

region

01





region



# Friends/Family/Contributers

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## The oasis at a cross section of invisibility

*region* is a journal dedicated to the artistic expressions of migrant communities and their first generation descendants in the midwest. Living in the American midwest has positioned our identities as either ephemeral- eventually assimilating into the larger culture or as permanently othered. A view that denies the validity of experiences of those who have made this their home and those who know no other land. It's the constant struggle articulated by W.E.B Dubois to exist in psychic duplicates- double consciousness- reconciling your self view with the self observed through the lens of society. Conversations about who *you* are, *what* you are and where you are “really from”. Not everyone struggles with this in the same way and for some of us these discussions might be easier to navigate than it is for others. But what’s important at whatever stage you are at in your understanding is knowing that you are not alone. We want to build an outlet to voice the stories that are often lost or taken for granted in a region that is often treated the same. For the people who exist between imaginary borders with family on both sides.

What color is

leaves, logs, and rocks. It does not like the sun or bright light. It is very timid, and when frightened, it will run. If it is handled roughly, it gives off a milky liquid through its pores, which helps to protect the salamander from its enemies. The

WHERE IT LIVES AND WHAT IT EATS

2. What kind of skin do salamanders have? **Spoiled Salamander Picture-Story Study** **early life in the water as IT LIVES AND WHAT IT EATS**

No.

It is an amphibian, a tadpole.

is shiny black with

the colorful animal in this be found from Nova S

Ontario and Texas. Salamanders look

more like the

in Canada

## THE BODY

The adult spotted salamander is about seven to eight inches long, although this young salamander is smaller than the maple leaf.

salamanders range in size from two inches to three feet. The

spotted salamander, as you can see in the picture, is shiny black with yellow spots on its back and tail. It is often confused with the tiger salamander, which is found throughout most of the United States and Canada. The tiger salamander,

tail of the dark blue Ontario and Quebec. Although the spotted salamander and other

salamanders have yellow blotches and bars which ex-

tail of the spotted salamander is rough, with flattened sides. The spotted salamander has vertical grooves along its body. It has small, weak legs.

the rear legs are not webbed, and tongue to grab, hold, and swallow the food it eats.

Their skin is smooth and moist. The salamanders that live in water use these tails for swimming. Salamanders can absorb water and air through their skins as well as through their lungs.



ANSWERS

1. What kind of animal is the

2. Their skin is smooth and moist. The

3. Salamanders are the only am-

phibians that live in water. They are found all over the United States and

4. In the early spring, the female salamander lays her eggs singly or in clusters up to 100, in ponds or streams.

# “Distance”

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CHAD ONIANWA

Being home and recognizing where your home(s) is/are/could be  
is disorienting  
To live centered between so many suns.  
Establishing your face  
your heart  
your driving force.  
Swaddled in quilts knitted by the ghosts of your DNA  
Open door. Take deep breath  
Dive into the warm waters that have helped you float  
to islands of interest. exotica.  
mindful skin testing surface temperature.  
Internalizing boundaries and mental borders because  
it is along these lines that  
You've learned to know yourself. To talk about you.  
What does that mean?  
It means that even when you yourself have  
never known another physical home,  
you are a migrant

Moving consciously between invisible barriers  
And sometimes as you squeeze through the gates,  
your skin is caught  
A hurt to be tended to upon crossing back over.  
Between sides  
Coastal visits.  
With beaches whose annually visited shores can speak.  
And when the warm waters wash the sand  
Creeping  
Slow to meet what skin is left,  
It reminds you to stop holding your breath.  
Because breathing is what keeps you alive  
and if you stop  
you will suffocate  
and die alone in your own home

# “Stage One”

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MEGAN MURPHY

Was I exotic enough?  
Good enough to kiss and touch  
But not good enough to miss and clutch  
Sucked on my sweetness until I dissolved  
Did the slant of my eyes say I was blinded to the world?  
Did the burn of the sun on my cheek,  
Remind you of a vacation passed?  
And when I was your blanket and you had touched softness  
Did you think that you could take my comfort?  
When did you think you could extract the gold of my tint  
Only to guild your own  
I am exotic  
But you are toxic



# “Colonizer”

---

MONICA GEORGE

You think you understand how oceans work  
because of the way that the waves  
crash into your boat  
during storms  
that you conquer  
with your chin raised  
and your god-fearing grin,  
but knowing how a fish feels  
that's a different story...

You've spent your whole life in the boat  
trying to catch it with a net  
and yet you try  
with your fake fins  
to feel it  
and understand  
and pass judgements  
and give suggestions  
and make demands  
but how a fish feels is so vastly unknown to you  
and  
despite your efforts  
you will never know the ocean,  
not that way.  
so don't speak for the fish  
you goddamn sailor.



Untitled

ASHWIN GONDIVARAJAN



# “On Seeing the Future”

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ANDREW MAI

I've never been one to count my eggs before they hatch  
I've never been able to imagine a future for myself because I  
never thought I'd get this far. I didn't prepare myself for this.

Now I feel close to where I need to be. I'm almost ready for  
what's to come.

I can see the future.

As the deadline approaches, I will panic. I feel inadequate. I am inadequate. I will be reckless, but my friends, and my family and my beautiful support system will be there for me. They may be who I think they are; they may be who I haven't met yet. Whoever they are (perhaps an extension of myself) they will help me get through the seemingly impossible. I feel on top of the world. The feeling of Euphoria validates every single moment leading up to this. I embrace it.

The feeling doesn't last long, but there will be traces of it in every single moment moving forward. I tuck Her inside that special place because I know I will need Her if I want to make it through dark times.

There are dark times.

I feel worthless. I feel small. I feel life has no meaning. I come face-to-face with Death. I acknowledge Her, but I don't say a word. She wouldn't listen.

Now is the time to live.

There are good times.

Oh my God there are good times. I create. I listen. I enjoy and reminisce. I love wholeheartedly and unconditionally. I feel invincible. I am invincible. I scream at the top of my lungs and Life screams right back. She wants me to know that I am here, and that I am here with Her.

I know.

I take Euphoria out of Her hiding spot and tuck Her beneath my pillow as I lay my head down to rest. This is a safe place. I smile knowing She is still with me- that she has always been with me.

# “Live it All”

---

KEFRENE ZAKPA

I speak of love  
Radiating above the skin  
A glow from within  
Love wears itself proudly  
Keen eyes of no lies  
Emitting rays of light  
Love is mental/physical health  
Power to run a mile  
Long nights, make for better days  
Love is grace from above  
The magical seed of nature  
Majestic trees growing mature  
Love exists under the sky  
Who am I to preach  
A man whose love is pure  
Make love the daily culture  
Only the strong survive  
Human Love in all ... One Love



“New Skin”

MEGAN MURPHY

# “Healthy Boundaries”

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MONICA GEORGE

How does one create a boundary  
that nourishes the body and eliminates toxins  
if dieting supposedly doesn't work and the food we eat  
is regulated by the lions that punish us  
for the hair that grows on us  
and our skin that wears us  
and our supposedly shameful reproductive parts  
that categorize us?  
How do you build a tree out of the wood  
that your family comes from,  
the one your mother picked fruits from  
the one that her mother planted  
on the land of her people,  
when where you stand is far from this tree  
and you've somehow found yourself  
isolated  
in a forest  
with species that are only recognizable by  
names that don't exist in your mother tongue?  
  
I created a boundary once.

It resembled a fenced-off  
freshly mowed lawn  
with a barbed wire fence  
and signs that read  
No Trespassing  
and BEWARE OF DOG

I was the dog  
tricked into eating  
more than I could chew  
then shamed for it  
on a diet that wasn't fit for my body  
after hundreds of years  
of genetic variation  
and geographical circumstance

I sat in solitude  
hoping it would grant me the solace  
I so desperately desired  
but it didn't



Untitled

Now, as a 28-year old woman,  
I am learning how  
to build a boundary  
that feeds my soul  
I burned this fence  
and in its place  
I'm planting a tree  
one that my mother can recognize,  
and I will invite her into my house  
and share with her the food  
that she once fed me

And that is by far  
the most  
nourishing  
for my body.



"Your roots are in another place but this where you've been planted"

JACQUE AMADI



"Across the River is Windsor, Canada"

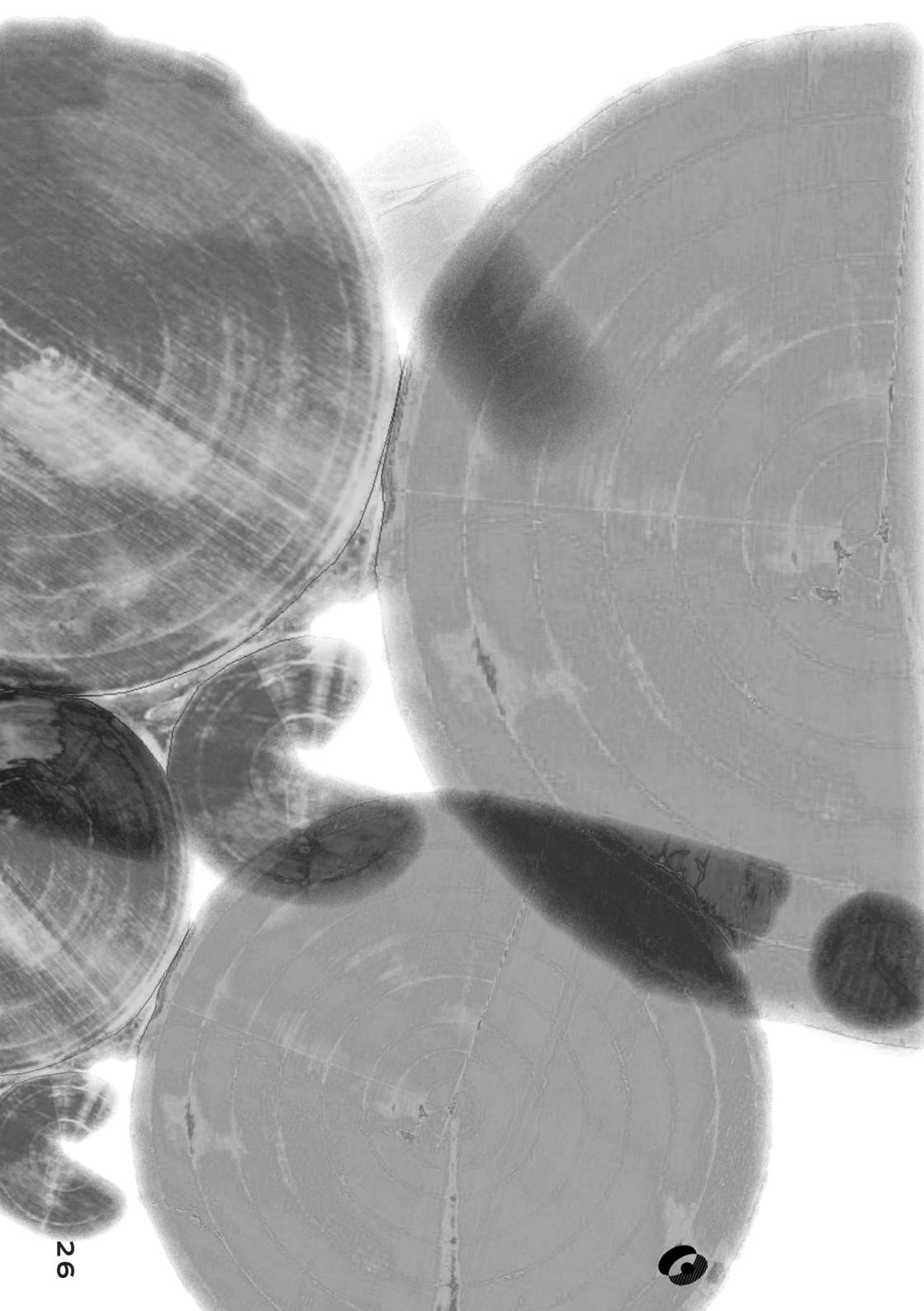
CHAD ONIANWA



"Fake Plant Wall" (Left)

CHAD ONIANWA  
"OO" (Right)



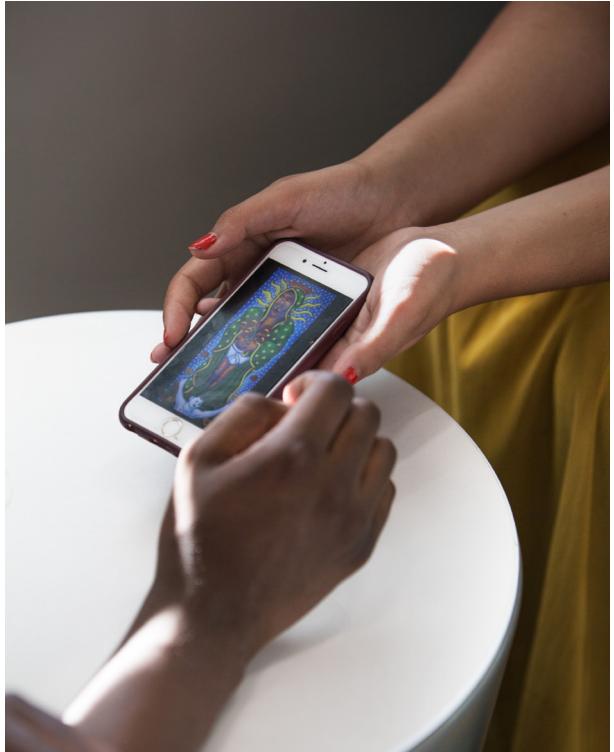


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ASHWIN GONDIVARAJAN



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## “Paola”

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ERICK ODUNIYI

Paola Ramirez is an undergraduate researcher studying Public administration and Sociology at the University of Kansas. I first met Paola at KU’s annual undergraduate research symposium where I got the chance to watch her present “Reimagining La Virgen de Guadalupe”, a project centered around tracking and analyzing reinterpretations of La Virgen de Guadalupe by LGBTQ Latinx artist. It was a major league talk and inspired me to generate new questions about my own identity and the pervasiveness of culture.

r e g i o n

### 1. Trajectory

**EO:** How did you decide to start volunteering at the library?

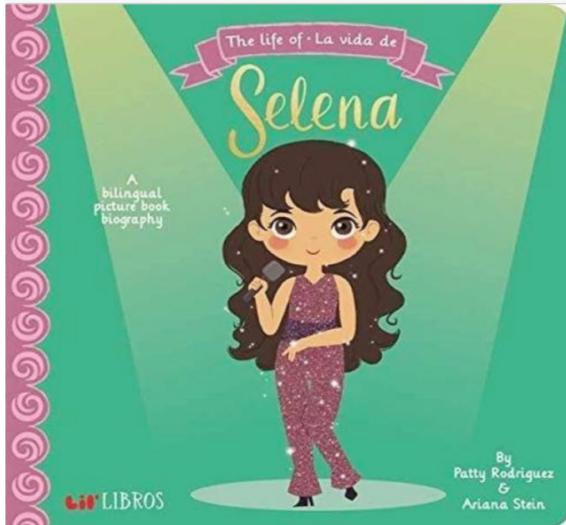
**PR:** I interviewed a librarian about her education path to try to figure out what route to take and I was invited to volunteer. That’s where I met Vanessa. She’s latinx and she’s from California too so I got excited about joining the team.

**EO:** Are there any books you frequently check out?

**PR:** I recently checked out *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down* by Joan Morgan. I’m not too far into it, but I’ve been reading a lot of 90’s black and brown feminist literature that use an intersectional framework to look at things like music, dating, and even immigration. I keep coming back to the book *They Can’t Kill Us Until They Kill Us* by Hanif Abdurraqib (which I own). He is a music writer, poet, funny twitter-er, and generally lovely person. I love the book and it was a path to vulnerability.

**EO:** What are some of your favorite childhood stories?

**PR:** I liked reading self-help books that didn’t apply to me at all. I’d go to goodwill with my dad all the time and I’d get books about parenting and childhood development. Now that I’m older I’m more interested in kids books. There’s this really cool company called Lil’ Libros. They have bilingual books about mexican culture.



**EO:** I think about public museums and libraries as academic temples, a place to worship stories or do work, an unapologetically spiritual experience. What do you think the role of museums and libraries are in human communities?

**PR:** Libraries are one of the last free, public places people can congregate. I believe knowledge is righteous and allows us find meaning in the worst of times. You can come into the library and check out a book about cooking, a movie, and do research. I think they remind us of who we are. When you read something, maybe something that doesn't directly apply to you and you can still relate, that's a beautiful thing. It goes the other way too.

**EO:** What are the places you call home?

**PR:** The older I get the more I realize that home is in people and myself. Home is a place of refuge and a place where I can be myself. I always have a bed wherever my mom is. I always have a place with my friend Ashley. I also find solace in myself.

**EO:** Have you always been interested in social science research?

**PR:** I guess so. I think I was doing it even before I even knew what it was. What's changing is the motivation and the process. Now I'm paying attention and documenting my ideas with the understanding that I'm producing something from my original perspective.

## 2. Research Interest

**EO:** Where did you get the idea to study the Virgen de Guadalupe

**PR:** I have a necklace of La Virgen hanging in my car for protection, but I'm not religious. I was wondering why I kept it and why I feel connected to it. It's definitely tradition so I wanted to explore that connection.

**EO:** How would you define icon?

**PR:** In the case of my research, I am identifying La Virgen as an icon so that her image can expand beyond her. There are pieces of art that have symbolism that alludes to the Virgen, but are stylized differently than her image. I also recognize her relevance beyond factors like religion, age, gender, nationality, and sexuality. That is an icon.

**EO:** How would you define culture?

**PR:** The history of a people. I know that's simplistic, but the bigger I try to take it, the less I believe what I am saying.



**EO:** How do artist, scientist, and institutions go from typical to household names?

**PR:** I'm not sure I understand the question, but this is how I am interpreting it. I think, within my family at least, information comes from social media. My mom has become a self-identified feminist and communist from things she reads on Facebook. Social media is accessible (free) and offers a really wide scope of interests.

**EO:** How would you describe the process of cultural change?

**PR:** I think cultural change comes from demand. Sometimes it can be gradual, but more often than not something big will be a catalyst for change.

**EO:** What are some things the Virgen de Guadalupe represent for people of Latin-American heritage?

**PR:** So, she is the mother of Jesus. She holds a lot of the same sanctity of other religious figures, but because she is a woman and a mother, she is perceived as compassionate. Where people are God-fearing, they are not afraid of La Virgen. She is refuge, patient and human.

**EO:** When I think about a culture I think about an associated region. Region is an area, some portion of space. Regions are identifiable, implying boundaries or distinctions. But how do you know where a culture starts and where it ends?

**PR:** Oh god no. Culture knows no bounds. That's something that's very true in my own experience and my research. When I think of communities of color in particular, I notice a lot of overlap. When you look at healing rituals, dances, and even food, I see some unifying strings. There is rice and beans in so many immigrant households, probably comes from both of these foods being cheap, but it has transformed into familiarity and culture. In regards to region, we can look at xicanx1 and their immigration into the US from Mexico. There

is differences in the culture as a result of access, but there are calling cards to this imaginary space we can call home. Mentally, spiritually, culturally it is something between the mix of the two nations culture, but physically it doesn't exist.

**EO:** In the historical account, Juan Diego is asked by Bishop Don Juan de Zumárraga to provide a sign of the Marian apparitions, which reminded me of the idea, "if you look hard enough, you'll eventually find it", still when does a person or community know to give up the search of significance?

**PR:** It's an independent choice. I believe my ancestors talk to me, when I am open to it. Is it "real"? I can't be sure, I don't have proof. I don't have castile roses, but I know I feel better when I believe there is meaning and connection to history and future.

**EO:** What are the deliverables you'd like to produce from studying reproductions of Virgen de Guadalupe?

**PR:** After giving my McNair Scholar<sup>2</sup> presentation, I realized I got people to listen to me for fifteen minutes about my culture in a scholarly, artistic, and genuine way. I can enter the canon of academia without sacrificing my interests or my voice. I don't know that there is a product in the sense of something I can capitalize from... but that doesn't make the experience or the project less valuable.

### 3. Implications

**EO:** How do you use the aesthetics of Mexican culture to communicate your identity?

**PR:** I think it shows up in more ways than I am aware of. I like to read and write so it shows up mostly in the books I read and the poetry I write. Its woven into the language, as far as clothes, I wear bright colors but it's more so about what I feel comfortable in than what it looks like.

**EO:** What are some of the social or psychological conditions that compel people to make variations on their culture?

**PR:** It's about adapting, it's about survival. Sometimes assimilation means survival. Sometimes going out of your way to blast Spanish music really loudly at your PWI is survival. It's about context. Culture can be intrinsic to an extent, but you can draw on it and change it when it is necessary.

For some people, the song "Versace" was a gateway into the Migos; for others it was "Bad and Boujee" that made them listen. Similarly, Juan Diego's goal was to deliver (or convince) the Bishop about building a temple in honor of the Virgin Mary, a gateway into the graces of Jesus.

**EO:** What do you think about the idea of gatekeepers and gateways?

**PR:** I think in this sense, it's bullshit. The image of La Virgen was influential in violently indoctrinating indigenous people and then in creating toxic masculinity and submissive femininity. Outside of that: I guess you are asking in a different sense, but more often than not, gatekeepers are rooted in some form of exclusion (\*cough white supremacy cough\*). I'm not really into that, like at all.

**EO:** Who is most equipped to deliver a message to a community?

**PR:** I'm not sure that there is someone most equipped, but I think a community member understands the needs of the community better than an outsider. I'm gonna go to my go-to and say, listen to black and brown women. They know everything. Especially abuelas.

**EO:** Looking at the reproductions of Virgen de Guadalupe, I think about culture's ability to unify. Culture provides a basis for a community, where individuals are given laws or prescribed norms that they should adhere if they wish to be part of the culture. But like what's the minimal amount of rules and norms one can follow in order to still be considered part of the culture?

**PR:** I think most of my communities, I was born into. Sure there are parts of me that are not exactly in the canon of some of my communities. Queerness and latinidad<sup>3</sup> for example, are not exactly inclusive of each other in a traditional sense. But if those exist within me, then how can someone tell me they aren't true. Latinidad is one of the trickiest too, because there are not inherent signs. There is a mix of racial groups, nationalities, social classes, even languages. I think that is why it is important to allow people to self-identify, but with the expectation that they'll do the necessary self-reflection to understand their privileges. A white latinx will have a different experience than me. But if we can find some commonality, maybe even in trash talking cultural customs, they might be more receptive to conversations where they can unpack the ways they (or I) contribute to systems of oppression. I'm not here to be gatekeeper and I'm not here to babysit people either.

**EO:** I've been watching videos of La rosa de Guadalupe<sup>4</sup> on YouTube and I was curious if you had any favorite television dramas and if you had any ideas on why drama is captivating?

**PR:** I don't watch soaps because I think the acting is too cheesy, I can't get lost in it. I do like sci-fi so I've been really into WestWorld on HBO. I think drama is popular because humans love spectacle and the nice thing about stories on TV is that they have plot and typically some sort of resolution. There is a pattern of emotion one can have watching a show. There might be variation, but for the most part I think it is constant and we like that. I like that. I think in another sense, it is about escape. I can worry about the future of technology and the ethics of using AI (WHO IS HUMANNNNNN??!) but Westworld gives me a way to explore those ideas concretely. I have characters to attach ideas to. It puts my fears and hope into action.





#### **4. Footnotes**

- 1.** Gender-inclusive variation of chicano/xicano
- 2.** Refers to Latin American people, communities, and cultural practices independent of any single social framework or experience.
- 3.** The McNair Scholars Program assists low-income, first-generation college-going and underrepresented minority undergraduates prepare for doctoral study.
- 4.** Mexican drama television series about stories of people who have experienced true miracles after praying to the Virgin of Guadalupe.



PANYIN BOYE-DOE

r e g i o n



Untitled

GABRIELA GUERRERO

## “Today I Learned the Names of my Grandparents”

CHAD ONIANWA

In the black of your eyes, you can remember  
the rhyming patterns of your life  
When you close them there's a scene too vivid for  
memory to hold. It sits on a plateau, a little  
higher than eyes can see  
but your position lets you see the tops of heads  
Raised hands, and shouts out loud  
The smoke from the flames can be felt on your hairline  
or you can at least imagine it after seeing the rising smoke  
It burns grey and green from precious minerals so sacred  
your eyes can't quite recall

I wish I could remember something like that  
everything is just out of reach  
On the edge of being mine  
Even though it already is or at least once was      or

I don't even know what is mine anymore      or  
if possessions mean anything

My reach is long like the homeless braids I'd find  
under a bed. They don't belong to me  
but I still remember what they mean



# “\*Forget the Pendulum’s Swing”

CALEB LAZARO-MORENO

You are asleep.

You are awake.

To live is to negotiate knowledges.

Knowledges can enact dreams.

Dreams can enact knowledges.

Dreams are knowledge.

To know is to dream.

To live is to negotiate dream states.

You dream.

You know.

I am

Vibrating violently.

In the stillness.

Still violent.

You are awake

You are asleep

To live is to negotiate dream states.

Dreams can enact knowledges.

Knowledges can enact dreams.

Knowing is dreaming.

To dream is to know.

To live is to negotiate knowledges.

You know.

You dream.

I am

In the stillness.

Vibrating Violently.

Violently still.

# “unearthing”

RACHEL ATAKPA

you listen for snakes as the forget-me-nots bloom  
move tessellate flower to let cool earth breath, hissing catharsis

you are searching for your father: buried stock fish, machete, rose  
colored dust. plumes of ink separate fingernail grooves in soil from  
acidic rivulets of rain, convening in sweetended burst of tomato insides

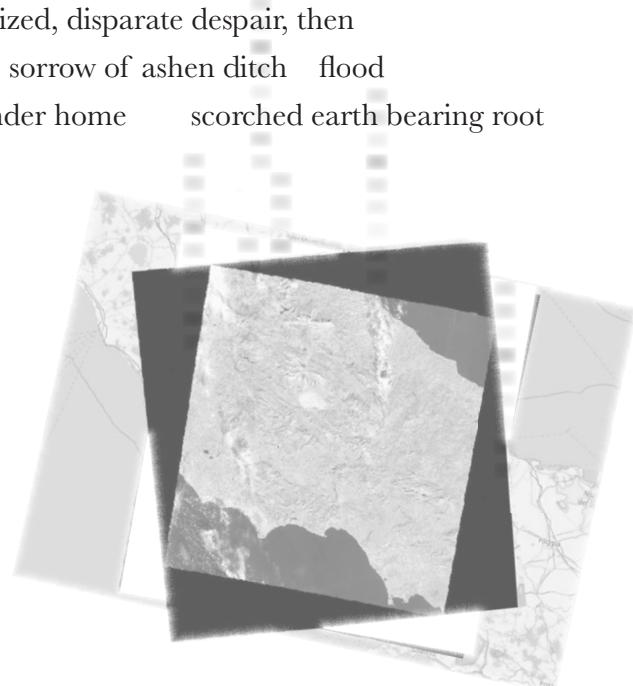
against flora    you are trepidation of voyage displaced by lineage; or,  
martyrdom unmourned for: ineffability traversed temple,  
crux of jaw  
opened temporality, ambient pulse of brain encircling    columns of  
muscle

make static shocks convulse, snap of memory shooting between teeth

you saw him once, nose pressed against mesh of screen door mausole-  
um, but it was under  
shifting light of debris: television glow, flickering street lamp, last breath  
of lightning bug

do you belong to memory? effervescent  
specter—unnamed origin crumbling as you plunder serpentine hole  
for route to core of alien earth; or,  
obsidian carcass of immaterial remains, inciting inaction of  
eeking tongue, inching alongside rootworm,  
unremembered root word, dislodged by flight of breath

he calls you through calcified ambulation of skipping stones  
adiah — daughter, first  
dream, materialized, disparate despair, then  
joy of prophecy, sorrow of ashen ditch    flood  
water pulling under home    scorched earth bearing root





# “Love in a foreign place or ode to grandma/gentle rage”

---

YUE SALLY JIANG

grandma's light is on  
in the next room.  
her sweet presence  
has been fading;  
it's nothing new.  
she's not as quick as she  
used to be,  
but she tries—  
she still tries—  
so why don't you celebrate her smile?  
why don't you celebrate her tries?  
she falters  
but she tries

my grandma means the world to me

I think she was my world  
when I was six  
(she bathed me in her love)  
when I am twenty

(she filled my belly until I could smell what childhood tastes like)

When she is eighty, I want to remember her twenty, even though I haven't  
seen it before

Do I talk fast and low rather than sweetly and slow so that I'm not actually  
understood?

For power's sake is it better for people to just hear a presentation of  
dominance and leadership  
rather than a true reason for it? Am I scared to show my cards?

Tailor my experience to the lightning of the evening  
The lightning that makes night  
look like day

Tailor my experience to transport you to a different place  
to the lighting of a photo studio  
Tell my story through your camera's eyes  
Immortalize me, if only for one instagram post

I am a temporary statue

Stop speaking—  
We need to sit!  
In silence.  
“Hang out”  
Let's sit by the lake  
And watch the lightning  
Of a horizon

Let's sit by the lake  
And think about our parents  
But

But

Let's - Sit - By - The lake - And - Let's

Not

Let's

- Not.

Gentle, Never ceasing.

Gentle, For the most part,

Crescendos as

Gentle

The storm speeds up-

The rage is born!

Gentle.

The gentle rage is born

Gentle, Never ceasing.

Gentle, For the most part,

Crescendos as

Gentle

The storm speeds up-

The rage is born!

Gentle.

The gentle rage is born,

The gentle rage of life.

Gentle, Is born in one instant.

Life is created.

Gentle,

Gently

Life is created.

TICK, TOCK.

my poems

etched

on the edges of

my memory.

if I were to pass

they would flash before my eyes

& cover me

an itchy blanket

clear

plastic, sandwich wrapper,

raincoat material

wiggling/sliding around my body,

in a hospital bed.

if I were to pass

If I were to pass into a different existence

i would carry these poems with me

into the foreign place.





When pretending  
to care about  
people of color  
isn't cool anymore  
will anyone still  
give a shit about  
**me lol**

DAPHNE CALHOUN

region

# “29.12.17 Donuthouse Night Run”

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Chad Onianwa

- Light shing on glossy gravestones the moment you drive past them
- man in white fuzzy robe smoking on porch surrounded by decorative red lights
  - Donuts fresh from the fryer waiting their turns to be iced
  - perfectly warm tea softening your throat + restoring your voice
  - realizing the home you've aged in has also aged + matured in ways
- totems, tokens, the power of items, belief, energy transfer, + why I consume
  - surge of emotions when remembering you can't be in one place forever
    - retracing your steps/memories around a city + on streets
    - trying to capture the feeling of dissociation when it's happening
- realizing you're your own confidant + thinking if you really trust anyone/does anyone really know you
- being guided by a gridded pattern of multicolored lights to your destination + becoming lost in the sea of it
  - when the sea of grid patterned guiding lights stops
  - a peaceful shadow eclipsing on your happiness/calm/reverie
- not knowing whether change is only an illusion of environments, if your doubt/insecurity + habits are involved or if your mind just leaves the haze for a little bit



- a church cross illuminated red along its edges atop a church., engulfed by the flowing steam from the vents
- neon open sign illuminating the clean curves an oldsmobile cutlass-style body sitting on 24inch rims.
- falling asleep with your eyes open to the sound of a clock dripping deeper into your ear canal
- wondering whether curses are real
- seeing and meeting the faces you needed to talk to
- thinking about the good/bad/neutral of purgatory + where that can be
- what meaningful buildings/spaces can turn into
- losing/finding things





region

