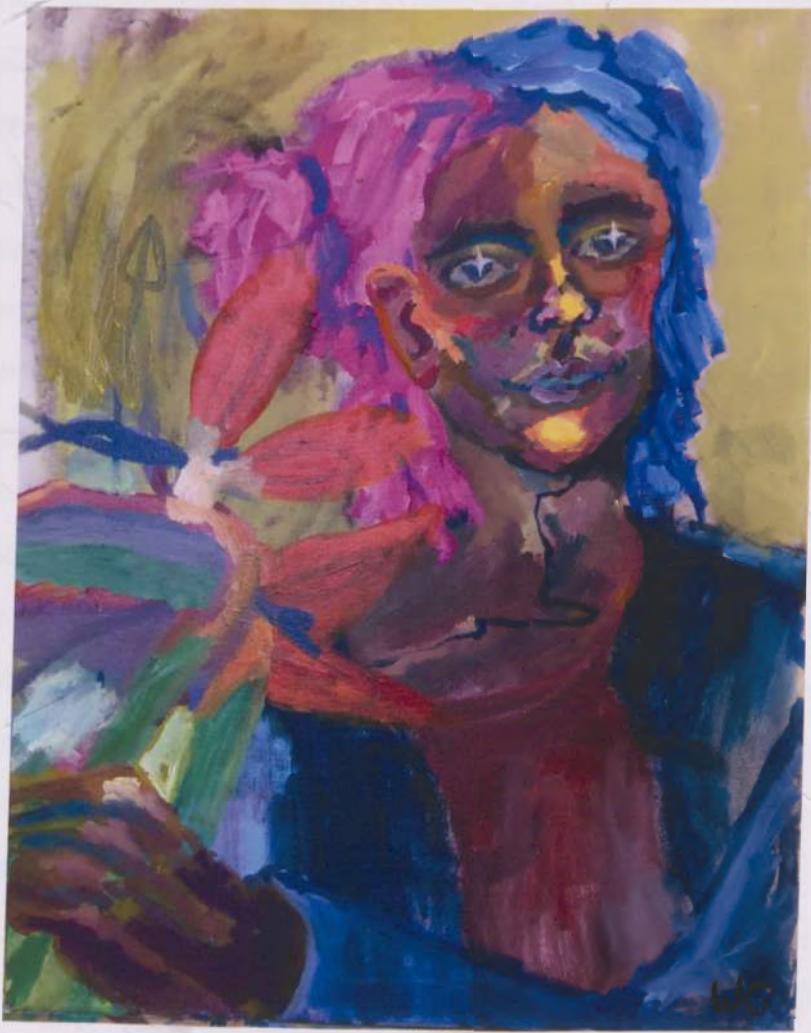
"When I was fifteen I tried to kill myself." The words seem to spill of their own accord, seeping out of every pore in her body. Theresa's legs fold and she collapses on the couch. An open wound, she fixes her gaze on the hitman, which must only look to Eleanor like she's staring into space, and Theresa, cleansed, tells her everything.

Theresa Lin is doing a final run-through of the house, making sure that all the cabinets are empty and that there are no beloved stuffed animals left behind in hidden corners. The U-Haul has left already, and Eleanor is outside herding the kids into the SUV, where the cats are already seething in their carriers. Satisfied that everything has been

accounted for, Theresa strides across the lawn to check the mail-box one last time. As she quickly flips through a stack of coupons and flyers, an unmarked white envelope tumbles onto the grass, the unmistakable sight of which sends a jolt of electricity down her spine.

The hitman left a few days ago, slipped away sometime in the night without Theresa noticing until she passed by the living room on her way to make her morning coffee. She had made sure to lock the front door every night afterwards, but as she gazed out at her moonlit silver lawn, standing exactly where he stood when she saw him for the first time, she observed not a single trace of him, no motorcycle tracks or discarded bullet shells, no empty stillness or sightless horror.

And so Theresa is not surprised when she tears open the envelope and pulls out the very profile the hitman was reading right before he was about to shoot her, labelled cordially "Order 7004." And she is not surprised when, at the very bottom, printed in bold square letters, an addendum reads, "Delivery unsuccessful. Target already deceased."



**Self Portrait with Birds of Paradise**  
Winifred Chavira

# Glitches

Libby Markham

Yesterday something started oozing out  
From underneath my closet door  
Making little puddles  
folding, bending, melting  
like a liquid does  
you never told me about matter that way  
said it didn't matter if I knew how  
to talk circles  
around my own head  
or dress for tea  
tea is a liquid, is it not?  
what if all the trees flip upside down and the buildings start  
wdrizzling onto my brow  
like wet hot rain that got stuck  
up too high.  
it couldn't think itself into a cloud  
couldn't bear to contain itself in such delicately  
precarious way.



A Visitation  
Julia Herceg

# Orphan

Sydney Merydith

Time has no mother. Time was not birthed; it has no skin to shed, no hair to seethe, no blood to bleed and drown in. Time is not a heavenly body; it has no body: nobody. Even the sun has skin and the moon has blood and the earth, well, the earth was birthed from rocks and gas and human greed and non-human teeth. Mother Earth has a mother and Mother Moon has a father and Time has no mother. And I have no mother. So the only words I've ever had to share with sweet and lonesome Time,

"I'll be yours, if you be mine"



Company of Lambs

Yi Du Zhao

# Boo!

Paloma Lopez

Enter the cloud of snow and submerge yourself. Don't react until you can feel your feet freezing over. Don't move until the deer has passed, and until the coyote chasing it has followed behind waiting for its flesh. Don't let the flesh be yours. Fear is your element--exaggerate it. Crawl until you reach the tree bearing berries and taste one (if you'd like). Begin to run further into the forest where that light is shining, keep running, keep running. Oh, he's gotten you; not the coyote, but the hunter--who mistook you for the deer.

# Lighthouse Keeper

Lily Wood

The sea spat you out  
like withered plankton.  
Writhing, bloodshot and purple

You roaring heathen  
Gorged on Uncle Sam  
You swallowed it whole  
I want you!  
Soaked in grease fat and gunpowder

Gave penance to the sea  
You  
Ephemeral fisherman,  
Your legs searched for saltwater  
Even when landlocked

You taught me to  
Shuck oysters, silver knife  
flashing through slick tendon  
then belatedly palm.

Blood spilled on driftwood piers  
Mixing with purple wampum  
And herring bait

The harbor welcomed you with open arms  
But you never took refuge,

Choosing instead to  
toil amongst your brethren;  
the barnacle, the jellyfish,  
the flashing-eyed cod

When they laid you to rest  
it was in a clean simple sheet.

# **Arrival Story**

Pippin Lapish

The last thing I did in Detroit was have a beer with my dad. I thought it was kind of him to set a stage where I could sink into my masculine posture. I wanted to leave him with a shred of my animus. I was drinking Schlitz because I read about it in *Stop Time* by Frank Conroy. It's a memoir that documents the author's youth in Florida and his adolescence in New York. After I read that book I thought, yep, I'm Frank Conroy so I started drinking Schlitz and I dyed my hair a darker shade of brown. I was feeling deprived of a boyhood so I decided that I had lived Frank Conroy's life. Mutations such as these are possible and not at all uncommon. My dad tells me that Schlitz was the cheapest, shittiest beer around when he was a kid, so that's what they drank. My dad's a carpenter. A real 'measure twice

to cut once' type of guy. He's unsentimental, and deals in absolutes. My Schlitz was a clock, counting down. And when time was up, I left the bottle on the table for him to clean up. I thought he might like that: a little artifact of me, evidence of our last encounter, so he could throw it away, wipe his hands on his jeans, and know 'that's that.'

En route to New York, being driven by my mom, I felt spoiled and disenfranchised at the same time. Like a prince, or a poet, doted on but permanently wistful. I tried not to think about the scale of my endeavor. I let the weight of the moment hang outside myself. I thought of the car as the shape of my ambitions, taking me forward. I rendered my anxiety in columns and prisms of steel and rubber. I interpreted my feelings as utilitarian objects. A means to an end. This isn't for nothing, I thought. The only thing I'll really miss is my car.

New York is a walking city. It makes me feel like a cockroach, to be scuttling on the sidewalk. In my car I'm elevated. Detroit, with its auto industry and techno music, is all about faux-futurism. It's about being highly evolved. Even all the vintage cars serve Detroit's fantasy futurism. They were designed for a Detroit that never came to fruition. They're artifacts from an arrested stage of evolution. My dad kept a 1965 Corvair collecting dust in the garage, like a memorial to his youth. I've always loved it, but I don't think he knows that. It was boxy, with a brim. A spy car, with a dark countenance. I never drove it, but I imagined it would skid across the night like a petoskey stone. We have a sign in

the garage that says Corvair: Tomorrow's Cars Built Yesterday. The Corvair, then, is a hauntological relic from a timeline that never materialized. It symbolizes the boyhood I lost out on, and the boyhood my dad will never get back. So the garage equaled my self-abasement. Mutations such as these are possible and not at all uncommon.

I'm moving to New York to live out an anachronism. Detroit is a city in perpetual transition, with its gears churning endlessly toward either an imagined future or a long-gone past. Detroit is grasping and clawing at a certain 'newness' that always disappears on the horizon. The competing notions of 'bring back old Detroit' and 'strive for a new Detroit' give the city a feeling of impermanence and liminality. Detroit feels less like a city and more like revolving doors. It is glassy and intermediate. Always busy mourning its former glory and heralding it's chrome-plated future. It is slippery, Aquarian, shot through with a quicksilver glint, I couldn't stand the mercurial slumps and spikes of the city. It's like living on a tripwire, a threshold. It's impossible to grind your heels into Detroit. I was always sliding across its surface, experiencing the city through my windshield, at one psychic remove. I'm moving to New York where I won't have to drive. Where I can feel grounded, in a city that's not constantly turning it's back on itself.

My dad sold the Corvair this summer. While the car was his monument to youth and freedom, my freedom is marked by my newfound carelessness. When he rolled the Corvair out, the first time it's been moved in years, there was a clean spot on the garage

floor. I thought about sleeping there that night, in its constitutive absence.

\* \* \*

When my mom and I entered the city, our car suddenly felt inappropriate, ill-advised, unwieldy. In Detroit it made perfect sense. In New York, it was a distended bullet, a steel body bag. Tar black and viscous, it sputtered and skipped and took us forward like ruined film.

My mom parked (impressively quickly; driving has always been her love language) and we unloaded. She drove home the next day, leaving me to walk everywhere. So I descended, bent my neck and cut my teeth and stepped onto the streets. I tried to embrace my new lifestyle as a flâneur, as Detroit broke into de trois in my tawdry faux-French ruse. I was a fixed point in the city. I stood around like a cop with a notepad, flippant and useless in the center of the scene.

It feels okay, for now, to live in New York and not work. I never had any belief in industry and I do not know the value of a dollar. In New York, my inferior sense of work is justified. I don't have to buy gas; I don't have to hear about anybody's promotion at Ford or General Motors. The car symbolizes the tensions between labor and play. It is vain but utilitarian, it is leisurely but industrial. I am rid of it, no longer living downwind from the

plant, no longer weighing my heart against my father's steel-toed boots.

I missed my dad but I didn't want to tell him that. Instead I texted him, "I miss the Corvair. What year is it again?" Even though I knew the answer.

He said "1965, first year new body style. I miss it too." He doesn't know how happy I am to be gone. He doesn't know that I secretly imagine him to have built every roof that's ever given me shelter. He doesn't know that I'm Frank Conroy. But he knows that cars are our lingua franca. Our common language, spanning the length of the rust belt.

# eye love you

Isabelle Khoo-Miller

HUMBLE YOURSELF. TRUST THAT  
THE HEALTH WILL STAY. THE  
WEALTH STAY & COME. DO NOT RUN  
FROM KNOWLEDGE. NOT FIXED BUT  
SHARED. NOT ALONE BUT PAIRED.  
YOU ARE CARED 4. YOU GOT THIS  
BABY. YOU & YOU. YOU & WHOEVER  
YOU CHOOSE. STAY INFORMED IF  
YOU'RE NOT WATCHING THE NEWS.  
GRATITUDE 4 THE FOOD. RELAXING  
IN THE NUDE. IT'S ALL JUST FLESH.  
DON'T BE OFFENDED BY WHAT  
THEY DO TO A SEXY OR NAKED  
IMAGE OF YOU. SURRENDER THE  
IDEA OF CONTROL. EMBRACE THE  
OPPORTUNITY OF THE UNKNOWN.  
THE SELF-DETERMINATION IN  
CHOICE. THE POWER IN VOICE.

# Becoming

## A graphic novel told on skin

Written by the entire fiction team, this story written on skin chronicles a collective journey of love, acceptance, and becoming one with our bodies. Shot by Sydney Merydith and Libby Markham. Featuring Elif Baysak, Cecelia Sagun, Stacy Lee, Kimberly Baldo, Elisha Parsons, Tanestrran Chandran, Libby Markham, Sydney Merydith, Leah Rivera, Chloe Goldstein, and Maki Villegas.



ONCE UPON  
A TIME

BEFORE THE  
WORLD TURNED  
TO DUST

WE WERE  
BODIES

TAKING UP SPACE

WARS WERE WAGED

OVER THE  
QUESTION OF



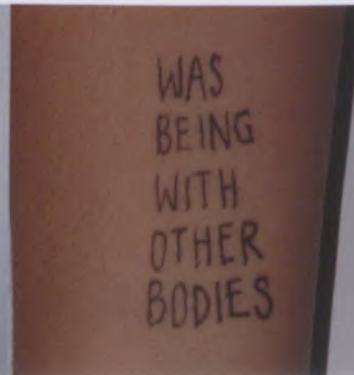
"ARE WE ART?"



OR ARE WE  
JUST  
NUISANCES



THE BEST  
PART THOUGH



WAS  
BEING  
WITH  
OTHER  
BODIES



WE FELT OUR  
HEARTS AGHE



SOMETIMES THE  
BODY WAS A PRISON

AND WE  
SHRED OUR SKIN

IN ATTEMPTS  
TO ESCAPE

YET  
EMBRACING  
ONE  
ANOTHER

IT WAS TOUGH

WITHOUT USE  
OR PROFIT

BOILING

WITH DESIRES

IS AN  
ASSEMBLAGE  
OF BEINGS

THE BODIES SCREAMED

BUT OUR VOICES,

THEY WERE HEARD





# Lessons from a Starfish

Em DeVincentis

or, notes on gender affirmation surgery  
- after Eva Hayward

I am cutting / cut // ing open / cut // open // opening soft and whole  
// cut soft / and whole // wholly cut open / a need // not wanting /  
not left wanting // not want / not left / open / I am cut //

re /  
/ assignment / moval / considered

damage  
from injury / skin shiver sliced & sutured  
contented with extending re /  
/ generating

every spine sensitive / spine sensitive to light

I am pouring porous being I am living being I am porous living alive I am pouring life

re /  
/ turn / claim / fold / form / spiral / ceive / veberate / crystalize / grow / vi-sion / volution  
/ configure / join / unite / imagine / new / pair / join / embody / storation / cast / side

to feel sated / to remove  
connective tissue  
as placing my pain / my joy



Untitled

Christina Napolitano

# Brain Removal ZIPPER

CAITLIN DU



Good For ...



Brain Removal

Caitlin Du

# body becoming

Iley Cao

can a body exist if it does not acknowledge the land that it is on to begin with?

my body,  
where does the border go,  
my body,  
where does the terrain run,  
my body,  
can you tell me when it thunderstorms?

i am smelling the sky for lightning, for damp sidewalks, a chance for rebirth.

my body. my body. my body. i put on cowboy boots. i put on a dress. i put in dangly earrings. i look like asian miss frizzle. i walk to the hardware store and pre-tend that my ass is not showing through this sheer dress. my body. i jaywalk in front of speeding cars and expect to never get hit. my body. my body is invincible. my body is the cat's 9th life. my body squirted so much that i had to rehydrate with two cups of water. my body scarred, my body sacred. my body kept the score. my body shakes. my body sobs. my body cannot remember the words to tell the doc-tor how my body feels, so my body leaves. my body runs at the thought of birth. my body is fish gills when i cannot swim.



# Vignettes

Elif Baysak

## New Coat

The wind is brushing my skin and the bedroom window is broken. I know she regretted it the second the bottle shattered the glass. She starts to clumsily walk down to the nearest hardware store, without a coat. It is freezing and she is trying to fix it, so I love her.

She takes on every action with rage but moments of care and sincerity still exist. Her plate with crumbs, mine with a slice of bread. Her bed a rock, mine a cloud. Her gentle brushes through my long, soft, ginger shades. I hold onto these as if they are my constant reality. I realize her potential, she becomes my mother. This is her worst breakup, I keep assuring myself, clouding the thought of others to come.

She returns from the store with a man and a coat on. His eyes, fixated on mine, are kindling something I can't put my finger on. His eyes are warm, inviting, and intentional. Moving closer he says, "Your hair is singing such a beautiful song." My mother smiles, and

I thank him to keep her smile alive. She gives me a cigarette and whispers, "do not come back until you finish the pack." "I don't smoke." "You do now."

I try warming myself with the lighter. There is no use. She falls out of love and in love within the same breath. Only if that breath could warm me.

### **Leaf**

He works like a clock, always leaving the room before my mother wakes up from her drunken sleep. Covering my nakedness in the creamy teared blanket, I lay inside my bed, facing the blank ceiling.

Brightness is shattered in my room. The small window, crushed between the neighboring buildings, leaves a small opening for the sun. The tall tree reaches my window, desiring to reach the sun. The wind blows, silencing the forceful thoughts. Leaves move back and forth, intersecting or separating. When the wind gets aggressive, the weak ones fall. The tree has its roots but each branch gives birth to ever-growing leaves. They are connected yet each one tells a story of their own. I want to become a part of the tree. Not the roots, not the branch, just a leaf.

### **Circles in Circles**

The small shore is covered with small stones. No one comes here, except me and Alemsah. People enjoy the warm comfort of the sand and the sounds of a crowd. We prefer the sound of the sea hitting the small stones. I throw a stone into the lake. A circle, moving outwards, the larger ones consuming the smaller ones.

The air is burning. We rush into the sea, swimming away from the shore with the desire to reach the sun. My arms are cutting through the short-lived waves. I gasp for air. The sun

needs to wait until I quit the poison. We extend our arms and legs, drifting in the rhythm of the current. The sea is our daybed. Boats' chains hit-ting the stones tickles my ear. This, clears my head, feeds my soul.

We swim back to the shore and light a cigarette. There is an otherly pleasure in the cigarette you smoke after swimming. The leftover salt on my mouth, the sun drying my wet skin, the gazing at the open sky makes me more tuned to the inhales and exhales.

## Coffin

I feel passion weighting on my lips by his. No second left to breathe, every second filled with his consuming saliva. With each vertical movement exercising his weight, his mouth opening wider with ominous breaths against my abandoned shrieks. My dull brown eyes feel bigger, about to explode, by taking in more experience than they should have. His eyes, fixated on mine, offer to ease his weight. Only it doesn't. The way he looks at me is against his actions. He presses more and more with the urgency to occupy me. I look down. Hair, long flocks of ginger shades, lifeless. His hands, swimming inside the shades, are stroking them. My body moving against his closeness meet with his hands melting into my hair. Clutching onto it, pulling it with a sadistic force, not letting it go. Not until he is finished. My pillow collects strands of hair becoming their temporary coffin, for their unwanted identity.

## A Fire

Sun carries glimpses of hope. Each day it is determined to travel through the clouds, rains, storms to shine. Doesn't have a care in the universe about what might happen. It is born early in the day and rests until the next one. Sitting on the shore, feeling the warmth on my face, I pull out a cigarette. Fires, crushing my soul, lit by a faceless man and a familiar woman. I exhale the smoke the same millisecond I inhale it. I don't want to hold it in. I

let go. I pick up a stone and crush the cigarette. I throw the stone towards the sun. A big splash. The outer circles are not consuming the smaller ones. They are created by the smallest circle in the middle.

### Razor

Existing inside a broken soul I clutch onto the razor. The receipt is resting inside the bag. I bought it. I want to see what life is without someone else's definition staring back at me each time I look at myself. My eyes resting on the mirror startled the razor through a grain of hair. Slow, little pressures accompanied by strokes. The aggressive howling of my metal hand moving so naturally, I can feel each air current moving across my skin. Razor starts feeling more present, colder. As each flock of hair cements the floor, my heart skips a beat. I am letting him go. A long stare from my eyes in the mirror follows this catharsis. I trace my face, getting to know this alien self. My lips, curling into a wide smile, believe in its act.

My bald scalp, shining on the mirror, seems to have a language of its own. I want to learn it. With each step I take towards the living room, my barefoot feels more rooted. My mother, sitting on the couch, staring blankly at the wall, seems to be drowning in the misery of his absence. Her face is a photograph of sadness, captured by my eyes occasionally for fifteen years. A life dragged under the spell of misfortunes tangled into my innocence. My mother turns from the blank wall to face me. It takes a while for her to locate my eyes. I take a deep breath in and re-lease, "I'm glad he's gone." "I know" she whispers, placing a box on the coffee table stripped away from any alcohol. How does she know? I sit next to her.

Opening the box haunts me with the bitter scent of the past year. Letters. All for me from him. I close the box. The room feels brighter and wider. I feel a warm wetness on my shoulder. A set of fresh tears, this time for me. My tears are ancient. I can still feel the razor in my palms: strong, cold, unbreakable. I am a small circle. I am a leaf.

A silence belonging to an eternal fills the room.

It's hard to be authentic  
when that authenticity  
Breeds loneliness

It's hard to distinguish  
between  
what I think I should want  
And what I actually want

It's proving difficult  
And the water is unforgiving

my chest aches  
from sunburn  
and loneliness

An intense upheaval  
of my self  
my spending

And, as always,  
overstimulation as  
a perpetrator of  
self doubt

THE PEOPLE THAT I NEED IN MY LIFE  
ARE FLOATING TO ME.  
I'LL KNOW IT WHEN I SEE IT.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO BE LOYAL  
TO MYSELF?

A year and a half  
And a haircut  
And a new puppy  
And too many tears  
to count  
And you are still  
collecting dust  
In your hat  
In the corner of  
my desk  
Next to the  
Eiffel Tower  
Next to the  
whispers of old  
friends that  
promised they loved  
me but only  
infected my  
walls

Above my head  
It was fiery red, that day  
I took the train to Chinatown  
With those friends of yours  
The ones I can hardly stand  
The ones that forget ~~me~~  
That I'm there  
I guess it means I'm full of  
passion and purpose, but  
My heart was glowing  
pale blue  
And the woman behind the  
counter  
Told me I worry too much  
About human relationships  
Need to give it some time,  
Practice patience  
And relax the left side  
of my neck

HOLD MY HAND  
AND LET ME WALK  
IN YOUR SHADOW  
KEEP THE SUN FROM MY EYES  
AND GUIDE ME GENTLY  
INTO THE REAL WORLD  
BECAUSE THE OLDER I GET  
THE YOUNGER I FEEL  
THE OLDER I GET  
THE HARDER IT IS  
TO LOOK UP AT THE SKY  
OR STARE DOWN AT MY LIFE  
AND SEE IT CLEARLY  
AS IT COULD BE,  
AS IT WILL BE,  
AS IT IS

VHOO REMOTEUD



## Pasta = Love

Vanya Suchan

My most recent ex said he fell in love with me when he saw how much butter I put on my pasta. He said he loved the way I enjoy food. We're still in love. It's complicated. Always indulging, I'd say I'm a glutton, but not a beast. I just enjoy a meal very deeply, tasting it under my skin. I have always loved food and its indulgent qualities. Not only that, but the craft of creating a good meal. I got this notion from my mom. She was always cooking, and we always cooked together. I sat on the counter, watching her every move, occasionally piping in, asking if I could chop up onions or garlic. She taught me at a very young age the language of food and the love that it can translate. She similarly sat behind her own mother as a child, learning as she watched. My parents are the kind of people who will

spend hundreds of dollars on food. The experience of a meal is what they prefer to spend their money on, on a deliciously intricate set up with a chef who knows what they're doing. It is something they prioritize. Food is language, it is culture, it is nourishing. Food is love.

Pasta has always been my comfort food. I remember being a kid and getting out of a long, hot bath and being handed a big bowl of spaghetti drenched in a cheap canned marinara sauce. The eyes of my stomach bulged out with excitement, my mouth watered to taste the salty, sweet, buttery combination that is a bowl of pasta. I slurped down every glossy noodle in seconds, my lips stained red from the sauce, and then crashed on the couch in a carb-induced coma. I always sleep best after a huge bowl of pasta.

A close friend of mine once told me that pasta cures depression. Not literally, but close enough. I type "do carbs cure depression?" into the search bar and the first thing that comes up is a [verywellmind.com](https://www.verywellmind.com/do-carbs-cure-depression-4158311) article which says that, "In a sense, reaching for sugary, carbohydrate rich foods can be a way of self-medicating depression. Research seems to support this theory: Having a meal high in carbohydrates tends to raise levels of serotonin, while a high-fat, high-protein meal may reduce them." Well shit, I'll take it. And with that note, I think I'll make some.

A recipe I like to whip up is pasta a olio. It's easy enough for someone who's never even heard of the dish, but for me, because of the countless times I've made this, my hands just work without a word from my brain. It sounds fancy, but only requires a few

ingredients. Oil, garlic, and parsley. And some type of pasta noodle, of course. Cheese is optional, but preferred. I always like to add extra. I used to make this dish for my friends freshman year, five or so of us all crowded in a cramped and stale dorm kitchen. I would sweat over that godforsaken electric stovetop and cook a huge portion of pasta a olio, dishing it out to them in shitty plastic bowls. Despite the sweltering stove top and the dishes that towered in my sink, I loved it. Because they loved it. I remember heads clumped together over their bowls, ravenously scarfing down the noodles like five hyenas. I was more than happy to cook for them. The ingredients were few and cheap, but more importantly, it was good. Even more importantly though, we shared it together. Those who I still talk to occasionally ask me to make it for them.

I'll start the recipe off by putting some water on to boil and salting it heavily. I used to put oil in my water so the noodles wouldn't stick together, but I heard some chef say it can increase the risk of the sauce not sticking to the pasta, so I stopped. Pasta choice is also important. I like something rounded like penne or fusilli, but this dish requires a noodle that is thick and droopy, like linguini. A shape that will dance in the sauce. Next, I prep all my ingredients. Finely chop some parsley and grate a lot of cheese, something hard and nutty, like parmesan. If you're following along, dice a few cloves of garlic, enough to make you want to brush your teeth after you eat this. A more traditional version of pasta a olio requires very thinly sliced garlic, so thin you can see light through it. Think

of that Goodfellas scene of Paulie slicing garlic with a razor blade. Well, I'm too lazy to do that so I recklessly chop some up with my dull knife on my roommate's crappy cutting board, splintering wood around the edges from overuse. Once I've done that, there's not much else to do but patiently, and lovingly, wait for your pasta to cook, al dente, about 10 minutes.

I once hooked up with the sous chef of Momofuko. A one night stand who I don't talk to anymore. He was everything I pictured a chef would be; quiet, meditative, with rough hands, and he carried his weight well. He had a soft rounded face with two glaring eyes that sunk into his head. In the middle of the night, hungry and a bit drunk, I made us pasta and a homemade red sauce. I used canned tomatoes, an onion, carrots and a spoon of honey for sweetness, with a couple cloves of garlic, then some fresh herbs tossed in right at the end. We whispered over the bubbling sauce, lit only by the light above the stove. Our lips made shadow puppets across the backsplash. We ate and smoked in my garden where I picked those herbs. He said "This garden reminds me of my grandmother's." He asked to cook for me in return, saying that I'd invited him over and made a home cooked meal, the least he could do was return the favor. After, we passed out. I remember sleeping very deeply that night.

Once the pasta is done, strain it, but you must save a mug full of pasta water. That is key! To any sauce really. The starches that seep out of the noodles into the water will

help bind all the flavors, allow them to mingle, get to know each other and sing in your mouth. Next, to a large saucepan, add a lot of olive oil. So much oil you're simply disgusted with yourself, but that's essentially the sauce, the aromatics are infused within. Once the oil is shimmering, add your garlic in the oil. Stand over the pan and breathe in, deeply. Ahhhhhh, garlic! One of the best things to grow on this planet. Once it starts getting really fragrant, but before turning golden, I like to add a couple dashes of red pepper flakes for some spice to round out the rich and bold notes of the olive oil. Then add the pasta. Mix it around, occasionally dosing in some of that precious starchy water. I'm sure this dish has measurements, but I never measure anything out. No real cooks do. Cooking is all about intuition. When you start cooking often, you learn how much of what salt, spices, butter will look and taste like. What it feels like in your hands. Cooking is intuitive, it is emotional. It cannot be taught. It's something you just realize one day after hours and hours of arduous practice and a lot of failures. You just know.

Once the oil and water combine and give you a silken texture, add in your parsley to wilt. Mix around, add the cheese, salt and pepper to taste. The best part is when the serving spoon is caked in extra cheese and garlic. I save that bite for myself. Then, serve preferably in a delicate and ornate bowl with a weighty fork. Enjoy!

I sit down now, to enjoy this meal myself. I've cooked this many times, for others or myself alone, and it always tastes like a home. A home I created and nurtured and built

from the ground up. One that is familiar, warm and just makes sense. The noodles are soft and chewy, delicately coated in the oil with chunks of garlic and parsley bound by cheese pulls. Sometimes I'll add a squeeze of lemon on top, the acidity curdling on my tongue settling nicely with all the fats in this dish. What I love about pasta the most is that it's simply a base. The rest is up to you. A soft and bouncy glutinous pillowed base to which you can add salty, sweet, acid, or fat to. Any food can act as a base and is what you make it, but you could dump your whole pantry into your pot of noodles and it would likely end up being a satisfying meal. I gobble down the rest of those fatty golden strips and scoop up the fallen bits at the bottom of the bowl. This dish leaves my lips greasy and my mouth smelling of garlic.

I know I will sleep well tonight.



**True Colors**  
Paula Armas

# Care Full

Grace Adamczyk



Turkey Kid  
Alex Fisher



**Pressure**  
Sylvia Freeman

# Your Mom

Alexandra Gold

The light feels like trying to read a hotel  
with only a microwave a stained bed a television that only plays HGTV And you realize  
it is cookbook you forgot how to read  
And it slams. Slams a Budweiser a Miller Lite the chair your found on the sidewalk  
kitchen floors

And the light forces you into a conglomerate setting. I have never seen my dad in a suit

in a suit permitting amalgamation. It is a time of our mother's mother  
here in America

What is *your mom* We  
more than she does.

is your mom? I think about my mother's

Abortion is funny in that way.

read consumer health pamphlets

that  
father and

The truth about condoms is

cooking in the kitchen is not cooking at all. Factory babies factory father's

I envy your

Arch my back and every family member you have ever known comes through the gap  
tearing the carpet restoring the wooden floorboards.

Data optimization is how  
unforgiving

Babies are made smooth and



**Paralysis**  
Julia Herceg

# How to Keep a Man

Miranda Lipetz

Hold his hand, gently, with your fingers relaxed. Avoid his eyes, and, instead, watch your leg bounce, listen to the squeak of your sneaker on the sticky linoleum floor. When he runs his thumb over the back of your hand, flinch. He'll start to cry, so stare vacantly ahead at the posters boasting the best emergency room in the county, maybe even the state. Cross your arms over your chest tightly, cradle yourself, and leave fleeting red lines where your fingers clenched at your skin.

When the nurse asks him to follow her, casting a sympathetic glance your way, pretend to get up to go with them. Gather your things slowly and sigh with your whole body. She'll tell you she just wants to talk to him, and you'll watch him trail behind her, his

posture exuding defeat. Mouth a half-hearted sorry at him while you sink into relief like a soft armchair. Allow your blue backpack to drop three inches to the ground, though you never really intended to pick it up at all. Pull your hoodie strings tighter to cover the blood and bruising. Careful, now, you don't want to look too upset. The nurses are watching, as are the barely lucid men slumped in chairs like regulars at a dive bar. You're strong, they need to think you're strong.

\* \* \*

Cross your hands in your lap when you perch on the edge of the narrow cot. The shuffle of slippered footsteps and thick manila files tiptoes cautiously into your eardrums, afraid of what's waiting around the corner. You must look composed, but show them you hurt in the ways that you move. Not that anyone is watching, now. Press your knees together and tilt your chin downwards. Let your feet swing rhythmically to the steady beeps emanating from the room next to yours. It's a ballet, really. Realize that you're wearing his sweatshirt and feel numb. It's okay that you feel nothing. Right?

You don't want him to push aside the heavy cotton curtain and step into the exam room. But when the nurse asks if you'd like to see him, you nod, once, twice. It's hard to make eye contact with her, but she won't expect you to, anyway. So she'll return with a

different man than the one you knew before you went to sleep that night. Mauve half-moons hang from each of his eyes, like he willed them to match your own. You can stare at those, study them, even. Just don't look any higher. His eyes will hold the same intensity as always. The same silent anger you saw while he ripped at your scalp. When he reaches for you again, you notice his hands are torn open. Your fingernails fit into each scratch like puzzle pieces. Your heart breaks and you can't look at him anymore.

Turn away, and he will cry again. He will apologize through an ugly sob, and you will suck your bottom lip between your teeth and show him a twisted smile. Don't forget to look just past him, so he knows you don't want him there. Begin to whisper it's okay but trail off after it's.

His mother will arrive before yours. Her drive was only an hour, from Providence to New Haven. She's so quick to forgive him that you doubt she ever blamed him at all. Why would she? You wonder how she doesn't comprehend the pain he caused you. You'll want to grab her by the shoulders and demand that she looks at you. Tell her, your son put me in the hospital. Your son. But you shouldn't do that. Isolate your hurt like it's a deranged prisoner.

She'll slide a comforting arm around his slumped shoulders.

Who is she really there for?

You think that the tears will come again when your own mother arrives, like a

toddler with a scraped knee that doesn't start wailing 'til his mother is within earshot. But you are empty when she holds you and strokes your hair. The wounds she sees are not what ache. Your body isn't yours, you have shrunk down and sit curled inside its belly. You hurt alone behind impenetrable walls of bruising flesh.

From inside yourself, you listen to your mother discuss MRIs and bills and insurance. She is exasperated, having driven three hours in the dead of the night to come get her daughter from a hospital in a town she didn't want her in with a man she knew was wrong. You want to apologize to her, she wants to apologize to you. So neither of you speak on the drive back to his apartment.

\* \* \*

When you take your first step back through the door with the sticky lock, don't feel bad when you fall to your knees and start to sob. The mirror is shattered across the floor where he left it. You are shattered there, too. The new tenants will sweep up pieces of you for years to come. Little particles that slid under book-shelves and into corners, collected in plastic dustpans, dumped into bins of empty yogurt containers and stale coffee grounds. He watches you crumble and reaches theatrically for you, then lets his arm fall to his side. Steps behind you, he contemplates suicide.

His mom pours you a bowl of Froot Loops and they taste like cardboard. Savor them despite the taste—you won't be able to eat them again without thinking of this. He packs your weekend bag for you while you force yourself to chew. Each slam of a door, or perhaps his head against a wall, will make your eyes widen with pure terror. He moves like a caged tiger; you freeze like its prey. In one hand, a spoon, in the other, the flesh on your leg. Caked under your fingernails are blood and skin. Who's to say which one of you it came from?

He asks to speak with you privately. He's not really asking you, as he looks at your mother for approval. She nods, you follow him into his bedroom. It flashes through your head again, and it's so real. He's punching you and kicking you for an eternity telescoped into a mere moment, yet you're seated away from him on the edge of the bed. Untouched and hyperventilating. He sits next to you and you want to scream. You don't. Or, perhaps, you can't.

Take the photograph he hands you. It's of you grinning in an emerald green shirt, now stuffed into your bag. The photograph used to lean against his mirror, next to his deodorant and balled-up socks, curling at the edges as months dragged on. Sometimes, you'd catch him pinching it delicately between his thumb and forefinger, smiling back at your frozen image. Now, he turns it over gently in your hands, and a note is scrawled across the back. In words he can't speak aloud, he tells you he understands if you want to

leave him. You're his angel, he reminds you. This is a sign he cares, right? He'll do whatever he can to make you more comfortable, he swears. With his lip quivering, he insists that you are his top priority.

He doesn't love you enough to leave you himself.

\* \* \*

A somber car ride later, you shower, alone at last, at your mom's house. Your hair falls out in clumps from where he tore at your scalp. Dark strands stick to your body in tangled knots, and you become exasperated. They won't rinse off your body, and when they finally do, they circle the drain endlessly. You feel with wrinkled fingers for bald spots where it stings. Hair takes a long time to grow back.

When you finally follow the shrouding steam out of the shower and into the mirror, you examine the purple splotches decorating your amorphous reflection. You think it's almost artistic, your enigmatic figure concealed by a haze of steam. There's no one else to call, so you tell him about the hair spiraling around the drain and the bruises conquering your sunken cheeks. He will apologize, but will ask you to stop telling him how much it hurts. He thinks you're trying to make him feel worse. It hurts him too much. It hurts him too much.

Now, you ask yourself the question he would not dare utter: Is this a performance? You'll ignore your pain and wonder if you're making it all up. Remember how calculated your gestures were at the hospital. The way you chose where to look, how to speak. How you wanted them to arrest him. How you wanted someone to yell at him, your mom to hit him, some kind of consequence.

You're making this all up. It wasn't him, he was asleep. It was a night terror. He dreamt of an intruder coming to hurt you, he says. He was just trying to protect you.

But when you try to close your eyes to sleep that night, you see his face inches from your own, and he's a snarling monster. Even worse, he's still the man you love. Loved.

You can't sleep anymore. It never came easy to you, but now it's impossible. Your sheets wrap you in panic, your pillow screams fear into your ears. Days, weeks, months of exhaustion overwhelm you. The bruises broke in your face like a pair of new shoes, and though they fade quickly, heavy eyebags will settle into the delicate spaces they left behind. You will look like how you feel.

One night, you will lie in bed with your mom and your cat. She'll doze off next to you and twitch in her sleep. You'll get a flashback, worse than normal, and become paralyzed with fear. You realize you're scared your mother will hurt you. That she'll become possessed with unknown hatred and punch you, kick you, bang your head against the floor until you die. The knowledge that Anything Can Happen weighs heavily in your chest. You

will never again know true peace.

\* \* \*

Your long-distance long-damaging relationship continues. Because you're separated by two trains and four hours, you need to stay over at his apartment to see him. At first, you'll try to sleep next to him. You'll pretend you're okay, because you don't yet understand how not okay you are. Move to the second bedroom after an excruciatingly long night of sobering vigilance. There are now two doors and locks between you, but your ears will quiver like a rabbit's as they strain to listen for clumsy footsteps or splintering wood. Something inside you compels you to keep coming back, to endure this again and again. Resent this urge until you learn to despise your entire self instead.

Get addicted to sleeping pills because you're too scared to break his heart. Retraumatize yourself, go ahead. When your script runs out, steal them from your father. Little white pills rattle in orange bottles, stuffed into every pocket of your backpack. Redose, redose, redose. It's not enough anymore. This was what you wanted. He said he was sorry, it's all he can do.

and he could stop drinking and doing drugs that induce night terrors

But he won't because it's all his friends do, and he needs his friends. He listens to

your whining and frustrations, he needs people who make him happy, people who are easier. Be quiet and take your pills. Raise the dose when your racing heart refuses to slow. Drown in fatigue.

You could've left him, this is your fault.

One day you do. His irrational anger will provide you with an excuse, an escape. You could almost thank him for his awfulness. Almost.

Sleep never returns, but he will, after months of vile one upmanship. You can't resist the comfort of being known. Silly girl, you shared so much of yourself with him. Shame on you. You tell yourself that you can't sleep either way, that the hurt happened, and can't be undone. So the choice is to be with him and feel horrible, or to be alone and feel horrible.

The answer seems obvious.

It's still hard to be around him while he's conscious, and you hate him more for falling asleep next to you. Crawl away and spend long nights shaking on the floor as he tosses and turns in a comfortable bed. Cover yourself in whatever towels and clothing litter the floor—it's too risky to grab a pillow or blanket from the bed. You might startle him, he might hurt you again. Again can't happen, you won't survive Again. So shiver and whimper as fear pins your eyelids open and your cheek to the cool hardwood floor.

Months later, on New Year's Eve in his best friend's bed, he informs you of your

addiction. You won't believe him until he asks to take your pills into the other room for the night and you clutch the orange bottle until your knuckles turn white. He tells you he can't be with you if you won't give them up.

hypocritehypocritehypocrite

Go to sleep cradling the bottle to your chest, the way he used to hold you. He'll cry in his friends' arms in the other room while you drift into heavenly thoughtlessness. It's a you problem, you hurt him with your addiction. He readily forgets that you started taking the pills because of what he did. Because of his selfishness, his ignorance, his uncanny ability to turn his problems into yours. His friends will treat you like you're the reason he's broken. He's good at acting broken, because he's not acting. You're just not the reason why.

You promise him you'll do better. Go cold turkey on your meds and miraculously survive. Happy New Year's!

In too many months, you'll have the courage to leave him again. Not courage, really, after months of cowardice. But it's done, for good. There are no more what ifs, you tried everything. It's about time you called it quits.

In a city that's now home, you'll meet people and get hurt, but in the normal ways. Normal pain becomes orgasmic to you. Getting ghosted will never feel so good. You'll get a new tattoo and ride around on the backs of mopeds at night, your loose hair a halo illuminated by traffic lights. You can't even tell where it was ripped out anymore. When

you try to meditate for the first time in years, you cry endless tears of love and ethereal joy. The world is so beautiful in these moments. You want this to last forever.

One particular evening, you'll scroll through your notes app and find pages and pages of hostility he typed out in silent fights on long train rides. The threats, the condescension, the sneer in his voice—you hear it all, really hear it, for the first time. Your hastily typed responses are sickening to you now. He brought out the worst in you. There was never a time before he hurt you. It wasn't your fault for not being able to get over it. You'll tuck your rose-tinted glasses away next to empty orange bottles.

Time moves like the Metro-North train you used to take home from your visits to New Haven. Sometimes it speeds through miles of marshes and clustered towns, sometimes it screeches to a stop and the doors just won't close again. Progression and regression are simultaneous. You heal and you break. The only certainty is that you are going Somewhere Else.

But you know that you'll never be rid of him. You can't fall asleep without thinking of him. His weight on top of you. His soft hands hardened into fists. Your hair wrapped around his knuckles. The rage contorting his face. The cruelty in his eyes. The mirror shattering and your sanity shattering with it. Cardboard Froot Loops and chicken-scratch notes.

You'll learn how to be a person again. Almost.

Every night for the rest of your life, as you get into bed alone, or with someone you love, and with drugs coursing through your system, you will think the same thought: I wish he had killed me.



**Murder Mystery**  
Christina Napolitano

# There's a Rat in My Bedroom

Shannon Folmer

There's a rat in my bedroom,  
he creeps around at night.  
Leaves droppings on  
my pillow just  
above my  
head.

Inside my brain I keep thinking  
he's me. I am a mouse,  
waiting to get my  
neck snapped  
in half.

There's a rat in my bed and  
he crawls on my head.  
At night I keep thinking am  
I real? Deception is like honey,  
sticky and sweet and much too  
tempting to avoid. Poison tastes like candy  
or else vermin won't eat it. I've eaten so many  
sweets this week that odds are some of them were toxic.

My chest is infected, my neck is snapped in half. I cry when I can't fall asleep.

There's a rat in my trashcan, he sleeps there during the day. I'd kill him  
but I'm afraid that he is me.

I haven't hugged my father in over  
a year and I can't braid my little  
sister's hair. She told me last  
week that she doesn't  
even know how.



**History Inverted**  
Caroline Yorke

# UNRAVEL ME

Vanya Suchan

Oh, will you please unravel me.

Roll me out and puncture me with piercing  
teeth

and  
bludgeoning  
eyes

and

curling tongues

and verberrating palms.

Oh, will you please  
unwind me

unfurl me  
flatten  
me

me and  
swallow  
whole.

# The Third Car, on a Wednesday

Adele Davis

Alice works at a lighting store on Broadway and hates mushrooms. Listening to rock makes her feel young, Alice reads magazines about birds and knows that ostriches have the largest eyes of any animal and that theoretically, baby birds can have siblings of differing species. Alice knows this is because fowl such as the brown-headed crow lay their eggs in the nest of other birds. This fact Alice finds particularly heartwarming, as she herself is adopted. Two brothers, both older. 'We're not very close but perfectly friendly, very civil. Different worldviews, that's all' Alice utters variations of the above sentence every time Tod with one D asks about her family relations, which is approximately every 14 days, as there is much time for chatting between the two employees of Williams Lights-- the

shop is rarely frequented. Stephanie, age 14 and living above the shop, apt #2B, believes the store is a front, of what variety she does not know. 'I live above some type of drug front' she recycles this line to the friends who come and go but mostly go. Tod with one D isn't the most creative of conversationalists, and therefore, in moments of self-imposed desperation, reverts to the subject of family relations. On each occasion, Alice repeats the same answer, graciously. Alice listens to audiobooks while dusting the glass and porcelain lamp necks of the shop. Tod has never asked Alice about birds because Alice unconsciously prefers to keep her bird knowledge hidden. When researching, she underlines the scientific bird names in blue pencil and forgets to look them up afterward. Alice works from 10 AM -5 PM, Tuesday through Saturday. On Sunday mornings she buys carrots at the farmers market and sometimes potatoes or Brussels sprouts, but always carrots. Alice likes to sit in her plush green chair, the one with the wooden legs. She drinks three or four cups of tea per day and gets seasonal allergies so bad she occasionally can't leave the house. Alice takes the F train--12 minutes walk, 13 minutes train, 11 minutes walk -- to Williams lights. Today Alice is wearing a floral silk blouse and skinny jeans. Facial wrinkles covered generously in foundation, she enters the third car. A podcast on robin's mating patterns streams through her black cordless earbuds. Alice is on the train.

Elanor lives off-campus with her cat, swordfish, and wishes her name weren't Elanor. She's half Romanian and plays the violin. Mostly classical, but she writes over and

over in her notes app, try more experimental violin stuff. Elanor has in-somnia and doesn't know it. She goes through a bottle of 60 melatonin gummies every 60 days. Lately, Elanor is thinking about negative space, and she just learned the definition of the word soliloquy despite hearing it her whole life. Elanor is very thoughtful, her father, Alexandar, tells Mrs. Rosenthal, as they smoke on their adjacent patios at 7 AM on a Tuesday. Mrs. Rosenthal is new, moved in after Elanor left for school. Alexander is balding. Elanor has shoulder length hair and is lonely. Elanor takes the F train to school, a 6 minute walk, 22 minutes on the F, then she transfers. Elanor likes reading poetry but is too afraid to write it. In her orange tote bag today, War of the Foxes, by Richard Siken. She has been carrying the book around for six days but hasn't started reading yet. Elanor eats frozen waffles for breakfast and occasionally hard-boiled eggs. Today she's standing on the platform wearing a blue and green knitted sweater and thinking about negative space. Elanor enters the third car, she's on the train.

'In every Seamless Bag, a Grubhub order'; 'A dating app made especially for the shyest of bookworms': my eyes dart between the ads, surveying the diction of the car. I don't like the font of the Grubhub ad. I haven't yet figured out where to look while on the subway. A torn McDonalds cup near my right foot. I pull War of the Foxes from my bag and rest it on my lap, my pointer finger inserted to an arbitrary page. I open the book, read one sentence, I'm not in the mood to read.

Mating occurs mainly from March to June, however, Robins sometimes nest as early as January. The voice of the British accented narrator continues broadcasting in my ears. The female lays 5-7 eggs which are whitish, slightly mottled with red-brown spots. I pause the podcast to sneeze. Allergies. Across from me, a bearded man sleeps. To my right, a young girl reads. I press play. The female robin incubates for 12-15 days.

# Digging Holes For Daffodils

Claudia Langella

Dad is out digging holes for daffodils—  
a red dot in a sea of green. Two hundred  
planted this spring; his Field of Dreams.

At the big wooden, table pulling out my hair,  
shedding tears. There's just so much to be  
done in the little bit of time that's left.

Please, daffodils, survive the last frost.  
It's something new to look at from within these  
walls, where things stay the same.

Roaming about this house, realizing  
I'm more traditional than my younger self  
imagined myself to be—

To find contentness in the daffodils,  
but only in a garden we share  
surrounded by trees bloated with birds.



Untitled  
Pramila Baisya

# Don't Tell, Don't Ask

Javen Parson

And again  
the bandaged moments of yesterday  
are still bouncing  
along the wet walls of my room

I pull you into me  
the drapes exploding with a current  
of frozen air  
the taste of your eyes  
clashing with the piercing lamplight  
Who knew?

that every night  
we'd end up playing the game of death  
An obstruction coursing  
through my veins  
turning my blood into a killer.  
It's the lamentable conditions  
of a man-turned-timetable  
But what even is your name?



Untitled  
Anais Stupka

# A PAINTING BY A DYING FLOWER

Erin Appenzeller

You're going to kiss me tomorrow. Just like you have for the past fifty years.

Wrinkled hands cradling my face, a smile on yours. And for a moment we'll forget about the dying Sun. The only heat that will matter is the friction.

The first girl you ever kissed died a week later. For years you thought that kiss had killed her. You told me this story without looking at me, your eyes focused on the ceiling of your second apartment. You told me how ridiculous it was, she had always smiled with half her face. But when you kissed her she grinned with all her teeth. That was life, not death.

Kissing is still like that for you. You can't help but smile. So when you give me a good morning kiss tomorrow, you'll be smiling. I'll run my hands up your sides until you

giggle, then I'll start laughing with you until the end of everything is the furthest thing from our thoughts.

You'll already have your graying hair tied up. Ever since you were eight and it was still a deep brown and your brother cut a chunk out for a laugh ever since then, you've put it up first thing in the morning. I do love when you take it down every night. Your hair suits you, it's soft and becoming curling like roses from the top of your head down your back. But I love pressing my lips against your neck in the morning more. The small laugh I get for the effort.

We'll spend the morning just like that, swaying and intertwined. I'll want to turn on the radio or the news- you won't let me. I always did like a countdown more. The assurance of knowing just what'll happen and when. When my father had gotten sick, I'd had the date circled and underlined on the calendar. Everyday I'd look at it and ready myself for his passing. When the day came I wasn't steady, my hands were shaking so bad you had to drive, but I wasn't surprised.

I'll want to feel ready, and you'll tell me that we both know what's going to happen, there's no need to know the very minute. You're not exactly a caution-to-the-wind spontaneous kind of girl, either. All of our calendars and to-do lists tell me just that. But you also always like to tell me that you 'appreciate the wis-dom of ignorance is bliss.'

So, we'll put on music, some instrumental. Blast the AC and we'll sit together.

Wrapped in blankets with the blinds closed. We'll cocoon until we're both overheated and have to spread out. The light getting brighter as it tries to slip in to capture us.

If we make it to noon, you'll get tired of doing nothing. So I'll pull out a deck of cards. We'll play Steal the Old Man's Bundle. Not the actual way it's played, but the way your grandmother taught you when you'd go to her house after school. You spent weeks there, spread out into hours over years. When you were little she was your best friend. When you were in your twenties, and we had just started dating, she'd passed. You didn't cry then, having spent the past year and half sobbing as she forgot who you were. It was her eyes, you told me, the complete lack of recognition. That you hadn't just died to her but had never existed. It felt worse than death.

They keep talking on the radio about how we shouldn't feel anything when it happens. That the light will get too bright to see and that will be it. They keep saying that matter isn't really destroyed, that we'll be ash and gas and then we'll be something else. I remember my dad telling me that we're all made of stardust anyways. But I keep thinking of you with vacant eyes, hands wrapped in the hem of your sweater, as you told me that to her you'd never existed.

And I don't want that to be the end. Bright ephemeral light and then nothing. I'd rather think that we will be stars again after we die. And someplace far away, on a planet that is not yet dying, someone will look up and see us. A constellation in the suggestion

of our final moments. Two lovers playing cards or kissing. Our hands clasped, or thighs pressed together.

We'll either keep playing cards until the Sun explodes or we fall asleep whichever happens first. Honestly, I hope it happens in the morning when we wake. I've been reading all those articles about 'going in your sleep,' about 'not feeling,' but I want my last sensation to be your smile pressed to mine. And I want that to be the image they remember us by.

# Goodbye Again, Hello Once More

Tanestraran Chandran

We said Hello in the Winter,  
Goodbye in the Spring,  
Hello again in the Summer,  
Prolonged in the Fall,  
Goodbye again this Winter,  
For a Hello once more.

For each other,  
We will wait,  
Through the seasons,  
Until a further date,  
No distance,  
Is too great,  
For I am,  
As you are,  
In Love.

## ELEVEN AND A HALF QUESTIONS WITH ELEVEN AND A HALF STAFF

i-What's the most surprising thing you could tell your pre-pandemic self?

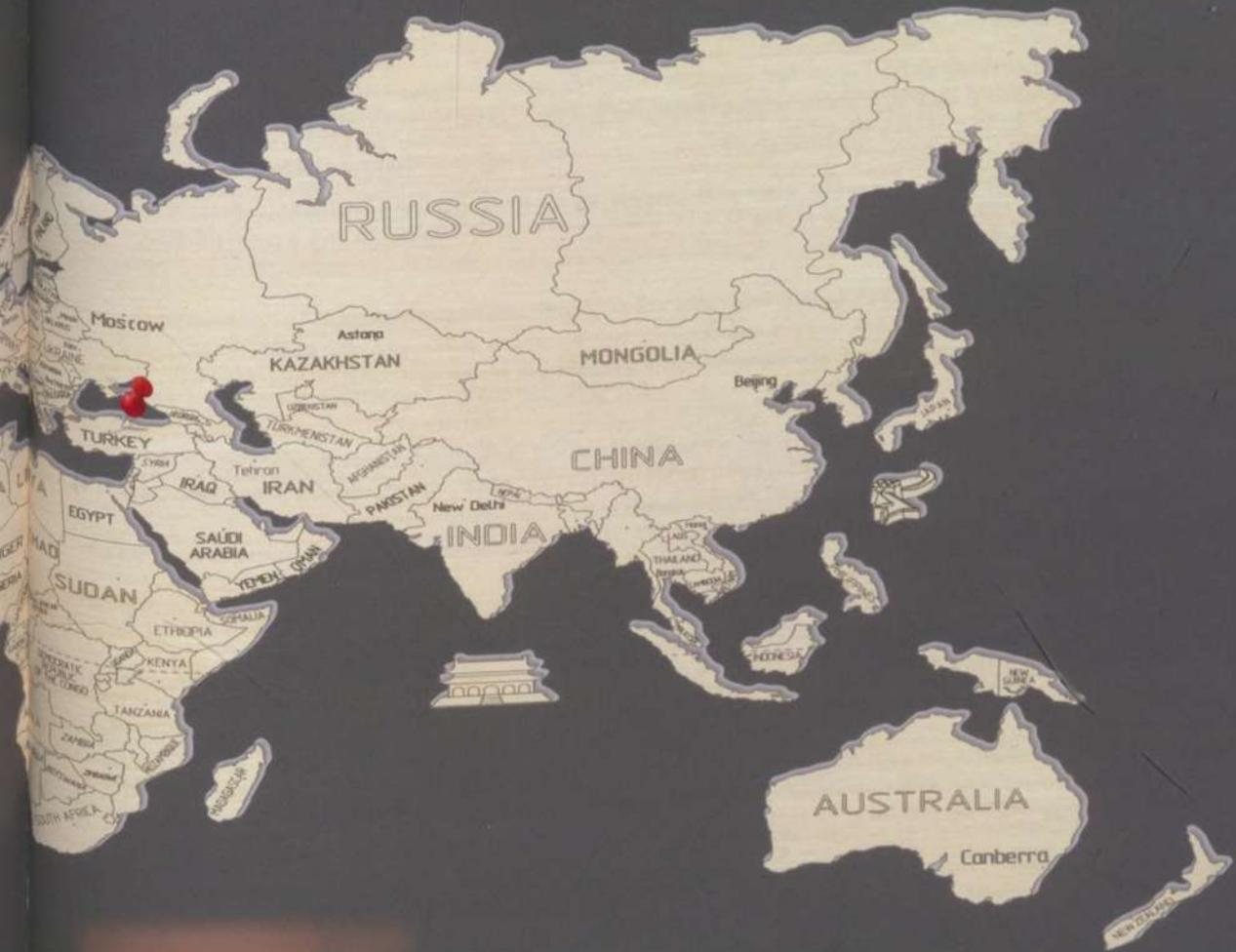
a. Lauren: I'd be surprised by how much more extroverted I've become in the post-vaccine era. I used to really struggle with social anxiety, but now that's hardly an issue. I guess spending so much time by yourself can make you appreciate the company of others.

b. Pramila: I realized just how introverted I am and how much my alone time means to me. I also had a greater appreciation for nature and just vibed among trees! I think another surprising thing for me was starting my YouTube channel and not fixating on needing it to be perfect. I truly got back to creating just for the sake of it, not just for work and class, and that was very fulfilling.

c. Elsa: Your mom steals a car for you - goes missing for days - dates a military general - diagnosed with ADHD - stalked by a police officer - gets into all colleges previously denied to - picks up antiquing - fossils gifted by Kid Cudi

d. Elif: I would say go with the flow. I used to be a control freak. Through the pandemic I realized that I can't always be in control, and things turn out just fine, maybe even better. Life surprises you.





2-What was the moment you felt the most despair and why?

a. Cecelia: When my sister got COVID - this was at the very beginning of the pandemic and I was one room away from her but not able to actually enter her room and check to see if she was ok.

b. Em: Well, there were always moments of despair that I continually felt throughout the pandemic. I guess it was going home and laying in my parents living room and just, being there.

c. Lauren: The pandemic hit right when I was supposed to transfer out of community college, and I ended up staying for an extra semester. My saddest days were spent walking around my suburban neighborhood wishing I was in the city already. Ironically, I look back on those walks fondly.

d. Christina: Degreeworks not showing all my credits and me thinking for a good three hours that I wouldn't be able to graduate on time (it took advising forever to get back to me).

3-Specific moments of joy?

a. Libby: My mom and I bonded a lot through baking cookies and treats we'd always wanted to bake! I also took frequent walks in the nearby woods with my dad.

b. Pia: Moving with friends in New Orleans, into a house that was full of happiness. Also a quiet, simple Christmas.

c. Elif: Weekly Rake-Fish nights, long drives listening to music, getting to spend time with my friends that wasn't limited to a week, regular walks by the seaside with my mom, eating home-cooked meals.....

d. Paula: Getting to see my niece last winter for the first time after she was born almost a year prior. Since the pandemic I've only been able to visit my family once a year, which is very unfortunate but it makes winter break and the time I get to spend with them even more special and valuable.

4- Happiest memory?

- a. Em: Right when I got home, I went camping with my dad before we knew the extent of the pandemic, and as we were driving we came across a large herd of sheep in the middle of nowhere, watched by two cattle dogs. It was so surprising, and I'll probably remember it forever.
- b. Brianna: Getting my first internship in Fall of 2020 doing multimedia work.
- c. Elsa: Probably getting to hold a very small box from Panda express.
- d. Pia: Receiving many mini brands for Christmas.

5-What song did you inevitably get sick of? (the anti-playlist)

- a. Claudia: I can't listen to any TikTok sounds or songs that went viral at the start of quarantine. "Supalonely" and "Say So" are so cursed.
- b. Pramila: Literally everything I listened to as an angsty 13 year old. If it's on a hot topic shirt I probably listened to it. Something about listening to screaming was extremely comforting at that time. Besides that there was a lot of Hozier, Lana Del Rey and Kali Uchis!
- c. Margaux: Future Nostalgia by Dua Lipa... I wouldn't say I'm \*sick\* of it but I associate that album very heavily with the world shutting down.

6-In 3 words describe yourself on Zoom? Embarrassing Zoom stories?

- a. Cecelia: Camera Off Preferred. Thankfully no embarrassing stories!
- b. Julia: Lazy, Distracted, and Sleepy. I fell asleep in the last ten minutes of my 9 am and the teacher spent that time talking to me thinking I was awake and had a question I was too embarrassed to ask .
- c. Elif: Distracted, overthinking, hungry. Seven hours time difference sucked.

7- Favorite place to sit?

- (a.) **Claudia:** Did not like staying still.
- (b.) **Lauren:** bed.
- (c.) **Elsa:** In my ex's house, smoking weed, playing xbox, for the 14th day in a row.
- (d.) **Julia:** My bed

8- Did you date during the pandemic?

- (a.) **Cecelia:** Yes, my boyfriend and I did over a year of long-distance: I was in the US and he was in Malaysia.
- (b.) **Brianna:** Kinda... the pandemic seemed to make things informal.
- (c.) **Elsa:** Unfortunately, I did. But much different terms apply to a pandemic bae. Can they breathe? Are they good at cuddling? Can they be taught?
- (d.) **Margaux:** Yes... My girlfriend and I started dating in July of 2020 and have been together since. I love her LOL.

9- Favorite pandemic read?

- (a.) **Claudia:** A Little Life by Hanya Yanagihara and Such a Fun Age by Kiley Reid
- (b.) **Elsa:** The letter that I missed my mitigation hearing
- (c.) **Pia:** We Are Never Meeting in Real Life by Samantha Irby
- (d.) **Libby:** Come As You Are by Emily Nagoski

10- New Bad Habits?

- a. Pramila: To be honest, I developed a pretty bad smoking habit. Also just literally never wanting to interact with people irl.
- b. Pia: UberEats became my most used app...
- c. Sydney: Actually a good habit- I decided to really put a lot of effort into getting back into french and meeting online with a tutor, I'm now almost fluent.  
Margaux: Too much delivery food...

# Contributors

**Grace Adamczyk** is a multidisciplinary artist and writer graduating from the Fine Arts program at Parsons School of Design. Her work touches on themes of the body, sex and power dynamics, and the imprinting of memory on our surrounding environment.

**Lara Agrawal** has always valued the arts and she has been highly involved with them even throughout her school years. She has explored a variety of mediums and styles and enjoys combining art with her love for literature, philosophy, and her own experiences.

**Erin Appenzeller** is by day a student at The New School studying storytelling and by night, about the same, just more tired.

**Paula Armas** is a fourth-year student majoring in Screen Studies and Film Production. Her work mostly focuses on the study of feminist politics through horror and surrealism.

**Katelyn Baker** is a current junior studying Journalism + Design, with a double

minor in literature and poetry. She has been writing creatively for as long as she could talk and is thrilled to be featured in this edition of Eleven and Half.

**Pramila Baisya** is a senior majoring in Literary Studies, with a concentration in Writing. She's your friendly neighborhood weirdo who's always got a camera on hand or doodles. She hates writing about herself.

**Elif Baysak** is an interdisciplinary artist from Turkey, experimenting with writing, drawing, video, and performance. She works through her impulses and desires.

**Margaux Boucheignies** is finishing up her final semester at Eugene Lang College with a major in Literary Studies and a minor in Psychology. She loves to play the guitar.

**Ellie Brown** is a mixed media artist focused on merging writing with visual art. She works primarily in collaging and repurposing found objects.

**Zein Bseiso** is a Palestinian-Jordanian senior at Eugene Lang College and is 22 years old. She is a Literary Studies major with a primary genre in poetry and secondary genre in nonfiction writing.

**Iley Cao** is a multidisciplinary artist who is currently studying Integrated Design at Parsons School of Design. As a queer, second-gen immigrant, Iley's work explores themes of diaspora, coming home, and intersecting identities.

**Steffie Chau** is an artist who was born and raised in Hong Kong. They explore the relationship between their environment and emotions, focusing on personal experiences such as heartbreak and coming of age. Since moving to New York, they have been inspired by the constant fast pace of the city and the people that they've encountered.

**Winifred Chavira** is a New York based painter, using mainly acrylic but including many other 2D materials to achieve a mixing of colors, textures, and relationships within her pieces. While doing this, she focuses on current feelings within her life, transforming the canvas to display those in an abstract and distant manner, in order to allow a

personal interpretation for the viewer.

**Tanestrran Lournard Chandran** is a Psychology major who has delved into many forms of art expression: from portrait drawing and sculpture to fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. Growing up in an affluent family from Malaysia, he draws in-spiration from closely studying films, reading broadly, and observing the intricacy of human behavior. Tanestrran is driven by a deep interest in understanding the human condition.

**Lananh Chu** is studying Media Studies at The New School. Her poems have been published by the Asian American Writers Workshop and AJAR Press.

**Adele Davis** is a sophomore at The New School studying Global Studies and Film. She is inspired by storytelling in all forms and likes to wander the East Village wondering what people are thinking about.

**Em DeVincentis** is a trans poet living in Brooklyn, NY, and studies Literature at The New School. Their writing focuses on joy and transformation, present in nature and those they love around them.

**Caitlin Du** is a visual artist specializing in many forms of storytelling, from illustration to comics and animations. Her stories often consist of vibrant colors, strong emotions, cute characters, and a dash of surrealism. Please visit @phantalism on Instagram to see more of Caitlin's works!

**Alex Fisher** is a music and Fine Arts student at The New School and Parsons School of Design. Their work plays in this bizarre middle ground of finding peace within an environment of insanity and violence both in their writing and visual pieces.

**Shannon Folmer** is a writer focusing on poetry and fiction. She currently resides in Brooklyn, NY, with her one-eyed kitten and will be graduating from The New School in the spring of 2022. She will be going on to become a teacher and short story author/poet.

**Sylvia Freeman** is primarily an oil painter and printmaker. They work primarily in self-portraiture that connects to their experiences with their body, image, and how people interact with them. They do this in blatant and metaphorical ways to connect to the idea of the gaze and their perception of self.

**Vanessa Genao** is a writer and visual artist based in New York City, currently studying Writing at Eugene Lang College and publishing and journalism at NSSL. When she's not reading poetry or dreaming up monsters, she can be found tending to her many plants, all named after Shakespeare characters.

**Alexandra Elbert Gold** is a writer born in San Francisco and living in Brooklyn, NY. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Crab Fat Magazine, 12th Street Journal, The Ephimiliar Journal, Indicia Lit, and The Ellipsis.

**Julia Herceg** is a junior at Parsons School of Design in the Communication Design program. Her focus is primarily rooted in illustration and how it merges with design. For contact inquiries you can reach her at either juliaherceg.com or email her at hercj191@newschool.edu.

**Andrew Kamel** is a self-published poet who blends the spiritual with the sexual, the cerebral with the concrete. With several books under his belt, his latest release dreams of a bedridden bedouin child — a Sufi mystic epic with illustrations — and is perhaps his most

consummate and paradigmatic, touching upon familiar themes in his work of masculine self-consciousness and an investigation into the male psyche within the realm of sex, love, and romance.

**Isabelle Khoo-Miller** is a child of earth, like all of us, and is alive and in abundant love. They create in many mediums, including imagination. They are from the ocean and have roots and familia in Coastal Miwok and Ohlone land, the Bay Area.

**Claudia Langella** is a senior at Eugene Lang College in the Literary Studies program, concentrating in nonfiction writing. She loves reading, writing, and cooking.

**Pipin Lapish** is a student at The New School.

**Anmy Lee** is a senior at Eugene Lang College majoring in Global Studies and minoring in Writing. Their writing is influenced by their experiences as a queer, Tai-wanese person living in the United States.

**Naomi Liechty** is in her last year of the BAFA program at The New School. She is studying Photography

and nonfiction writing.

**Miranda Lipetz** is a freelance writer, editor, and artist studying Writing at Eugene Lang College. She is a published illustrator, credited songwriter, and works in a range of artistic mediums.

**Paloma Lopez** is a fourth-year BAFA student majoring in Literary Studies at Eugene Lang College and Vocal Jazz at The School of Jazz and Contemporary Music, with a minor in Fashion Communications at Parsons School of Design. She wishes to continue her career as a writer of nonfiction, fiction, and poetry.

**Libby Markham** is a sophomore at Eugene Lang College. She is an undeclared creative who loves writing, music, and art.

**Honor McConnell** is currently a second-year student at Eugene Lang College, majoring in History with a minor in Museum and Curatorial Studies.

**Sydney Merydith** is a student at The New School studying Film, Writing, and Visual Studies. She seeks to create new ways of presenting time with both visual and written elements. She is a dreamer.

**Christina Napolitano** is an illustration major in her third year at Parsons School of Design. Her work focuses around women and feminism, often times blending reality and the surreal.

**Javen Parson** is a fiction writer and poet, currently in his third year. His work is grounded in the expansion and exploration of queer realities, moving to eventually bring these stories to life in motion pictures.

**Elisha Parsons** is a student at The New School.

**Cecelia Sagun** is a Filipino-Polish writer based in New York City. She is double majoring in Writing and Literature at Eugene Lang College, with a focus on multi-genre writing, and is inspired by love, rain, and her sister, Gabriela. She can be contacted at @ceceliasagun.

**Elena Saviano** is a photography student at Parsons School of Design, and when she's not at school, she loves drinking coffee, listening to music, writing, dancing, and watching movies. Her favorite band is Twin Peaks and her favorite food is pasta.

**Sammi Shen** is an Illustration major at Parsons School of Design. The bittersweet feeling of nostalgia is a central theme found throughout her works, which are greatly influenced by memories, experiences, and stories that are special to her.

**Anais Stupka** is a Georgian-Italian multimedia artist that grew up in 10 different parts of the world and is currently based in between New York, Milan and Tbilisi. She is the youngest winner of the Sony World Photography award. Her work is influenced by the diversity of beauty and social standards of the countries she's lived in and by unconditional love.

**Vanya Suchan** is a third-year Writing student who finds her words in nonfiction and poetry. Originally from Texas, she moved to New York City with the hopes of nourishing her passion for writing, taking inspiration from the chaos around her, and sharing the stories the city gives her.

**A.J. Vitiello** is a graduating senior in the Literary Studies department with a concentration in fiction and screenwriting. He is currently Assistant to the Publisher of Street Noise Books and is planning a winter trip across the

Trans-Siberian railway to celebrate and continue his Russian lit education.

**Lily Wood** is a writer from Boston. Most of the time her work is written on unorganized legal pads, destined to be left on trains. She hopes to one day understand what Bob Dylan is singing about.

**Caroline Yorke** is a student at The New School.

**Kamila Young** is a junior studying psychology and literature.

**Yi Du Zhao** is a Chinese Canadian artist based in New York and Toronto. Her work showcases reinterpreted childhood memories and the contrasting roots of her heritage. Yidu's illustrations and writing act as a window into the haven she created between two colliding cultures.

# Featured Artists

Sammie Shen

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**112** Turkey Kid

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**130** History Inverted

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**137** Untitled

Anais Stupka

**139** Untitled

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For each other,  
We will wait,  
Through the seasons,  
Until a further date,  
No distance,  
Is too great,  
For I am,  
As you are,  
In Love.

Tanestrarran Chandran

2022

