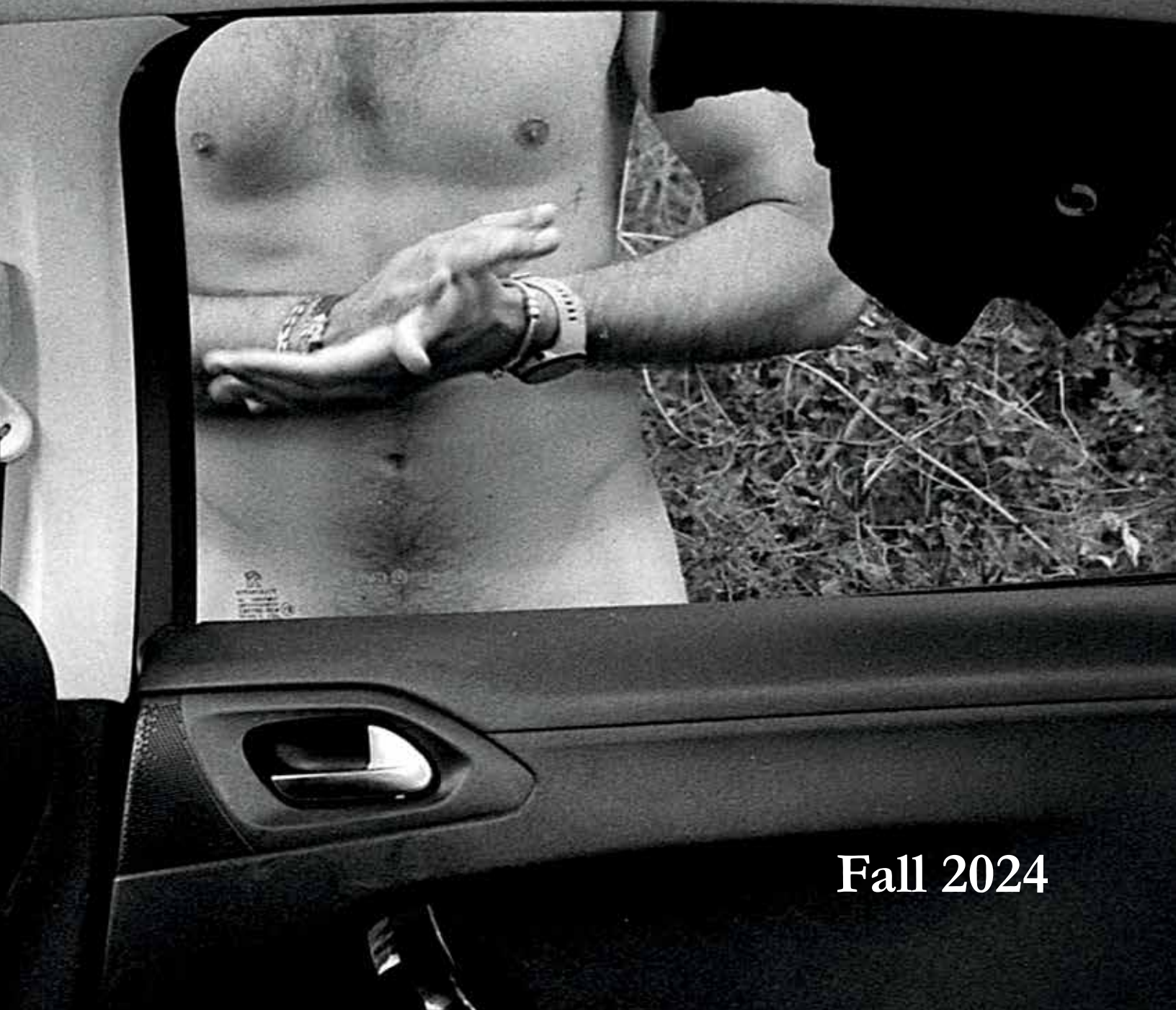


Superpresent



Fall 2024



SUPERPRESENT

Superpresent

A Magazine of the Arts

Volume 4, Number 4

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Cover
Changing Room
Luca Brt



Endpaper
untitled
Peter McCoogin

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Donors for Volume 4

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who have generously contributed to the journal:

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Editors' Note

Who doesn't love a road trip? Road trips are sometimes family vacations and sometimes spiritual quests and sometimes memory pilgrimages and sometimes a time of longing or forgetting or even new beginnings. Often they become several of these things at once. That's where the art comes from. This issue of *Superpresent* proudly presents some of the most creative writing and best images we have had the pleasure of publishing.

Why are road trips wrapped in mystery and excitement? It's more than getting from point A to point B; but what are we trying to discover or recover? Some of this quarter's submissions provide an answer of sorts. "Perhaps some of his atoms were still in this town; particles of carbon dioxide released in front of this same ceiba," Felipe Aramburo Jaramillo writes in "Ceiba."

Similarly, road trips merge with family sagas and cruising and the search for self in Hal Shipman's tender hand-painted photographs and maps, documenting a search for an uncle's authentic life.

The "why" of the road trip may be thwarted or it can be truncated but unlike the road, it is rarely straight. For example, a tree lighting ceremony masks what remains unsaid between two people in Paloma Maria Freitas' piece. Sometimes it's a love poem to a truck stop and even more. See Donna Langevin's poem "Love's Truck Stop."

Our senses are alive on the road, aren't they? Rina Palumbo treats us to the surprising tastes of the road and CJ Giroux tempts us with ice cream and other treats and Echo Andersson points out that "the open road is smelt more than felt."

The narrative of a road trip can be hard when there's a word limit, but Giroux efficiently reveals to us the sequential slabs that speed past the window, converting our daily drudge into the mystical road trip.

In our Video and Sound section, in a beautiful blending of form, T Lavois Thiebaud presents video incorporating words, sounds, and archival moving pictures to bring her poem to life. And Brian R Donnelly captures the speed and excitement of a different kind of road trip by brilliantly using popular films to propel a narrative in "Goin' Down the Road."

The theme for our next issue is "Secrets and Mysteries." Submissions are free at superpresent.org. The deadline is December 1st.

-the Editors

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May in Idaho

for CMarie Fuhrman

i.

One lane of US-95 is closed for construction. Idling, we chat with the sunburnt flagger through our open window. She points out an aerie in a nearby cottonwood — earlier today she watched as the pair of nesting eagles collaborated to kill an adult heron, heave it back to their chicks. Says it happened so quickly she couldn’t pull her phone out.

ii.

We stretch our legs at an overlook commemorating the White Bird Battlefield, where the Nez Perce once defeated the U.S. Cavalry. As we’re reading signs, a frantic peeping rings out — kingbirds have constructed a nest under the shelter’s wide canopy. We are creeping too close, the parents can’t rest. We leave the space to those who were here before.

iii.

Somewhere before Coeur d’Alene, we lose an hour. The cliff swallows don’t seem to notice. Mustard fields are combed so smoothly it makes my hands itch. All week, time has skittered like blackbirds on the roadside. Tomorrow is Mother’s Day. That does not mean as much as it used to.

-Erica Reid



Untitled
Peter McCoogin



Lincoln Highway
Jenny Kowalski

bridges

many Italian
roadways to the Renaissance
throughout Firenze —
walking across the Arno
on different bridges
Beato Angelico
and Massaccio follow routes
Giotto first walked —
they half-wave to each other
acknowledging, but also
turning away their faces,
beautiful profiles

-Alan Bern



Roadtrip 2
Veronica Romanenghi

between the lines

pastures of beige thoughts blow like prairie grass
vast willowy swaying in a gentle chaos

I am heading west of Colby, Kansas
driving 70 on 70 at 3:17 a.m.

trying not to think at all
I just keep the pedal down

to get some where
else

hearing the heartbeat of concrete's cracked horizons
that hushed thump-thump when tires meet tar

my mind blurs from the conscious whir
focusing on what is not here

between the lines
silence

-Aaron Williams

Valiant

(bad thing happened here)

Roared orders, lights
pulled up alongside us.
Our chances look terrible.

Worn wild and dark,
complaining as gods
birthed in hidden light.

Accelerated after the first
warning shot telling me
it wasn't about race.

We road on regardless.
Magnificent, unprotected.
A harvest moon shines

on hair in the blood.
Wood fire days of waiting,
just jeans and fifteen.

-Betsy Fagin



*Sunshine, nothing but sunshine
For when you feel empty
Maria Titan*

Ceiba

Without much clarity, they were gathered there in front of the ceiba tree as they had promised. Today was not a special holiday, unlike what they might have imagined once the first anniversary of his passing had come. No birthdays or particular tributes. No, today was just an ordinary Sunday. No religious celebration or forgotten historical day. And yet, it was special in that all of them, setting aside the monotonous obligations that made up their lives, were there: under the great shadow of the ceiba tree. Planning the roadtrip, as expected, had not been easy. They had to carefully consider how to distribute people in each car without overlooking the chemistry that governed the dynamics of this peculiar group: this seemed essential. After all, the center of this human galaxy had disappeared long ago. Childhood friends, classmates, and ex-lovers formed a strange ensemble that had to be jamed in two different cars.

The last time they had all gathered was a year ago, days after the untimely event, to lay the groundwork for what resembled a common commemorative tradition. Back then, they promised to meet again to give a more personal closure to the grief that seemed to haunt them. The ceiba tree seemed the most logical place: everyone remembered how much he liked that tree. Since that day, many days had passed; some longer and more significant than others, but days nonetheless. This passing accumulation of dates was necessary for this day to arrive. Perhaps the weight of time—or maybe the absence of it—was starting to settle in their bodies; all seemed to carry a burden unimaginably difficult to measure: metric units cannot be assigned to grief.

Once the distribution in each car was settled, a meeting point and time had to be agreed upon. Despite sharing a common destination, it seemed impossible to resort to the simplest parsimony in choosing central gathering point: renouncing one's own preference seemed, in some way, a renunciation of the hierarchy of attachments that had brought them together in the first place. An unspoken agreement indicated that those willing to drive, beyond the simple reason of owning a car, must have occupied some superior affection. Or at least they must have occupied it when he was still alive. Whether it was the amount of time shared or the quality of that time, it allowed some people to resign themselves to surrendering to the whims of others.

Before arriving in town, they met at a roadside stop for breakfast. It wasn't the plan: several people had skipped breakfast to traverse the city and reach the meeting point at the suggested time. An absurd act, in many cases. As expected, the scheduled time was nothing more than an arbitrary formality that would not be respected. The roadtrip would start with a predictable delay. Choosing a place to stop for something to eat was almost as challenging as the journey itself. The different dietary restrictions, particular tastes, and insatiable cravings made this task almost unfeasible. The original reason for the stop had little to do with food; the idea was to share a moment together before reaching the town, a simple way to confirm everyone's commitment. Perhaps deep down, it was a way to find some escape. Taking advantage of the lead they had over the other group, they stopped at a roadside stop nestled in a mountain. The view of the restaurant seemed enough to undermine the dietary complications. It was cold, and the fog began to creep through the vegetation. A round of hot coffee for everyone as they waited for the rest.

The second car would be delayed, announced one of its occupants: the necessary words to abandon all cordiality and give in to their voracious appetite. Arepas, empanadas, scrambled eggs, puff pastries, and dishes of various sizes had to be placed with microscopic precision on a long—and unstable—plank that served as a table. Almost everyone ate in silence, constantly adjusting their legs to avoid bothering the others. They exchanged trivial everyday matters with no hope that they would mature into a more significant conversation. Despite sharing a close bond—which had grouped them in this car and not the other—it was painful to see them try to interact. Many of them, especially after the death, were learning to live among the living. Getting used to inhabiting the present was, above all, a linguistic challenge: relearning how to conjugate verbs in the present tense to narrate something that had happened in a personal and immediate space. Describing those places that had not been inhabited by all members of this select group was terrifying.

They arrived in town after noon. They gathered in front of the ceiba tree without much clarity on what they should do. Arriving in town had exhausted all imaginable planning: many had not even considered that they would stand before the famous tree that was already part of the tribe's oral tradition. By the time they met at the roadside restaurant, it was too late to make a plan: they simply hurried to reach the ceiba. No one knew how he had come to love that ceiba tree so much and not another; or any tree, really. His departure was so sudden that many questions would remain unanswered. Soon, his presence in this world, manifested in the group's memories, would cease to exist. Perhaps some of his atoms were still in this town; particles of carbon dioxide released in front of this same ceiba. Thinking that he had been here, in front of the tree, was easier than thinking about the possible reasons that led to his death. Memory has a certain aversion to movement. His figure in this plaza, static and incorruptible, was the only solace they had left.

Before making a hasty decision on how to perform that evocative ritual, they walked through the steep streets of the town. The heat was comforting: the sun filtered through the leaves of fruit trees, and the wind blew gently. Perhaps it was the season of the year or some strange and incomprehensible meteorological phenomenon, but they found it impossible not to think that some higher power was conspiring to make the day unfold this way. All the streets led to the cemetery. Upon arriving, they exchanged anxious glances for what felt like an eternity. Someone, without much hesitation, decided to enter, and the others, with a certain resignation, followed. The cemetery was nothing more than a somber garden with a few scattered tombstones throughout the space, like moles spread across an extensive skin. It was difficult to find the right words. Some decided to focus on the landscape: a small lookout allowed them to detail the mountainous valley where the town—and the ceiba—rested. Others, with lamentable conformity, focused on the few flowers that adorned the place.

It was starting to get late, and they hadn't had lunch yet. Some began to show visible signs of desperation. It could have been the lack of proper nourishment or the fact that this solemn day had turned into some kind of outing with distant and removed relatives. They returned to the plaza, looking for a place to eat and discuss what should happen. So far, there was no clarity on what they had to do to break the spell and finally free themselves from the pilgrimage in which they had become entangled. A rough-looking woman arranged several tables disdainfully so

they could sit down. She warned that at this hour, the lunch options would be limited. A round of soups and cold beers was the way to appease the formidable restaurant owner. For the first time during the entire roadtrip, there was some universality among them: they would all have the soup and finish the beer. By then, it was too late to refuse what had brought them together here. Soon they would have to leave to avoid the unbearable traffic.

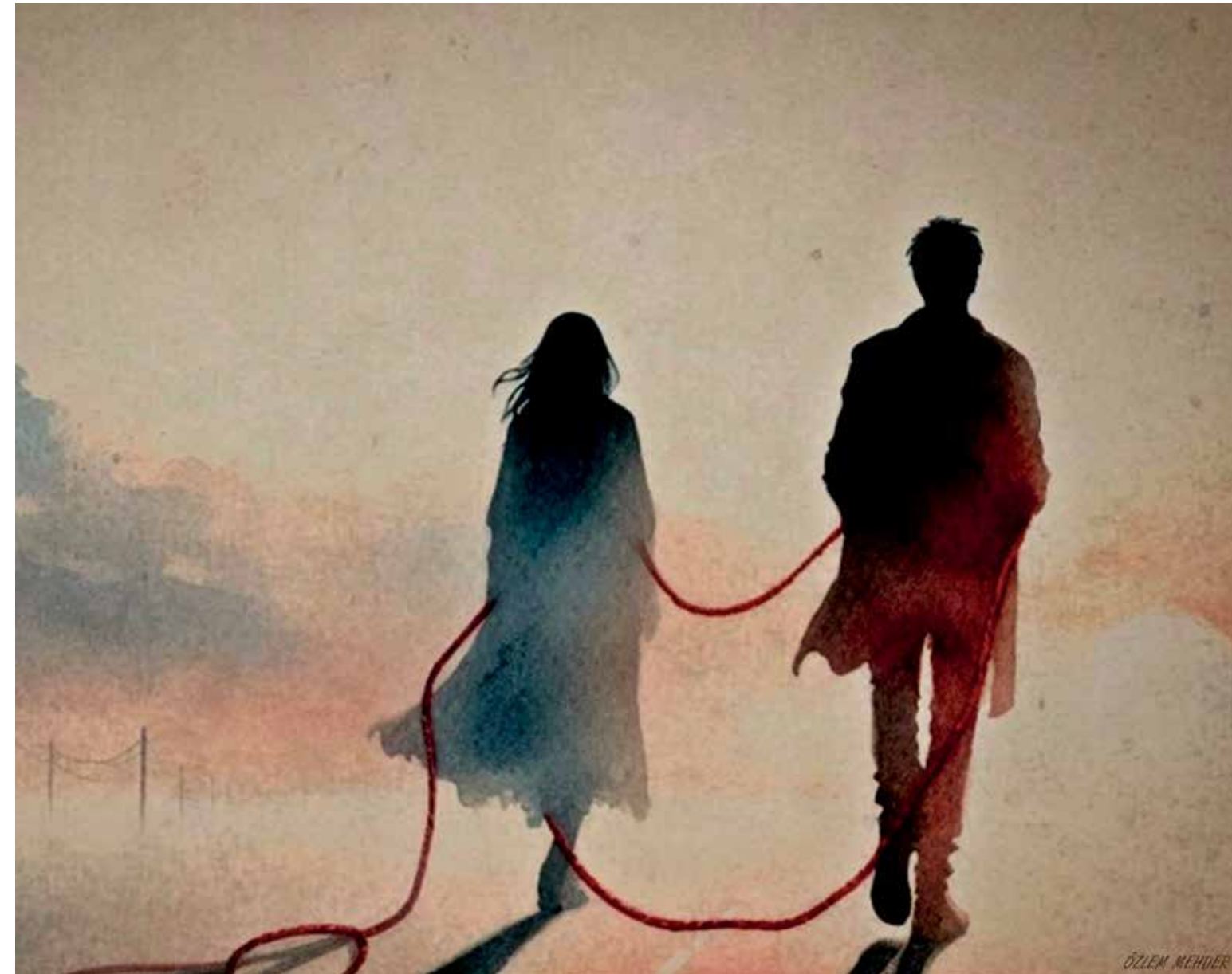
Some people had brought small tributes for the ceiba, while others, without much planning, had simply accepted the invitation to the trip, perhaps in search of an answer to a question that never had the opportunity to be asked. It seems unrealizable to encapsulate everything that made up a person in an impersonal object or action; especially when this person seemed to represent all the most immediate realities. Perhaps this was what had led humanity to build complex and incomprehensible religions: a macabre mechanism to deal with the unbearable absence of someone. The ceiba tree thus became the central symbol of the faith that had just been proclaimed. The tree, in the center of a plaza, seemed to give some meaning to the strange pilgrimage they had undertaken. That the tree was teeming with life, with green leaves and iridescent flowers, soothed the mournful atmosphere of the day.

Plates loaded with rice and potatoes were finished. They ordered more cold beers despite the coolness of the afternoon announcing the day's transition into night. Familiar anecdotes were shared, as well as closely guarded confidences. To an unknowing observer, it would have been impossible to distinguish the tears from the laughter emanating from the table. The emotional kaleidoscope manifested in its entirety. The void—like the dark matter of the universe—left an invisible mark on each of them. The sudden deprivation of what is assumed to be constant is so difficult to assimilate that the body does not have the cellular machinery to handle it. They divided the bill into equal amounts; a friendly reconciliation to remedy the possible excesses (another piece of chicken; more salad; an additional soup). They said goodbye to the owner, who by then had changed her haughtiness for affectionate complicity. That day forced them to surrender to a state of absolute kindness; even that shopkeeper who had nothing to do with what had brought them there.

They walked toward the center of the plaza where the ceiba tree stood and observed it one last time. While they were having lunch, a solitary drinker had told them that the tree could be over a hundred years old; claiming it had been there since the arrival of his grandparents. It was useless to ask any questions: the more they dug into the ground, the thicker the roots became. These were all elements that somehow predated their lives, making them even more timeless. The ceiba tree was a symbol that transcended their time in this world. They placed the offerings—small objects, letters, flowers—at the base of the tree. A perfunctory gesture, almost accidental. The clock was already urging them to start the return journey.

The road to the city was dark and the streetlights on the road flickered intermittently. The powerful headlamps of the trucks warned them that any attempt to prolong the trip would be futile. At this point, it was necessary to return to the warmth of their homes and the familiarity of their routines. The absence of those who once formed an intrinsic part of these routines was something they would have to deal with in the weeks to come. Just as when returning from a long trip, the bed would seem stranger and harder than usual.

-Felipe Aramburo Jaramillo



Our Own Truth
Özlem Mehder



Everywhere I Go, Even on the Road
Carolina Yáñez



Be Mine
Maria Titan

Greening

A patch of yellow grass
Greening itself
The smell of gas-oh-lean
As-you-lean into me
The cars hot
Busted AC
But you're hotter
Busted nose.
My back, wet from the seat.
The heat
Pressed like wash and fold on Sullivan st.
We miss New York in this way, in flashes, in fumes
The open road is smelt more than felt
Burning rubber
Bad coffee
Sugar-free anything to keep us awake and thin
Your eyes, focused, sort of, on the tarmac ahead
But also focused
On my bare thigh
Dangerously close to knocking us out of 5th gear
Dangerously close to pulling us over.
We don't know what waits for us
When we get back to the city that made us

Maybe better coffee?
I pray for a quiet revival
Of all the things that make the streets holy
I pray for you under green subway lamps
And me under you
But. For now.
The road, the yellow grass
We green ourselves as Manhattan approaches
And everything else
Fades in the rear view.

-Echo Andersson



Grand Tour
Keith Douglas Warren

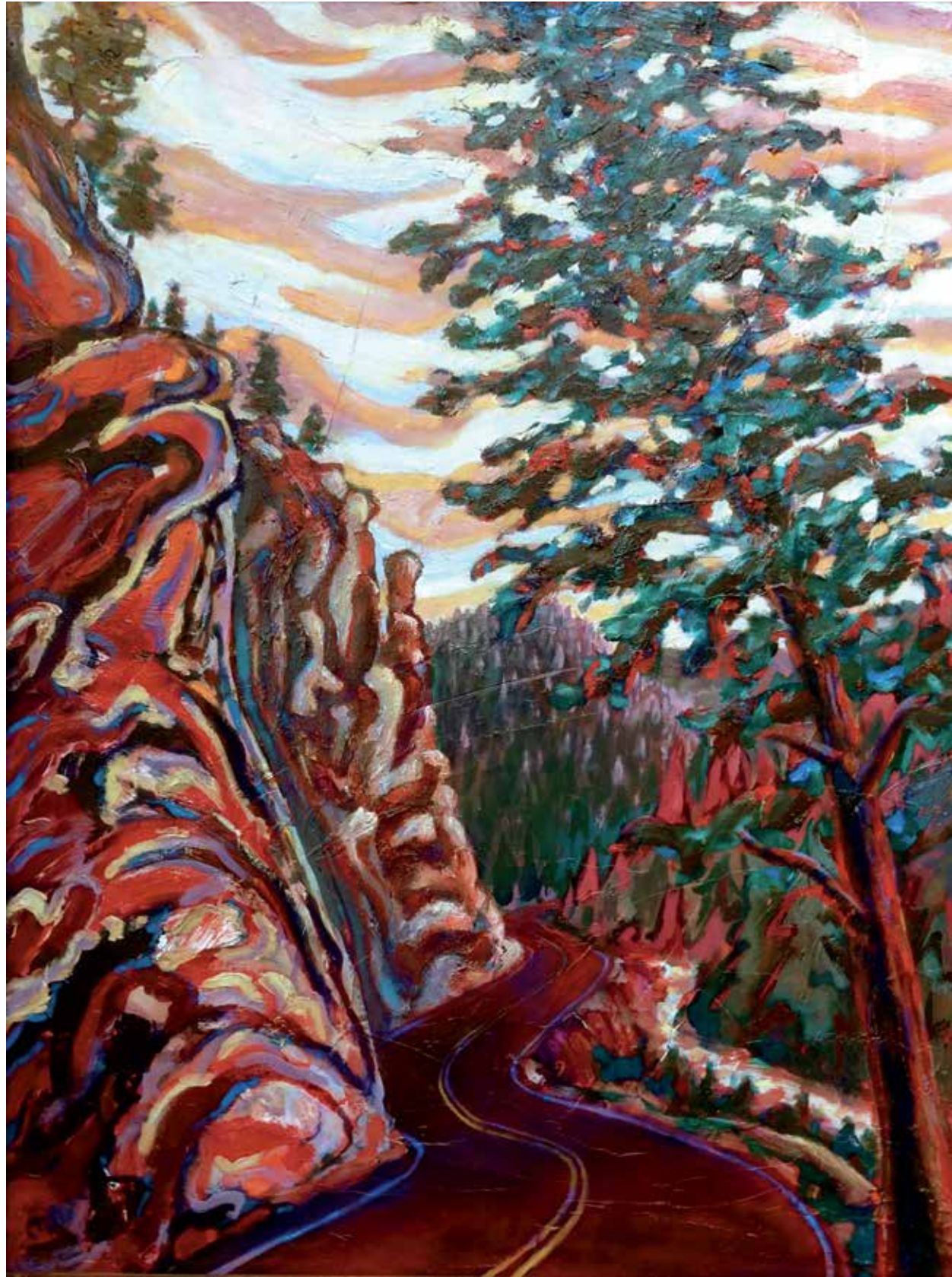


Firebird
Cori Matusow

Fireflies

This year, she had one last request
as Mother's Day grew dark and pierced-through
with stars: one large half-cherry, half-Coke slushy
squeezed icy from the pull handle
of a fluorescent-lit gas station. So, kids to bed,
I drove out of the neighborhood in the dark
and turned onto Spencer-Mattingly Road.
There, I remembered that change can come
soft and unnoticed like the turn of a season,
when you wonder how long this year
fireflies shimmered in the field on the roadside.

-Devon Neal



The Winding Road
Tyler Alpern

Route 101 to the Hall of Mosses

The Hairy Man is all around us
driving through a red stretch
of Washington's blue lip.

I spy a gruesome wood statue:
something apeish that feasts on a kid.
I'm stunned but get no goosebumps.

Further up, a dusty bungalow window
with a message on cardboard for travellers:
BIGFOOT IS REAL in ballpoint gashes.

Then I bet all the gorilla suits in the world it's true
and that I would never see, and never go looking.

-Briana Armson

Travelling Poem of Despair, Resolve, and Acceptance

(with a small snack at line 6)

All of it—created, evolved, manufactured or imagined—will finally
Blow up and boil down sizzling, like butter, a fragrance
Cloying, yet forgettable
Drown like sunsets at Key West
Edging toward the
Fridge (no poem to see here, keep moving)
Get on down the line, go. Go
Home if you have a home
If not, just
Jump on the train. Just joke about it
Keep it light
Leave as though you're expected elsewhere
Make a discreet exit
Now you're getting the hang of it
Only a little farther, remember
People don't know how far you've come. You keep that
Quiet—nobody needs to know how hard you have to
Run. Run—
Stay ahead of the snares until
Today turn to face all of it
Today, tonight, tomorrow
Under glaring prairie sun, under stars, under
Violet streaks reflected in train windows,
Wyoming-bound
eXit at the place where the boiling never stops—
Yellowstone.
You have arrived. Relax. Pitch your tent at Ground
Zero.

-Sharon Hilberer



On the road
Patrick Willet

Bayou Lafourche

It was a long drive up from what they call
“The Bayou” where my friend Nick lived among
indigenous Choctaw and cunning, wild-ass Cajun’s
who partied like monkeys on the dance floors
of innumerable bars and worked 14 day shifts
on drilling rigs in the Gulf of Mexico
then cheated with their cousin’s wife’s
when they were back on shore.

The young girls there knew how
to stroke a lizard’s belly. Put it to rest
so they could tap it back awake.
Those neon green lizards have a reflex
that clamps their jaws shut so Cut-off LAL
lasses can strut along Highway 1
with living, neon gew-gaw dangling
off their ear-lobes. Along their
lovely neck lines, saurian bellies.
Slender tails curled against clavicles.

Nick and I liked to stop half-way to Baton Rouge
at a bar on Highway One, a road
that seemed to exist in thirty years ago
in a land too fierce to accept change.
The barroom was dark as Guinness
but had French doors that swung out
onto the grace of an uneven balcony
above the slow dun of Bayou Lafourche.
Egrets and Great Blue Herons waited
for fish to mistake their stilts
for saplings, drift within reach.

Mid-afternoon the bar was mostly empty.
We’d have a draft. Talk or not talk.
We also liked the way the syllables
of that town’s name fit in our mouths.
Labadieville. Labadeville. The ie makes a
long E sound in the middle. An e falls silent at the tail.
A sort of bounce to it inside the parentheses
of dominant, doubled L sounds. Labadieville.

-Ed Ruzicka

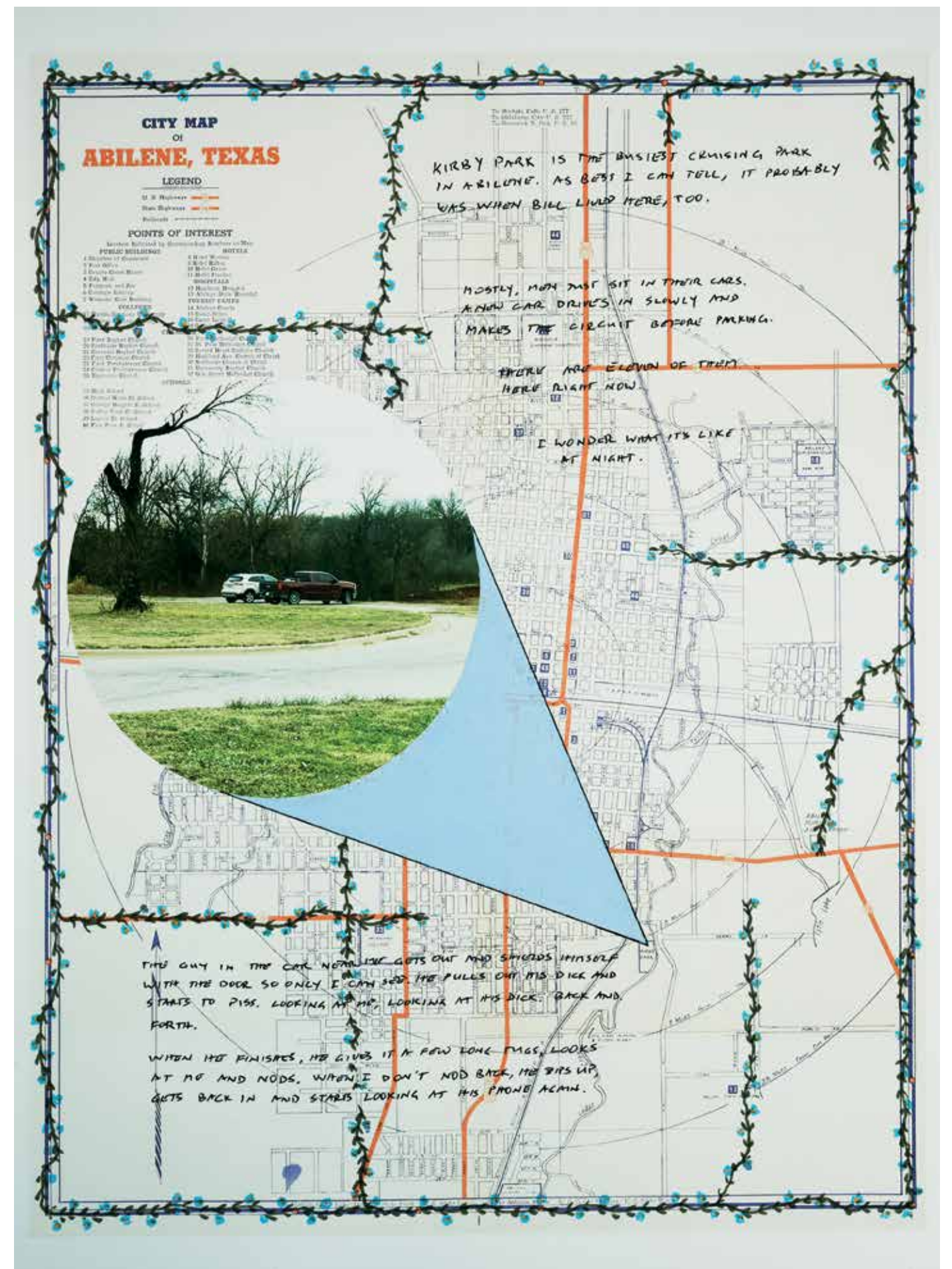


Walk in the Rain
Keith Douglas Warren

Philips '23

September 2023, I87 to Atlantic Highlands in the early morning blue for a 7A call time with a quick coffee at the Molly Pitcher Rest Stop and down the same road I took seven months earlier to Rehoboth Beach on a winter weekend at the Avenue Inn only for a night and then to the State Park to pick up horseshoe crab shells across the way from Cape May which was a three hour drive for our family back in 2008 though we never stopped and rarely stop except for when we come back up the Taconic after visiting family in Jersey or Staten Island and so Dad can grab a Red Bull which he didn't do when we drove through Arizona to the Grand Canyon a month before the Atlantic Highlands because we were all agape with the great desert landscape and the one time we stopped to get gas there were cow skulls and tin cans in the sand and a funny cowboy bathroom but naturally in 2016 on our way to Ohio during my brother's time in Cleveland of course we stopped in Pennsylvania since the drive is thirteen hours wow but you should have seen me two months later as a Traveling Lantern children's theater actor because Becker Weinberg and I drove from Fishkill NY to Kearney NJ to Harrisonburg VA to Saxtons River VT to Revere MA to Speculator NY to and on the way back from Virginia we stopped at this massive gas station which reminded me of the James Gandolfini Rest Stop with a few tweaks and it had this spectacular light pole shining through the winter mist and the gas pumps were red like the Kum and Go stations in Oklahoma or the Philips 66 across the panhandle which I passed every day when I worked on *Killers of the Flower Moon* needless to say when I took my own road trip cause I was going stir crazy haha and drove from Bartlesville OK to Eureka Springs AK and through Missouri cause I'd never take a road trip to Missouri though I got a great hamburger on my way home and stopped to enjoy a little watering hole in the woods somewhere before driving back along the bison and cattle of Oklahoma that gave me experience again two months before Arizona to drive through Colorado with my brother and sister which I adored due to its immensity and rolling green hills and mountains of pre-historic size we stayed in Evergreen and only drove out far once to Glacier Mountain Park as we did after Oklahoma when the three of us stayed in Montana and drove Rhonda the White Rhino van all the way to Yellowstone National Park a mere five hours round trip and fairly precarious Wyoming roads are windy and lie in between canyons just like the Arizona roads and the Colorado roads but nowhere in the panhandle or the Northeastern corridor when Becker and I were touring and of course the first road trip taken post driving license was New York to Montreal ten years ago with some friends on a very simple route up to Canada with nothing remarkable not even when its compared to the American farmland so etched into my memory as a child on our drives to Hersheypark USA as cows and red barns sat on the side of the road very much like certain parts of New Jersey I had to again drive through for work to pick up some Halloween props in 2019 for the movie *Trick* but I hope the next all American road trip I take is with my brother and sister through the Pacific Northwest or Nevada and all the ghost cities like the one outside Kansas City anyway now speaking of Scorsese I'm reading *The Last Temptation of Christ* on the way to Calverton National Cemetery so my mother sister uncle and I can visit my grandmother's tombstone

-Peter Carellini



Kirby Park
Hal Shipman

Motel

neon lights flash
through the streaked motel room window
heavy curtains drape the vignette

we sink within pulsating colors
cheap bed sheets rough encapsulate
our thinned bodies

free ice free ice free ice

situated on a once busy state road
now bypassed by a super highway
left to crumble like tumbleweed dust

free cable free wifi vacancy

blinking blinking
speaking to no one
always a vacancy

-Susan Dipronio

Safety Under Cover
Michael McFadden



I Didn't Wake Up

I don't remember meeting you,
hopping in my car, cranking

the engine, punching the old
wheel. I never drove to the airport,

ran through TSA, took off
my shoes – didn't take off

my shoes, it's Harry Reid,
Bergstrom, God, make up

your mind please I'm losing my mind,
I can't fucking remember buckling

my seatbelt, pulling down the tray
during takeoff – did it break

off and cut me in half? Slice through
my stomach like an axe – look mom,

I didn't cry, okay? Snot didn't crust
to my cracking lips leaking

into the seams, until they started
to sting. That didn't happen,

I took an Ambien, fell asleep
for five hours until the plane

landed, ears popped, and I crawled
off the ship, moondust crunching

under my boots, helmet strangling
my neck, but I looked up to

the Earth, floating in tar, spinning
slick like a soapy marble, and finally,

I sat down, closed my eyes, sweat
frozen to my cheeks, free then,

and I took my helmet off,
and breathed in the fresh air.

-Jacqueline Zalace

Wayfaring to Maracaibo

Past a Barquisimeto cemetery, its long walls gaily painted in support of the Revolution.& into lowlands spackled with cardoon cactus & small-leaf trees, fractured by dry *quebradas*. The range of hills mound, or they crag, the *tierra* leached to pale colors, to white. A stray goat grazes on a crumpled-rock slope. Every so rarely a home, a motel or restaurant rises out of the earth traversed by a pipeline & powerlines.

* * *

The distant *sierra* has now retreated. Rarely a farm plot of onions or corn, grazing sheep. Under a sun-bleached sky, birds find refuge in a swamp. & still the kilometers of cactus, of small-leaved trees. In a dried-blood-soil lot, a half- dozen boys fly kites. A large field of infant sugar cane & *campos* of tasseling cane. To the west, a storm pours upon those mountains. I fall asleep

* * *

But our winding through rolling scape, humid dense green, awakens me. & into flat land again. The sky is clouded thick. The sun dips further to the west. Occasionally wet road sizzles beneath our tires. Unstuccoed wattle & daub houses. Herds of cattle. Still that pipeline. Towns become larger & more frequent. Boats dry-docked & stripped of paint. Squatter *barrios* of corrugated tin *ranchos*. The sun lowers, pallid colors pool between clouds. We turn away from that rusty pipe. Red & black oil derricks pump behind homes. Rides gyrate of a carnival set up in a lot, colored lights dancing. Now we travel across the oil fields along the eastern shore of Maracaibo Lake. Pipelines multiply, paralleling the road towards a compound of storage tanks. Stacks become more common, the escaping gas afire, flames licking the twilight. Civilization grows denser, traffic lights, homes, McDonalds, bars & grills. Children on a playground. & those stacks, gas combusting.

* * *

We leave those endless cities behind, back to verdant countryside. Sunset colors appear faintly to our right, village after town to the left.

* * *

Across the bridge, towards the white-gold-green sheet of lights on the opposite shore. Beneath us the lake is colorless, deeper than the not-quite-night sky. Headlights flash upon its rippled surface streaked by *lemna* algae. & once on that side, we ride by refineries, air heavy with chemicals. Past the port, cranes idle. Into this bus seeps the smell of that lake a-dying.

quebradas – creeks

tierra – earth

sierra – mountain range

campos – fields

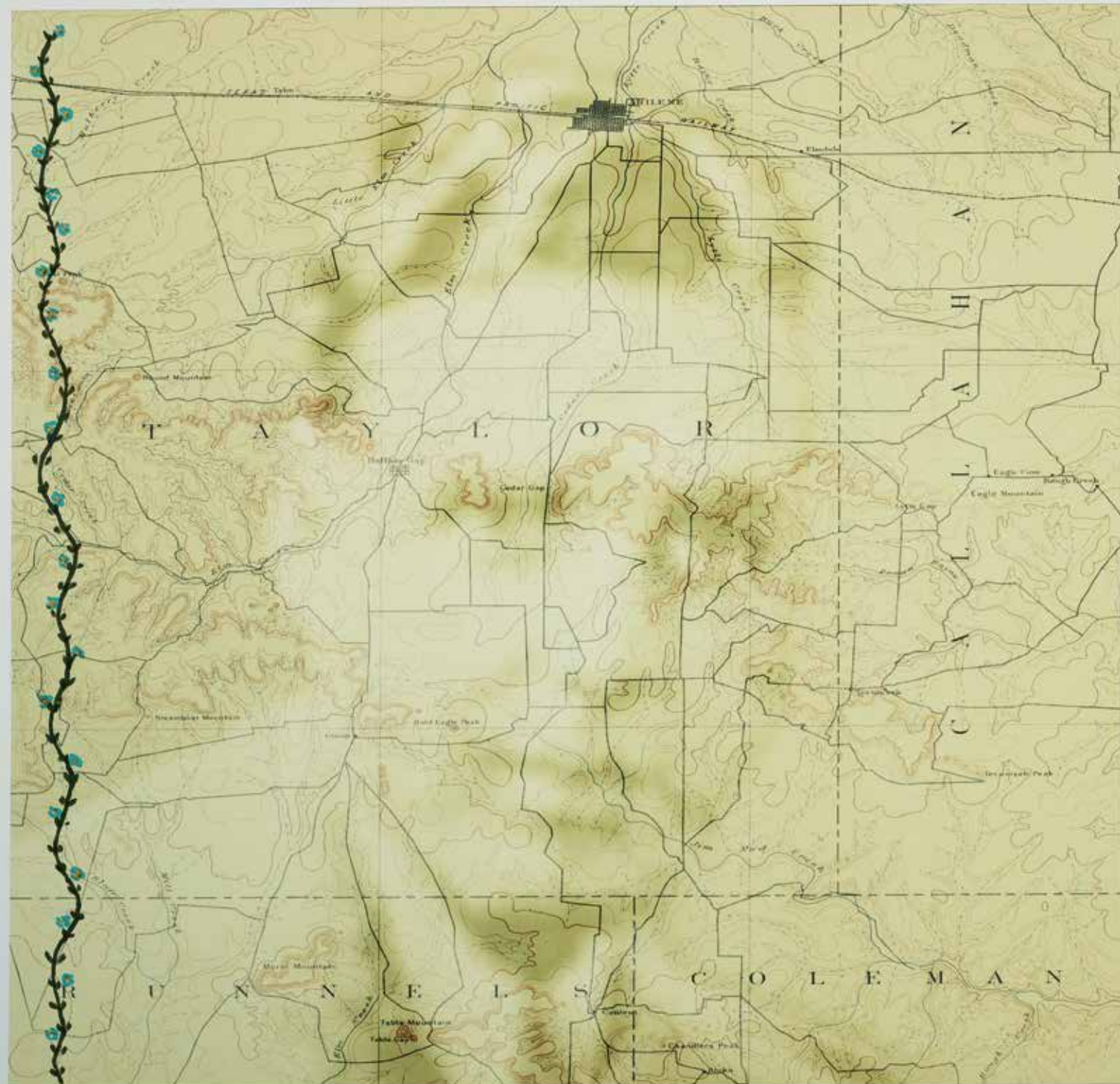
barrios – neighborhoods

ranchos – shacks

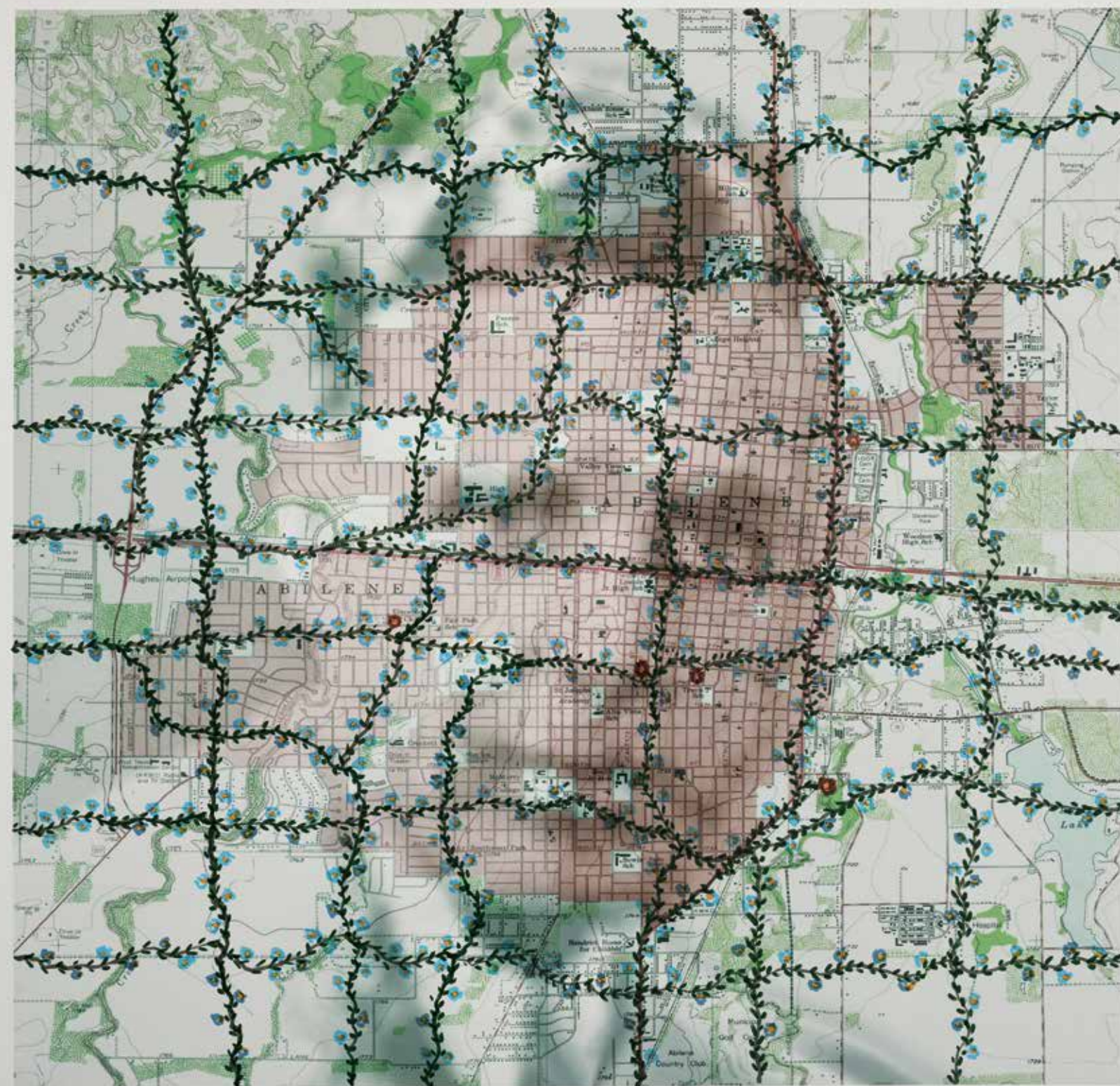
-Lorraine Caputo

Manifest Destiny
Michael McFadden





THIS IS THE ONLY PICTURE I'VE EVER SEEN OF BILL



LEFT *Portrait of Bill* ABOVE *Bill in Cage of Vines*
Hal Shipman

The Maze

Why such a powerful need
to pinpoint that place in the maze
where I took the first step off the path
to follow the will-o'-the-wisp of a dream?
To listen again for call of the cuckoo
that touched my old ache for a union of souls?
Let me attempt to reenter that youthful self
right before she stepped into the bog,
when there was still time to say no.

It wasn't the party, the kisses alone in the hallway,
dismissed with chagrin the next day;
these peccadillos I braced to dissemble
the next time we met.
It was the tone of his voice
as he spoke my name two weeks later
that brought on an instant shift
from ignorance to full knowledge.
Which foreshadowed as well
the reversal from good to ill fortune.

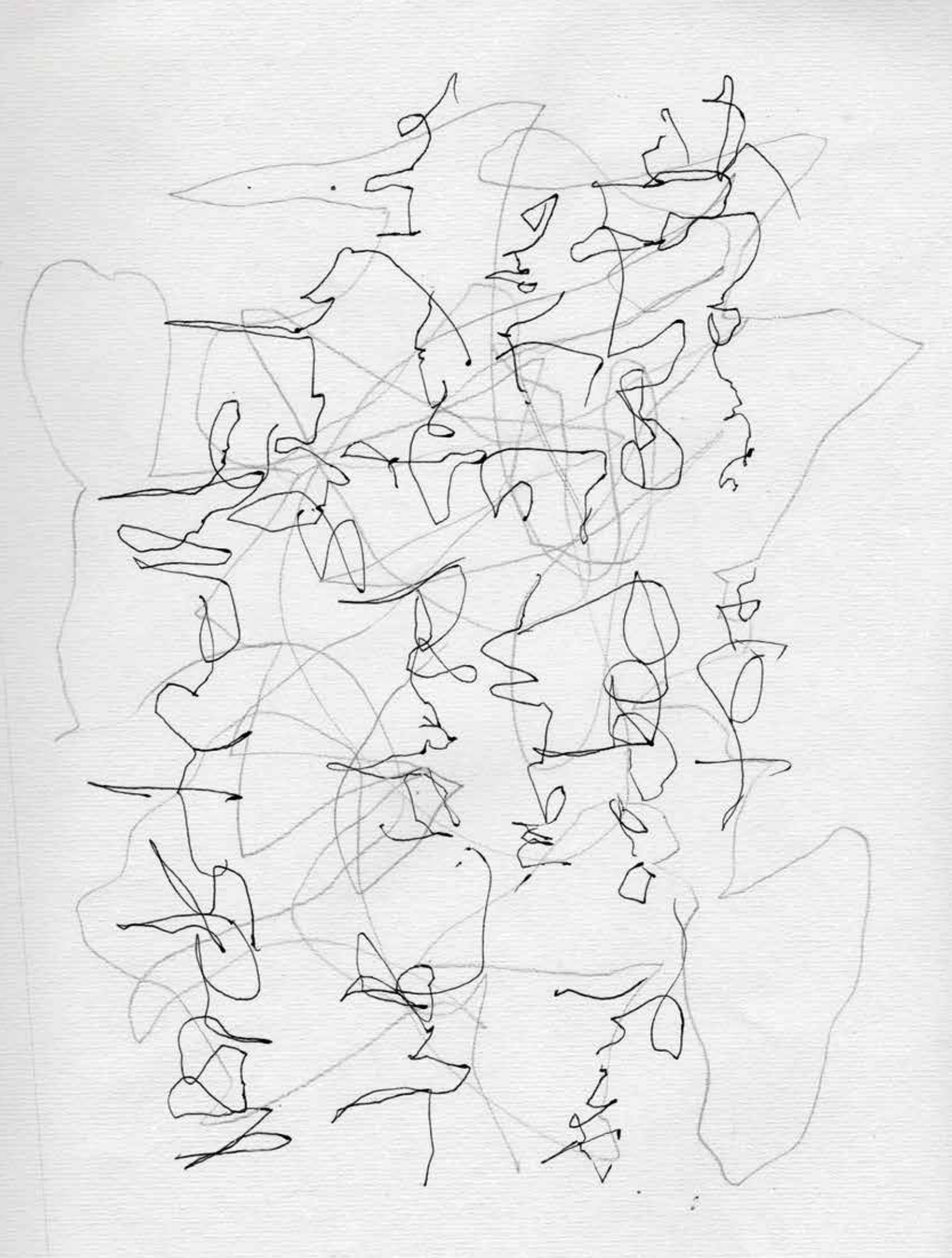
And a moment I wholly embraced,
charging into the muddle and muck,
straight in, and too deep to swim out.
No "Michigan turns" in that maze,
no legal way to blow past the junction
reversing direction at the next corner.
Only a quagmire of hummocks and peat,
bog-cotton seedheads in clumps

like a windswept chorus of whiskery ghosts
holding forth on the impact
of fractured families, children bruised,
and a death.

What gain, now, in going back to events
beyond reach of change? A chance
to examine the lurking fear of an impulse
that might, even now, drive me into a passion
built on a dream.

And to find that the landscape has changed:
from the bogs and dead ends of a maze
to the unbroken spiral
that leads to the labyrinth's heart.
Which means that, at the same crossroads today,
I would no longer be the woman I was,
but the one I've become over time.

-Sharon Whitehill



The Streets of London

Shoulder of Mutton Alley, Cock Lane:
not Sunday dinner but slang
The first was for resident whores,
the second for clients they served.

Houndsditch, more literally labeled,
where dead dogs were tossed.

Elephant & Castle, named for the crest
of the Worshipful Cutlers' guild,
proud of their ivory handles.
An elephant bearing a castle-shaped howdah.

History exposing itself like a dirty old man
on a public street corner.

-Sharon Whitehill

Hand written poem over sketched map on bumpy road
Richard Kitchen



Gold Country
John Laue

The Samhain Roads

As they drove further up the pass towards Gleann Nimhe, Aoife felt the landscape changing—the bare trees were windblown shadows in the dark and the thickening mist. Liam was oblivious, his broad shoulders bouncing along to AC/DC on the van’s radio until, finally, the mist got so dense even he noticed. He slowed the van, hunching over the steering wheel, peering into the gloom. ‘You certain this is the way?’ He sounded uneasy.

Aoife looked up from the map spread across her knees. ‘There’s just the one road to Gleann Nimhe.’ Outside, the world had dissolved into a swirling mass of grey mist. She checked her watch. ‘It’s midnight. This is when the Veil’s at its thinnest.’

Liam sniggered. ‘C’mon now—’

‘The final entry in Neasa’s journal said she was coming here. She was last seen walking past the pub in Money Beg. *Something* happened to her in Gleann Nimhe.’

‘Yeah, she ran away with the fairies. Jesus.’

‘You never even tried to understand. You should have been nicer to her... and to me, considering I’m all the family you’ve got left.’

Liam glanced at her. ‘I’m here, aren’t I?’

Aoife clasped Neasa’s journal tighter, remembering the last time she’d seen her. Her sister’s eyes had been fever-bright, full of life, her words tumbling out in a rush. The Garda hadn’t investigated her disappearance much—they’d clearly thought she’d just run away to Dublin or England or something. They’d not been interested in her journal at all, except as ramblings that proved she was ill. On a night like this, though, it was harder to dismiss her vivid descriptions, her sketches of the world beyond the Veil.

The road narrowed, the hedges high on either side, the surface getting rougher. The van lurched over another pothole, jolting Neasa’s journal off Aoife’s lap. It fell into the footwell, next to the half-eaten sandwiches and the flask of coffee. As she bent to retrieve it, the van’s engine sputtered and died.

‘Ah shite,’ Liam said, twisting the ignition key. The starter whined, but the motor refused to turn over. They climbed out of the van into the chill. Aoife shivered. ‘The air feels different,’ she said.

‘Just the mist,’ said Liam. He stared at the engine and poked a few wires around, shaking his head. ‘Fuck knows,’ he said and slammed a fist into the van’s side.

Faintly, the sound of approaching hooves. A shape coalesced from the mist: a horse, midnight-black, its eyes gleaming. The creature regarded them calmly, tossing its mane.

‘The fuck is that doing here?’ Liam said, his eyes wide, his gaze flickering between Aoife and the horse.

Aoife remembered the wonder in Neasa’s eyes when she spoke of ‘Themselves’ and took a step towards the horse. Then another. The horse turned and moved away, and the shimmering mist seeming to part around it.

‘Wait,’ Liam called. ‘Aoife, be serious now—’

But Aoife was already moving, Neasa’s journal clutched to her chest. She followed the horse into the mist and thought she heard her sister’s laughter quiet on the wind. She smiled.

Liam found himself alone in the mist, the van’s headlights barely penetrating the darkness. He shouted Aoife’s name a few times. He’d be so fucking mad with her if she followed the horse into the bog and got herself drowned or something.

A flicker of movement caught his eye, a familiar silhouette in the distance.

‘Aoife, what the hell?’ he yelled, moving towards her.

The figure shifted in his direction, and he saw it wasn’t Aoife.

‘Neasa?’ he whispered.

The apparition moved away into the mist.

‘Jesus, Liam,’ he said. ‘Catch yourself on.’ Aoife must have slipped something into the coffee again. But he was walking towards where he’d seen the figure. ‘Neasa, wait!’ he shouted, his chest tight. The mist swirling around him absorbed his shout. He tripped. ‘For fuck’s sake, what kind of daft game are you playing?’

Neasa turned, looked back, and disappeared again. It was like they were kids again, him chasing her around the ten-acre field and up to the fairy fort. But now, no matter how fast he stumbled, she was out of reach in the mist until, eventually, he found her standing at the cliff-edge, smiling sadly.

Liam edged towards her. ‘Neasa, for the love of God, where’ve you been the year?’ he shouted, his breath ragged. ‘Aoife spends the time crying her wee heart out. Ma was so upset she upped and died. What’ve you been at?’ He tried to grab her, but she slipped through his hands. ‘Ah shite, Neasa, come on. Just come back to us.’

He remembered shoving aside her stories of ‘Themselves, always the sneering older brother who thought his wee sister was a brat. How’d that turn out?’

‘Neasa, look, I’m sorry, right?’

Neasa’s form flickered, solidified again. She took a step backward, over the edge. Liam lunged forward, but his hands grasped only mist. The faint light disappeared, and he was standing in the dark on the precipice.

‘Jesus,’ he whispered, his voice breaking. ‘Neasa...’

He stood at the edge of the cliff looking down for he didn’t know how long. Then he wiped his face and moved in the direction of the road through the dark fields. A faint light appeared through the mist. He walked towards it, and there was the van, just where he’d left it, its headlights blazing, and around it the fuchsia hedges ethereal in the haze.

Liam opened the door, swung himself into the cab, and put his forehead against the steering wheel. He stayed there until he almost convinced himself that the whole thing was a

dream. Except his lungs were burning, his legs ached, and guilt had replaced the anger in his heart.

Aoife pushed deeper into the forest, following the path the horse had taken. To one side, a glint caught her eye: jewellery hanging from a twisted branch. Her fingers closed around the cool metal. She gasped, recognising Neasa’s bracelet, a sixteenth birthday gift from their mother.

Movement caught her eye. The black horse again, but now a slight figure rode it, her once-auburn hair faded to grey. Her green eyes, deep-set in a pale face, held the same stubborn determination as ever.

‘Neasa?’ This wasn’t the girl she knew. It couldn’t be. This Neasa was thin, insubstantial, pale as moonlight. Aoife stumbled backwards. How had the poor girl survived out here for a year? What was she eating, even?

‘Aoife.’ It was a whisper, but it was Neasa’s voice.

‘Sis, I’ve come to bring you home. Your home. Do you not remember?’

Neasa jumped down from the horse, her face hardening. ‘I remember you saying I was just making things up to show off. You remember that bit, Aoife?’

Aoife flinched. ‘I’ve read your journal. I understand now.’

Neasa’s laugh was as sharp as newly-broken glass. ‘Do you?’

‘Ma’s dead, Neasa—she died not long after you disappeared.’

‘Grand. She made me lie, forced me to pray for forgiveness when I was just telling the truth. She let them drug me.’

A memory surfaced: Neasa, eyes bright, whispering about Themselves. Ma’s face. The threats and tears. It was true they’d given her meds, but only because she was ill.

‘Ma loved you,’ Aoife said. ‘She just never knew what to do.’

‘She could have believed me.’

Aoife held out her hand. ‘We all could’ve done more. But I was just a kid. And Liam’s an eejit. And Ma was at her wits’ end. None of us believed you—it’s true—but I believe you now.’

‘You weren’t the worst,’ Neasa said gently. ‘I nearly stayed for you. But this is my world now, fire and air and smoke, not earth and water.’

Tears pricked Aoife’s eyes. ‘I don’t understand,’ she said. ‘I just know that I love you and I miss you, and Liam does too, though he can’t say it, so he hits things instead. And we both wish you’d come back to us.’

Neasa embraced Aoife, her form shimmering. ‘I know. And I love you too,’ she whispered. ‘And I’ll always be with you. I’m the smoke and the fire and the air that you breathe,

but you have to leave—the Veil’s thickening again.’

They separated and, for a heartbeat, Aoife saw Neasa as she truly was now: wild, free, and beautiful, her smile as bright as the stars. Then she was gone, dissolving into the mist that swirled around her like an embrace.

Aoife stood alone, still holding the bracelet. She slipped it on and wiped the tears from her face and the gold was warm around her wrist.

Aoife walked through the swirling mist for a while. Eventually, a dark silhouette in the moonlight materialised into Liam’s battered old van.

She climbed in, greeted by Liam’s familiar grin. ‘Whatever you put in the coffee, it’s doing a grand job,’ he said. ‘The entire world’s gone for a loop.’

‘There’s nothing in the coffee except coffee, Liam,’ Aoife said. Bloody Liam, never catching on, always trying to be a smart-arse. ‘It’s not the coffee. It’s Samhain. I saw Neasa. She lives with Themselves now. She’s happy there.’

‘You away with the fairies too, Aoife?’ He twisted the ignition key again and the van’s engine started. ‘Hallelujah.’ He revved the engine and eased the van out onto the road again.

‘I really saw her, Liam,’ Aoife said. ‘And I found something.’ She showed him Neasa’s gold bracelet, pulled it off her wrist and gave it to him.

Liam glanced at it. ‘It looks like hers,’ he admitted.

‘She said she’d always be with us.’

Liam nodded. ‘She did, surely,’ he said. ‘You positive you put nothing in the coffee?’

As they drove through the pre-dawn landscape, Aoife noticed Liam’s hands trembling on the steering wheel. She hesitated, then placed her hand on his. ‘You alright?’

Liam’s eyes remained fixed on the road. ‘Remember the wee fort in the ten-acre field?’

Aoife nodded, feeling tears welling up again.

‘Neasa told me that Themselves lived there. I said she was... Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.’ He slammed the steering wheel with the palm of his hand. ‘Right. Fuck. I saw her too. I watched her jump off a cliff. She didn’t even speak to me.’ He pulled the van to the side of the road and turned his head away from Aoife. His shoulders shook.

Aoife put her hand on his back. ‘Liam, it’s grand. I told her you love her. She already knows you’re a buck eejit.’

He wiped his face, turned back, and smiled crookedly. ‘Am not an eejit,’ he said. His hand hovered over the ignition, then reached for a cassette instead. ‘Remember this?’ He pushed the cassette into the stereo. The opening notes of *Winter* by Tori Amos, Neasa’s favourite song, filled the van. Liam started the engine, and it growled along with the melody.

The road widened, the red bells of the fuchsia catching the dawn light to either side.

They crested a ridge, and in the distance a hill stood out, caught by the sun, unnaturally green in the first rays of the sun. Liam coughed. ‘Truth is, I was jealous of the way Neasa seen the world. It was like a wee secret she knew and the rest of us just missed it.’ He glanced at Aoife. ‘Do you... do you honestly think she’s happy over there?’

Aoife smiled and wiped the tears from her face. ‘I do. And she wants us to know that it’s okay to be happy here, too.’

And something shimmered at the edge of their vision until they blinked and it was gone and they were driving down a damp road in a familiar Donegal landscape of gorse and heather and the sun was painting the sky rose-gold.

-Graeme Shimmin



ABOVE
Sensible Shoes for a Revolution
Kelly Moran
RIGHT
Roadtrip 3
Veronica Romanengh





Love's Truck Stops

No, this is not an ad. It's one link in the chain spanning America as we approach Sedona though a mountain pass. The rows of XTRA, Globus, Forge, Winnebago, Pride and Pods transport rigs guzzling diesel or parked in the steaming lot. This is for the coffee-fueled drivers: tattooed, tank top and bandana clad, who break for a feed and pay shower, all the water they need. Land of dry creek beds, Cat's claw, Creosote and Brittlebush. Love poem for hotdogs, corndogs, chicken dogs, jalapeno dogs, cheddar-smoked dogs, fumes from the grill watering my mouth after being a devout vegetarian for sixty years. It is a love poem for Love's giftshop. Racks of t-shirts peddling America with stars, stripes and eagles. Red Rock State mugs and menagerie of blown glass storks, hummingbirds, and china horses with topaz eyes, ruby rosettes and fake diamond encrusted manes. The mustang I adore but can't afford. After 200 miles promising signs for Dead Horse Ranch State Park and Little Horse Trail, I've got horses on my mind along with the brushfire we pass and my long-ago neighbour Johnny whose moving van engulfed him in flames, his two teenage sons who rode their motorbikes to the funeral, his widow Jane who met him in high school and never remarried. This poem is for my modest husband who suffers though photos in flamboyant cowboy hats when he prefers ball caps. A love poem for the wild love we made after our pitstop at Love's.

-Donna Langevin

Highway 62 #3
Bill Leigh Brewer

Self-Portrait in a Rear View Mirror

Route ‘66

In the early morning rain with a dollar in my hand ...

‘So where are you heading?’
‘Manitoba.’
‘My, that’s a long way. We’re only going as far as Barrie.’
‘That would be a great help.’
‘Put your case in the back and sit here in front with us.’
The odd couple shifted over and he got in the brown van which pulled out onto the highway.
‘So where are you from?’
‘Today, Toronto. But home’s in England.’
‘The old country, eh?’
‘That’s right. Britain.’
‘Why don’t you have a Union Jack on your case?’
‘Would that help?’
‘How long have you been waiting here for a lift?’
‘About an hour or more.’
‘Flag would probably help you some.’
There was long pause in the conversation and the middle-aged woman in glasses looked at the road ahead while her man drove.
‘Do you often pick up hitch-hikers?’
‘No. But you looked different.’
‘In what way?’
‘Well,’ she said, ‘you look like a Beatle but you talk like Prince Charles.’ They both laughed inordinately.

It was the summer of 1966. He was eighteen-years-old and trying to see more of Canada than he could by working as an office boy in Toronto or as a student planting trees with the Department of Lands and Forests in northern Ontario. The Beatles had just released ‘Paperback Writer’ c/w ‘Day Tripper’ and they were touring the United States. This was the year John Lennon declared they were more popular than Jesus. The hitch-hiker had sent a heavy suitcase full of clothes and bits back home and was now travelling light with one small battered black cardboard case, containing essentials like sponge bag, pyjamas and Bri-nylon underpants.

The odd couple shared some food with him and he then headed north past places like Parry Sound, Georgian Bay and Sudbury. Lifts became easier the further he went from Toronto. The great lakes or views of their inlets glittered in the summer sunlight. Outside Sudbury with its nickel mines, a Pontiac pulled over and a burly man with a heavy European accent asked,
‘Where you going?’
‘Sault Ste Marie.’
‘That’s good.’
The young man put his case in what he had learned to call the trunk and got into the passenger seat. A few miles later, the gruff man said,
‘Can you drive?’
‘Yes. Why?’

‘I feel sleepy.’
Help, he thought. He had learnt to drive in Plymouth, England, a few months before and had not driven since and nothing like the Pontiac automatic but the driver was already changing places with him.
‘I’ll give it a go.’
He hoped he wouldn’t veer off the Trans-Canada Highway into one of the lakes before he had fully experienced life beyond a sheltered upbringing and a British boarding school education. The car seemed strangely heavy and the steering-wheel large in his hands but he pulled onto the highway and started to enjoy the steady power of the putty-coloured Pontiac automatic. Soon his Polish companion was snoring beside him and the young man was enjoying the scents and sights of the pine-filled landscapes of northern Ontario again.

A piebald car overtook and put on its sirens. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police in traffic mode pulled the Pontiac over and the two vehicles drew up on the gravel beside the road. The policeman looked at the youth in the driver’s seat and then at his grumpy passenger.
‘We’ve had reports of this car weaving along the road and we want to check.’
‘I see.’
‘How long have you been driving?’
‘Since March.’
‘No. This car.’
‘About five or six miles. I’m a hitch-hiker.’
‘Can I smell your breath?’ He exhaled at the policeman who winced.
‘Have you got a driving licence?’
‘Yes. An international one.’
For the first time, he produced the crisp bottle-green card with his photograph on it. The policeman scrutinized the unfamiliar document. His companion had checked the Pole and clearly smelt drink on him.
‘We’re taking him to the station. Can you follow us in his car?’
‘Yes.’

As he drove into the Canadian twilight, he wondered whether he too would be spending the night in the cells. The only offence he committed was stopping at a crossroads directly under the red traffic lights which in Canada are often suspended on wires in the middle of the crossing. At the station, the traffic cop gave him his case and told him he was free to go. He walked to the bus station, drank some water from a cold tap and slept as best he could on a hard red seat under the insomniac strip lights.

In the dime stores and bus stations, People talk of situations, Read books, repeat quotations, Draw conclusions on the wall ...

The next morning after a breakfast of bacon and eggs with sugary coffee, he walked to the far side of Sault and was resigned to another long wait when a smart sports car slowed and a handsome young driver in his twenties looked at him appraisingly before stopping.
‘Where are you going?’
‘Winnipeg.’
‘Jump in. I can take you as far as Thunder Bay.’
‘Thank you very much.’
‘Other end of the lake.’

And so they headed off towards Wawa.
‘Is it dual carriageway all the way?’
‘Do you still have carriages in England?’
They both laughed.
‘We call it a four-lane highway.’

Lake Superior looked like a massive inland sea with its horizon glistening silver under the shifting cloudscapes of Ontario.

‘Have you got anywhere to stay?’
‘Not yet.’
‘Why don’t you come back to our place? The family is having a welcome-home party for me.’ Here was the North American hospitality he had heard so much about. ‘My girlfriend, parents and sister are there.’

Thunder Bay was the closest he ever got to Hibbing, Minnesota, where Bob Dylan grew up and ‘*the winds hit heavy on the borderline*’, as he sang in ‘Girl from the North Country’. The Englishman was already a fan but Dylan was on his 1966 World Tour and being called Judas in Britain for going electric.

Mike introduced him to his parents and blonde sister Aline with her two young children and the family offered him food and a bed for the night. He showered and slept for a bit before the lakeshore party. In the darkness, there were some flickering illuminations.

‘See those lights over there?’
He looked at the glimmers dancing in the night sky.
‘They’re the Northern Lights.’
‘Never seen them before.’
Aline later tried to seduce him but he didn’t want to lose his virginity to a wife and mother with two young children sleeping nearby.
‘What about your husband?’
‘He’s in the air force and sleeps with other women.’
‘You think so?’
‘I know so.’

The next morning, he said his thank-yous and goodbyes and set off again. In Winnipeg, family friends called the Trueloves were expecting him. Dr Leslie Truelove and his writer wife Rosamund had emigrated with their four boys to Canada. In summer, they seemed to live in riverside luxury in a large house with insect screens and a swimming pool. At the bottom of their garden there was a high rampart built by the city to protect houses from the Red River in spring flood. There was a dock and a speed boat and he learnt to water-ski on the rusty brown waters of the river. In winter, your breath froze, they told him.

All these places had their moments ...

After the lazy days of domestic luxuries and family chat at 44 Victoria Crescent, St Vital, he stood beside the road again for the long miles across the prairies. He had a map of Canada which came with the *National Geographic* and the exotic-sounding names promised him Moose Jaw, Regina and Medicine Hat on the Trans-Canada Highway. To his surprise, a yellow school

bus stopped for him. It was being driven a long way by a father and son to somewhere in Saskatchewan but at a grindingly slow speed.

Think I’ll go out to Alberta, Weather’s good there in the fall ...

At Calgary, he and two other students went to the Stampede and watched cowboys lassoing calves, and daredevils trying to ride bucking broncos for a few desperate seconds before being thrown. The three young men tried to pick up girls in the fairground as dusk fell but he had no luck among the Wurlitzer sounds and smells of candy floss and hot dogs and so went back to the motel.

I can’t get no satisfaction I can’t get no girl reaction ...

By this time his money from tree-planting was running low and he decided to head west in search of work. The Rocky Mountains like a wall of alps towering ahead made a welcome change after the monotonously hot plains of horizontal prairies and vertical grain silos.

In Banff, Alberta, there seemed to be a green mountain at the end of every summer street. He walked up the long drive to the Scottish baronial castle that was Banff Springs Hotel and, in the manager’s plush office near the luxury goods shop, he enquired about work.

‘Do you have any black pants?’
‘No. Sorry.’
‘Pity. You could have been a waiter.’
They gave him a brown uniform instead and turned him into a groundsman.

Staff slept in a barracks-like block and ate in a canteen. There were hundreds of other students working summer jobs. A lively character called Rick asked, ‘Would you like to go on a blind date?’ So he and Rick met his girlfriend Ann and her friend Margie McDonald, both from Winnipeg.

*Remember me to one who lives there
For she once was a true love of mine.*

One evening in the twilight they stood on a walkway above the refuse area and watched as the shadowy shapes of brown bears raided food from the bins.

England had won the World Cup but football and the news meant almost nothing to him at this distance from home and any television set. After a few weeks, he decided to hitch to Vancouver but he never saw the scenic route through the Rockies because he got an all-night ride direct there. He then stayed at Victoria on Vancouver Island with another Duncan he’d met in Banff, Duncan Knight, and was offered a pre-war Buick jalopy for fifty bucks with doors which opened front-outwards but he declined because it burnt as much oil as gas.

Instead, he took the ferry to Seattle and when he stood thumbing a lift beside the eight-lane highway a cop in a car shouted at him through the loud-hailer,

‘Put your hand down.’ At which point he quit and bought a \$99 Greyhound Bus Ticket

which provided him 99 days' unlimited coach travel in the USA.

Yes, I'm one too many mornings and a thousand miles behind.

Less than three months later, the young man was studying Classics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he had already decided to drop Latin and Greek literature for English as soon as he could. When it came out in paperback, he read *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote and was more than relieved that he had not tried to hitch any further lifts.

But who is this person or namesake I can now imagine nearly sixty years later? Almost the only documentary evidence I still have for his existence then is an old orange address book of the time and in it he encouraged new Canadian friends to write their names and addresses in their distinctive handwriting. How is it that months of vivid existence can evaporate into a few indistinct anecdotal snapshots which we call memory? And where is the me in memories and who and where am I in mine?

*Altogether elsewhere, vast
Herds of reindeer move across
Miles and miles of golden moss,
Silently and very fast.*

-Duncan Forbes

Shower
Luca Brt





in the morning
Luca Brt

VIDEO AND SOUND

By Suv

T Lavois Thiebaud

Created at the Djerassi Resident Artists Program in a converted cattle barn on a hankering old mountain nestled high above the west coast horizon. May of 2020 I left a life I'd carved into a shape I fit for a gut-yes-what-if-road-trip at a bad time for staying and a bad time for leaving I guess. Sky in my mouth, musing over what magnetic mooing lures a warm-blooded mammal from home out into the mouth of the next unknown. How the body crosses the landscape alone. I get by how I get by but here I got by SUV.



<https://youtu.be/czN9QBpII2k?si=V-VypoIW4t9deKXG>

Goin' Down the Road

Brian R. Donnelly

Goin' Down The Road is a psychogeographic meander through Toronto using popular movies to propel the narrative forward. Relying on films' inherent unfaithfulness to geography, a few dialogue cues, and a great deal of coincidence, scenes from disparate films intersect and redirect each other to follow geographic patterns rather than their individual stories. Compositing closely cropped professional footage over wide-angle, contemporary video allows for the emergence of a disjointed document that captures the growth of a city over several decades; distilling a small amount of truth from a growing library of fiction.



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

Der Flug

Paul Beaudoin

"Der Flug" is part of the Cities & Memories project from 2022. Inspired by a field recording of a railroad station, it evokes memories of my childhood visits to Miami International Airport with my father, where we would watch planes take off and land. This piece captures the anticipation and wonder of far-away travel that resonated deeply with me.



https://youtu.be/wUSOIm_O8NM?si=yYBubQ8CoPRnswDQ

It's Not How I Remember It

Paul Beaudoin

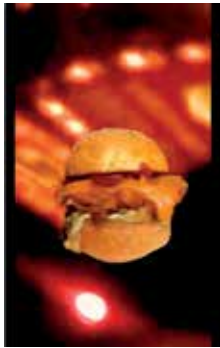
Using found footage from a family road trip, "It's Not How I Remember It" reflects on the discrepancies between our experiences and our memories of them. This project draws on the nostalgic imagery of 1950s and 1960s American family trips, highlighting the differences between past experiences and their recollections. I have also attached still images from both projects for your review.



https://youtu.be/_niMwzFmNck?si=2xikILALwx4IB6ho

Late Night Funk
Ian Stokes

This piece features a rotating burger, suspended in mid-air and separated from its background. Upon closer inspection, it reveals the iconic rotating sign of Tommy's World Famous Burgers in Los Angeles, CA, a landmark known for its burgers since 1946. The camcorder format evokes a sense of nostalgia, capturing the sleepy, dreamlike quality of a road trip and it utilizes the motif of the burger to intertwine memories across generations—childhood moments, college road trips, adulthood—using the cheeseburger as a unifying symbol of Americana. This piece aims to link all of our diverse, unique, and impactful experiences in America through one iconic truth; the burger



<https://youtube.com/shorts/Y7WW1837q9w?si=wk0ua8t0IREyNGHk>

Train III
Don Strandberg

Banning is a small town situated in the San Gorgonio pass, under the shadows of Mt. San Jacinto and Mt. San Gorgonio, not far from Palm Springs. There is a distinctive beauty in the 'out there' quality of not only the high desert location, but in the aspects of its strange quietness. Not many outsiders spend time there for any other purpose than to get somewhere else. Through my regular visits over the years, I came to know it by seeing it through the eyes of an artist. I felt especially attuned to its peculiar magic, which can only be apprehended by patiently witnessing the passing of time, and watching days come and go in the slow pace of their unfolding.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZEyO5Ebjmg>

neulich im Bus (The Other Day on the Bus)
Beate Gördes and Adrienne Brehmer

Based on Adrienne Brehmer's poem "neulich im Bus," the film adaptation presents a highly abstract and fleeting visualization. It captures a mysterious nocturnal atmosphere where two people are in connection and on the move, while rain hits the bus windows. The journey, whether to Prague or elsewhere, remains undetermined. The film's ethereal sound and the voice-over text complement the abstract imagery, creating a dense, almost floating ambience.



<https://adilo.bigcommand.com/watch/FoGJqMYF>

unterwegs sein (on the road)
Beate Gördes and Adrienne Brehmer

The video visualizes Adrienne Brehmer's poem "Unterwegs sein." Filmed through a tram window facing south in Cologne, it shows the crossing of the Deutz Bridge over the Rhine. As day turns to night, the landscape passes by—buildings, lights, colors, trees. Someone is on the way, either in thought or in reality. It is dark, and the traveler remains alone. The destination is unclear, possibly ending at a subway stop, but this too is indefinite. The journey might continue or start anew. Anything is possible.



<https://adilo.bigcommand.com/watch/ISejupT4>

Road Food

Cherries. Rainier because they are the right combination of sweet and tart, and I've seen you eat bags of them and spit the pits outside open car windows on our cross-country travels. If we ever went back, would there be rows of trees along the roads we take because interstate drivers are maniacs hyped up on amphetamine/caffeine/cocaine or whatever it takes to keep driving fast? We two don't want to do that. Drive fast on the interstate.

Beef Jerky. The kind in stick form because your best friend since Reed College always ate them. So you started eating them too, and they leave that aftertaste of sodium nitrate that I can still taste when I kiss you even though you ate the last one hours before we stopped at this campground far away from the interstate with a vast open sky holding hundreds of stars.

Matzo. Lightly salted, they leave so many crumbs, more like shards, because the pieces are sharp; you told me you love the crunch. We always need to have a tub of margarine because that is how you ate it when your parents were still alive, and we would drive west to see them on the edge of the Pacific, except they had real silverware and not the plastic white knife we use.

Pretzels stuffed with peanut butter. The hard and the soft. The salty and the sweet. Something you start to eat fast, putting it into your mouth and crunching down, then the shell breaks, the peanut butter oozes out, mixes, and then blends with the particles of pretzel and your saliva. You slow down, chewing more softly, slowly, and evenly, and finding a rhythm with the miles moving beneath us.

Trident Sugarless Gum. Those small planks, white with specks of color, usually green because you preferred the peppermint, blue if all they had was the other mint, good for my digestion, you would always tell me as you popped in another elongated tablet into your mouth and dropped the crumbled paper on the floor.

Dr. Brown's Cream Soda. A six-pack because you always drank at least two, no ice because you have sensitive teeth, you loved the flavor, and it's not too carbonated, unlike the Vernor's Ginger Ale I always got, which you claimed made you burp too much, and you hate that feeling like you almost throw up but not quite.

Baby carrots. This is a total lie. They are just adult carrots cut more petite, but you ate them all the time, and this resulted in your fingers turning orange, which made you worry about your health, so you went to the doctor and the orange fingers were okay, but the throwing up feeling was not so here we are.

Not on the road, but the rubber wheels grip the floor, and the machines keep another rhythm now. Not on the road, road food on the rubber-wheeled tray before you. Everything moves slowly and evenly to the beeping, buzzing, gurgling, and compressed air. And I taste it all now.

-Rina Palumbo



take a bit of the sun
Melina Gomez



The Bulldog Diner
Michael Possert Jr.



The Pickle Barrel Ice Cream Stand
Michael Possert Jr.

Ghost-Dog Road Trip with Sadie Where We Stopped for Pie Whenever We Could

A Bards on the Run Poem for the Wandering Murphys

The ghost of my white German shepherd says, *In a 1969 test, the brain waves of a blob of lime Jell-O were identical in micro-voltage, frequency, and amplitude to those of healthy men and women.* We're heading toward Pennsylvania in our Silverado pickup truck, and Sadie recalls this nugget from our foray at the Jell-O Museum in LeRoy, New York. She also ponders the taste of celery and tomato Jell-O. And the dessert's kinship with cough syrup. I lured her toward "the Birthplace of America" by promising to stop in Hershey so she might savor the toxic chocolate she was denied during her life. Crisscrossing the Keystone State, we listen to The War on Drugs and Taylor Swift. We zigzag from Betsy Ross' home in Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, where George Ferris created his giant wheels. We motor through Allentown, Jim Thorpe, and, once again, the Paris of Appalachia. This time to take in its Bicycle Museum. We stop along blue highways at any ma-and-pa diner that might offer a slice of shoofly pie from the pastry case by the cash register. Sadie sleeps while I drive. Or breathes the oncoming headwinds whenever I roll the passenger window down. She tells me she can taste the future. In Amishville, I order two Pennsylvania Dutch pot pies, eat one, and doggy-bag the other. Afterward I plot our way toward Lancaster, where the Barnstormers play a night game with the Lehigh Valley Ironpigs. Sadie's dark eyes nudge our itinerary back to Philadelphia while she noses a styrofoam container for the last taste of pot pie. She is curious about my fascination with the Reading Fightin' Phils role in the Great Potato Caper. Instead of that detour, we stay the night in a bed-and-breakfast outside Gettysburg. Where I surprise her with turkey-and-pumpkin mini-treats. In the morning we visit the battlefield where I try to identify the birdsongs harmonizing from the surrounding trees. On her own, Sadie inhales the scent of hallowed ground. I sit with her beneath the shade of a Witness Tree to scratch her stomach. I can't tell a chickadee's song from an oriole's. Sadie stretches as I rub the skin under her neck. I want to drive overnight through Virginia to watch a phenom homer off the bull in Durham, North Carolina. Sadie is eager to follow the trails pioneered by redbone coonhounds. En route in the Silverado, we agree to tour Asheville's Pinball Museum and the Currituck Beach Lighthouse. Before we reach the state line, I tell Sadie I need to visit Lumbee, the town where the last woman who loved me was raised.

-Michael Brockley

Ghost-Dog Road Trip with Sadie Where She Reminds Me Why I Wanted to Be a Cowboy

With an atlas of America's haunted roads in the glove box and the reincarnation blues as our tail-wind, I settle behind the wheel of a Silverado pickup truck. And point the hood ornament west toward a different Eden on a November road in search of America Fantastica. The spirit of my white German shepherd rides shotgun. This time we carry the stories we wish were true. Sagas about flaming iguanas and Harry Truman's excellent adventures. We sing an unburied song during our passage beneath an endless sky, traveling at night in the company of gold Cadillacs and the last convertible. Sadie regales me with tales of how the last boys of summer hot-wired a DeLorean for a road trip on the Lincoln Highway until they ran out of fuel. Teases me about racing in the rain when Amish buggies lap me as I pretend to drive Bonnie and Clyde's Fordor Deluxe. She reminds me why I wanted to be a cowboy. We're on the other side of disappearing. Having whistled past graveyards and been baptized by a night of two moons. *We're the highway kind*, she says as we solve small-town mysteries. Rescue a widow's lost children. And lampoon fables from the eighties. Sadie summons her favorite birds. Kingfishers. Loons. Golden cardinals from as faraway as Graceland. I honk the horn to salute all my mother's lovers. In every paper town, we hear rumors of an abundance of Katherines, Mings, Fatimas, and Pilars. Until Sadie asks, *Why are the towns named on our maps missing along the roads we travel?*

-Michael Brockley



a friend
Melina Gomez

Making A Way Through The Hours

Until noon

Advance of clouds strung with heat
lightning along the pyrrhic where everglades saw
into the ritual of blacktop and glass
buildings we become as the migratory:
fly into windowpanes and break, like trees
under the heavy hand of wind, our necks
and empty, into the sun-paralyzed light, our breath.

And dying for a smoke we take refuge where
we can remain unseen, even to each other, creating
in the spark of our hands a mercy, not of forgiveness but rough
knowledge: scars tucked under the hairline or bruised
inside the camouflage of our cotton demeanor, a hematoma
congregates, we are, like the spectacle of god,
disembodied to the other and divined through the organ of our touch,
the blasphemy of a dove without spot unable to fly.

No darkness can save us from noon: not keeping
my hand held just above your skin in the junked out black
of this room without window, until, like over a candle
whose flame is so hot it has surpassed even whiteness
into the invisible, I sense the heat, a hole blistering,
as old paint will, in the center of my palm, and I know
I can't offer up, like prayer into the incense of sky, this hurt,
the scouring light relentless under the door, the rawing
into which we become, as melanoma, visible in all our glory.

-Christopher Dunn

10:47 pm Highway 62
Bill Leigh Brewer





Roadtrip 1
Veronica Romanenghi

Mexican Mishap

I initially arrived in Detroit under a two-year contract with a bilateral German/American technical program connected to the auto industry. Of course, since my stay abroad was tied to a specific time period, I wanted to see as much of possible of my new surroundings.

The first chance I got in getting away from the office for a few days, I recruited two co-workers to accompany me in driving to Florida. One was an American girl employed by the American side of our project, and the other a German friend who shared that two-year assignment to Michigan with me. The latter one also joined me in exploring New York and Philadelphia. We were both eager to make the most of our time in the United States.

But there was one memorable trip I ended up risking alone.

During the second year of my American adventure, I had met an impressive young man at a Halloween gathering. Having had the courage to show up as “himself” at that costume party, he made a profound impression on me — and soon we were dating.

Therefore, when I planned a trip to Mexico while still being on North American soil, I sincerely hoped that my new love would come with me. Much to my disappointment, he declined — claiming he was unable to take a vacation at that particular time.

However, after a bit of back and forth, he arranged a business trip to San Francisco. So, I simply amended my return trip by adding a layover in that city to the already scheduled stops in Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon.

My three days in Mexico City were absolutely wonderful.

After settling into my hotel, I booked a sightseeing bus, equipped with an English-speaking tour guide, to take in the usual tourist attractions and to familiarize myself with the local geography. Then I took off on my own.

Strolling through the downtown area, I marveled at the centuries-old buildings and — whenever hunger or thirst called for attention — I stopped off at some roadside cantina. I loved mingling with “the natives.” However, my pitiful command of the local tongue had to be heavily amended via a Spanish/English pocket dictionary, since those were the days before internet access and online translation applications.

When I told people later on about my visits to those quaint eateries, they were astonished that I had escaped “tourista,” which means “the runs.” Well, contrary to my American colleagues who were in the habit of drinking a lot of faucet water, I rounded out my various Mexican meals with wine. After all, I was on vacation!

Besides, at the time of that trip, I was not used to drinking much water anyhow. When our German team started working in our American host company, we were all intrigued by the readily available little drinking fountains on company premises. More than one of us joked about those shiny spewing metal spokes being rather useful — if only they were dispensing beer.

Bidding goodbye to Mexico City, I boarded a cross-country bus to Acapulco, with an interim stop in Tasco, that historic jewel of a town famous for its enchanting beauty.

I arrived in the morning, then spent the day rushing about, photographing as much

as I could. To be able to make the most of my rather brief visit, I used a taxi to get around.

Then, in the late afternoon, when I informed my driver that it was crucial for me to catch the evening bus to Acapulco, his face took on a startled expression.

“Lady,” he said. “The only bus to Acapulco showing up here once a day is the one you exited this morning.”

I froze.

After I recovered from the shocking news, I inquired if there was any way to get me to where I wanted to go.

“Well,” he finally said. “There is another stop at a main road some distance from here, where an evening bus coming from Cuernavaca passes through.”

When I asked if he could take me there, he offered to do so for about thirty dollars.

I was only too glad to pay. So far, I really had no place to stay in Tasco, and all my hotel reservations in Acapulco might be canceled if I didn’t show up as planned.

So, off we went.

Driving through rolling meadows and spacious farmland, I was nervously hoping that my helpful cabbie would remain just that — a friendly, accommodating taxi driver who was merely trying to earn his keeps. I was most certainly at his mercy in that isolated area.

As he kept on chatting to keep me entertained, he also volunteered that some of his friends were planning to travel from Tasco to Acapulco soon.

Our road finally merged into the major artery he had told me about, and the promised bus stop was right at the intersection where the two streets came together.

After depositing me and my luggage at the makeshift shelter’s only bench, he collected his fare, wished me well, then turned around to head back to Tasco.

I waited longingly for my desired mode of transportation.

As six o’clock neared, I paced back and forth, very anxious for the bus to arrive.

It finally did — and hummed right past me.

I can hardly describe the sickening feeling that rushed through me.

What was I supposed to do now?

Here I was in the midst of nowhere somewhere in Mexico, with a suitcase, a shoulder bag, and a very limited knowledge of Spanish. To top it all off, it was gradually getting dark.

I was scared — really, really scared.

Scrutinizing my surroundings, I spotted some houses in the far distance — some to my left, a few to my right.

I contemplated in which direction I should walk to secure some place to hide out for the night — before finding a more permanent solution to my current predicament. Then I

decided to wait a bit longer, just in case that wayward bus had really not been the one for me to take.

Maybe there was still another one coming, somehow.

Needless to say, I was fighting back the tears. I had not felt this helpless in a long, long time — if ever.

Suddenly a big, black limousine came zooming down the road I had just traveled.

It screeched to an abrupt halt right in front of me. I had barely made out two elderly gentlemen seated in the front before one of the backdoors flew open. Two young men jumped out, grabbed my luggage and threw it in the car. Shouting in Spanish, they motioned for me to get into the vehicle as well. I did. Totally confused and utterly desperate, I simply didn't know what else to do. Even if those people were actually up to no good, I was already outnumbered anyway. Besides, there was still this tiny glimmer of hope that — considering the time of day and my precarious situation — those guys had realized I was stranded and wanted to help.

Nevertheless, I was extremely frightened.

We had been driving along for a while, with me straining hard to grasp what those guys were trying to tell me, when much to my relief, I picked up on my taxi driver's name being mentioned. Gradually, amidst a convoluted dialog of a few Spanish sentences here and some English words there, I pieced together what had happened. On his way back to Tasco, my cabbie had encountered his friends traveling in the opposite direction — and he had asked them to check on the status of that German girl he left behind.

Although I now relaxed some, I was still concerned.

Glancing out the car window, while sitting tightly sandwiched between those two young guys in the backseat, I noticed deep ravines bordering both sides of the highway. That's when it crossed my mind that if my travel companions would ditch me somewhere along that route, my poor family might never, ever know what happened to me.

However, my guardian angel came once again to my rescue.

Not only behaved all four of my newly acquired travel companions like perfect gentlemen. I also learned that one of the older men owned a casino in Acapulco, and my two seat buddies were his nephews heading back to school after a holiday break.

After arriving at our destination, they dropped me off at my hotel and the two young fellows offered to take me out on the town the next day — which they did.

I spent the following few days soaking up the sun and thoroughly enjoying the sand and the water. Then I headed for San Francisco to meet up with my future husband, who had no idea that our Californian rendezvous came darned close to never taking place.

-Helga Gruendler-Schierloh



Dalhart Blues
Kelly Moran

Midsummer's Day

The scent of ocean sand rises like a cologne, faint, but stronger when I turn my head, just crack the window. Riding shotgun down the main drag, I compare ice cream stands, their wooden storefronts, number of flavors, claims to fame. Hand-dipped, homemade, 17. You laugh at the young moms in striped cover-ups leading their kids, ponytailed and flipflopped. The stretch and curve of day-glo Lycra. 23. 29. The alternating rippling of Captain America's shield. 50-plus. Superman. You brush my arm—butter pecan, rocky road—then palm, squeeze my thigh. No, I dream that last bit as you prattle on about graduate offerings in fall term: structural linguistics, *Ulysses*, a seminar on Shakespeare. History or tragedy? You can't recall. When you quote Portia, mercy unrestrained (Free Samples!), leaving becomes a bourbon pool; the black passenger door of a Ford Falcon, its dents pounded out; an engine knocking. Soft-serve. Self-serve. Twists. I seek you, your image elongating in polished chrome. A metal sign with a waffle cone, two scoops, blue moon melting into sea salt and caramel. Dreamsicles. Rocketpops. No sugar added.

-CJ Giroux

July's End

My wife, sister-in-law relay the route: Coopersville, Ravenna, Grant, at some point Fremont. We move from chicory blue, to browning grass and rusted wire for deer and elk, to slatted fences for peaches and blueberries. Pallets point to potential: weathered bins with spraypainted codes in black. I tally primary ads and campaign flags promising faith, family, freedom. I switch to closed signs in Grant, trailers clothed in trumpet vine, broken TV antennas; their metal supports arc as if the silk of severed spider webs. Ravenna offers no canal, baptistery, octagon basilica, but like its twin overseas, it holds on to the dead it never possessed. When we stop to stretch our legs in Newaygo, I discover in the used bookstore Guernica, mazes of fading quilt tops, bulldogs baring teeth; there, among crepes served with chorizo and scrambled eggs, I am told the system is down: cash is king. Mutton-chopped and wearing a faded Pyromania t-shirt I too once owned, a local at the checkout laments Elon Musk is a squeaky wheel. All urge me on and on and on and elsewhere.

-CJ Giroux

Stopping at the First Bay City Exit

The lone light perched above the billboard swings like the needle of a metronome tipped on its back. The ad's message, tattered, moves in and out of sight like your memory. Strands of vinyl twist upon themselves as they reach for earth. Like Christmas lights we hung from the maple in the backlot. Like the plastic army men we tied to yarn and lowered from the treehouse. When you took me and Cousin Bobby there, I stayed below, an act of betrayal, or perhaps survival, as though the graying ladder were the Skybridge: moving each time someone touched the rope railing, tested glass by tapping foot. Now, though comforted by moving forward, I park by the ice machine in the Speedway lot, where Howard Johnson's used to be. Beneath a small sign rusted and red, advertising meat processing, I pull a tuna sandwich from the cooler, think of an 8-pt. buck, hanging, the blood draining, gutted from neck to nuts, as Old Gran might joke. While the engine pings, I can almost smell the broasted chicken and grease from the fryers. The last time we ate with her under the orange roof, the baked potatoes were rock cold, sour cream lumpy, roast beef still rare. The first drop of blood to fall on my napkin—serviette she always called it—soaked through, reached my jeaned calf. Now, years later, I imagine it now spreading like a ripple in Big Poppa's koi pond. I still have red on my hands.

-CJ Giroux





San Luis Reservoir
John Laue

Feline Speaks

Call me a predator par excellence,
patient beyond your clumsy human mind
that wanders off to weeds, not seeing trees.
Stalking, in a crouch, all my muscles taut,
I pounce on movement. A four-legged snake,
fanged, and just as quick, I can sink sharp teeth
into a rodent's neck before it knows
I'm there. For you, feeble biped, I catch
rats and mice and baby flying squirrels,

dead-ish frogs. I display better vision
than any human: two hundred degrees
for my field of view, compared to your one-
eighty. I can hear an octave above
your beloved dog. Those grovelers don't
sit on your lap to warm you, vibrating
to tune your frequency toward calm, or chew
your lank hair while sitting on your shoulder.

Don't let my silky fur make you forget
the lessons I teach by being present.
Wondrous hunter, I. Birds can't fly away.
In tooth and claw, I tell the truth. Hear me.
Worship me. And on a platter serve me
liver. I've already eaten your heart.

-Joan Mazzza

Attends pour mue kitigingoo
Jennifer McCormack



Thunderhead

Jodi was taking Cheeto Dave to California,
so I invited Katy. Cheeto Dave stopped us
at the 7-11 on 5th to buy Cheetos, but got
the generic brand, and complained for two
hundred miles. Hence, Cheeto Dave.

We had dinner at Katy's parents' place
in Henderson, and Cheeto Dave was
flapping his lip, so all I had to do was eat
enchiladas, which was fine by me.
We hit California, and with the sun up, saw

it had rained like it never had: the rivers
full, the grasses thick, the desert in bloom.
Jodi and Cheeto Dave had a disastrous
jaunt to Disneyland. I had no dough, so
Katy and I ran in the rain and began

kissing as if there was no water, no air.
Heading back, I laid Katy on the seat,
and Cheeto Dave would, watching us in
the rearview, ask me a sometimes question.
I'd look up, out the back, and answer,

then dip to Katy, all the landscape transformed.
We made a quick stop in Zion's, then
a breather in a small town, where I lit
Always on My Mind on the jukebox,
and Katy and I danced while a pre-teen girl

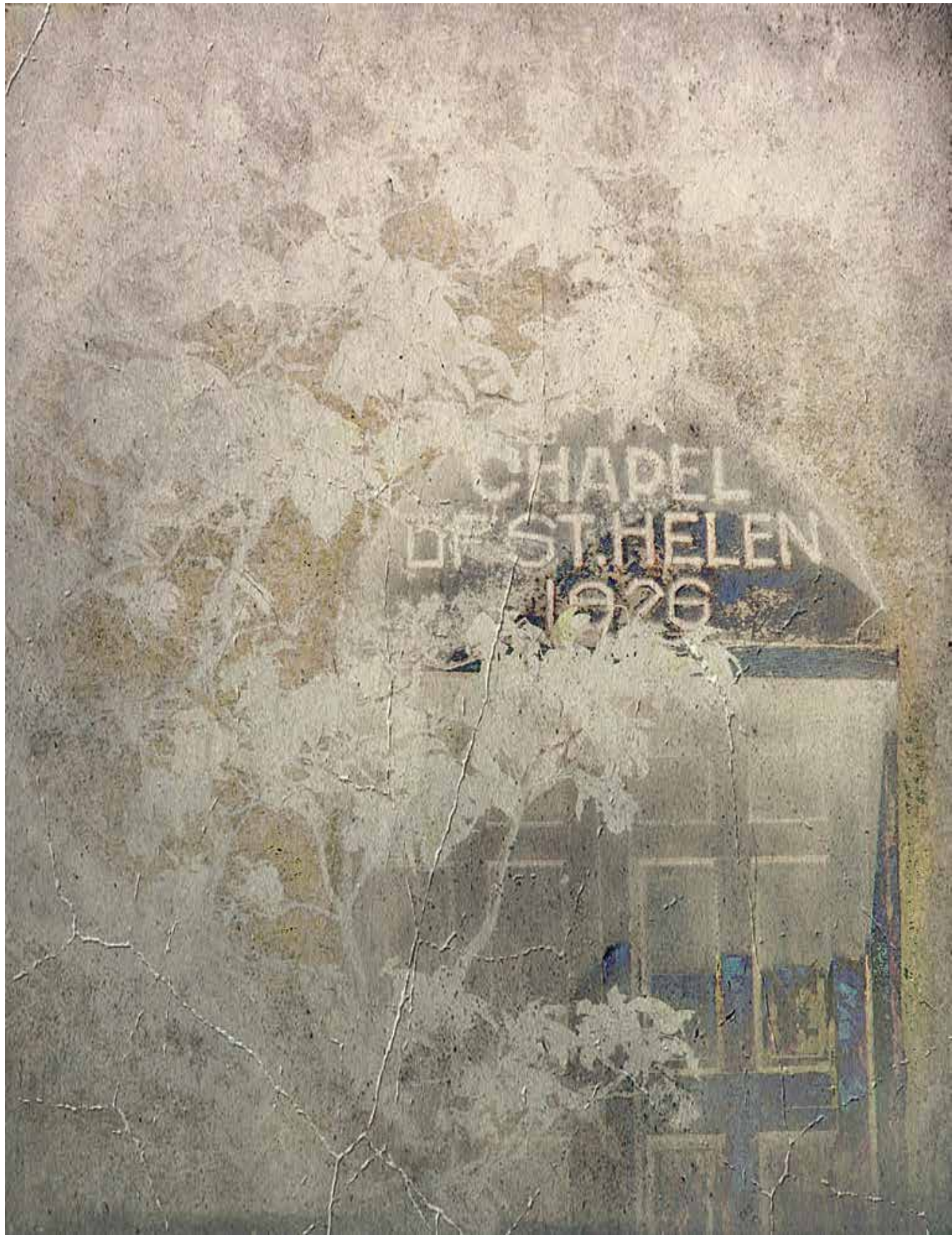
and her grandmother looked on. Cheeto Dave
made me drive the final leg, a new road on

the eastern side of the mountains. I knew
where the road was going and didn't care
about its iced bridges, the magnificent deer

and elk poking along. I shifted to overdrive.
We laughed at the shadows twisted by the moon,
hurting to watch the beautiful hum
under the tires, to hold and wield the jumble
of lightening churning us to something wild.

-Jared Pearce





ABOVE
The Shearing Shed
 LEFT
The Chapel at St. Helen
 Jae Hodges

Home

“Home is where you come when you run out of places.”

-Mae (Barbara Stanwyck) in “Clash by Night.”

You come when you run clean out of places.
Everywhere’s heard your havoc except home,
that clashing ground of desperate hands and faces.

In dreams you blaze steep trails from sketchy traces.
You go as if your retro soul grew fins of chrome,
but you come when you run clean out of places.

Never linger long enough to get down to cases.
The judges only sit where perps no longer roam,
that clashing ground of desperate hands and faces.

The memory of a thousand desk clerks erases.
Your heart now unclaimed luggage you disown,
you come when you run clean out of places.

Odometers roll over as your wilding pulse races.
Your wander lusts antsy and alone
in that clashing ground of desperate hands and faces.

Running out meant no pressures, no graces,
but a set never steadies in your dragged-out bones.
So you come when you run clean out of places
to that clashing ground of desperate hands and faces.

-Mike Reis



Pelei 1
Nikos Kachrimanis

Driving to the Cabin

Hours pass wedged in the car
between the love of my life
and Jen's puppy.
Classic rock winds us up
to 5000 feet and the trees
get taller, greener.
The boys nod off and the sun
glints off broken roadside glass.
They're selling bonsai trees
on the side of the road.
The older dog is unimpressed
she's seen pinecones
bigger than those trees
dreams of squirrels waltzing
among sugar pines while she
barks a percussive beat.
When we hit the dirt
the dogs perk and the air is crisp
on the slow road. We spread
fine brown dust,
shower our arrival
like rose-petaling a bride.

-Allison Burris



Forest Road
Alexander Limarev



Serpentine Road
Alexander Limarev

Passing Time, Riding to Our Cousin's House

On Seattle's highway to Bothell,
backseat in the car, I gaze out the window
at the Wigwam pancake house
in the land of asphalt, with automobiles
darting into lanes, fast as yesteryear's arrows.

We pass used car lots and steak houses.
One store after another, tight as salmon
on a market's ice bed. Half-way there
at Lake City, not a waterway surfaces,
but a serene Evergreen Cemetery emerges.

Its long, ever-new lawn, luring. We roll on
to our destination – a town of two churches,
shops closed on Sundays. Even in Bothell
not one old red barn left.
No wild horses here. Not a bucket.

But my old neighborhood house still stands
with its lilac bush of unbashful scent.
Years later I sniff bought bunches
that wilt too soon, and swallow Bothell
like loganberry wine. Yesterday's communion.

-Denise Utt



Tourists in Corsica
Nathanael Fournier

Sparky

*It's what we can't see that makes us, that trembles //
in our blood and waits patiently for a name.*

—Al Maginnes

We used to drive to the beach when the sun
was rising, Sparky and me, her name
apropos of her character—a flash as she
would run round the house, a spark
erupting and disappearing as we would see
her here then there before she settled
panting on the sofa, a gem gleaming
on the hand of a sultry Annapolis night.
She was a golden coat of affection.

On those morning drives she sat beside me,
a patient passenger. But when I opened
the window she would leap into the back seat,
lie upon the rear panel beneath the glass,
configure like the Sphinx, her ears like two
lively leaves flagging the sides of her face,
primed to hear the sibilation of passing cars,
her snout twitching for fragrance
of the approaching scent of the sea.

Once at the beach, I would raise an umbrella
and set down a chair, and she would lie
in the shade beneath me, her face windward,
her eyes staring upon the distant metallic
glimmer of the Atlantic, alert, listening, intent,

following the rise and fall of waves,
their relentless rhythm curling inward
then pulling back, as if she saw
and heard what I could never know.

Since then, I have wondered what
she heard, what she saw in the light
that sparked and flickered off
the hissing foam, and I would have
her say it. But language can fail us,
and mysteries, like the vagaries of love,
are nameless. The beach remains.
The timeless sea scrolls in and out.
Light still flashes off the waves.

Beneath my chair a shadow falls,
and the wind ignites the sand.

-V.P. Loggins



Castres
Nathanael Fournier

Broken Statues

One time, when I was little, before too many impressions had been made, before I knew towns had a bad side, I found a pit bull in Oak Park. It thumped its tail against the sidewalk when I dropped to my knees. I didn't love my dog as much as that one.

When Cam left for Santa Clara, she let me keep the dog, Luna, and made me promise to visit her before Christmas.

"I'm not ethnic enough to be a diversity hire," I told Cam when she asked how it was going. Cam's name was Carmella, but I never called her that.

She reached for her drink in the cupholder, and took a sip of mine. "Those Dutch genes pulled through. Be grateful. That's a luxury."

"You can say privilege. It won't hurt you." It was poor wording on my part. Cam got mad about it later. She was right, but I didn't say so.

"The hotel we drove by, they have a lounge outside, and they do dinner by the pool. We could walk around the campus, check out the mall."

"I'm not much of a fan of Stanford." I admitted.

Cam scratched at the cup's plastic lid with her pinky nail "You like where I'm living, though. Right?"

Of course, Cam couldn't afford Silicon Valley. But when she announced she was moving, it was clear. Even if she couldn't live in this area, she wouldn't settle for "that part of the city" either.

I looked out the window. "It's nice, for sure. I'm happy it worked out. If you're able to do something, I think you should do it."

Cam didn't like that for some reason. "How's Luna?" She asked.

"She keeps looking for you."

"Awe, poor baby. Miss that girl so much. Wish you would move up here, too."

I smiled, shook my head, and turned up the air conditioning. "Wish you hadn't left."

But Cam couldn't have stayed. After the shooting, they'd hung up signs for her brother outside the public library and tied strips of paper streamers and ripped up t-shirts along the fence by the park. They were all dyed red and dark blue and fluttered with the wind. I think it was done by some high schoolers. There's better places they could've put them.

We drove around for a while listening to the local news and ended up at a tree lighting in Redwood City. By the time we'd got there, they'd already turned on the lights. A group of senior citizens in sparky green and gold sweaters shedding bits of metallic string were carolling Jingle Bell Rock to a dispersing crowd.

We took tiny candy canes to stuff into our pockets and black coffee from the Knights of Columbus and walked through the downtown. At the end of the street there was a small park where we sat on a bench in front of a concrete fountain which they had turned off

because of the drought.

"Where are the elks?"

"What?"

"There's a plaque." She took out her phone so we'd have more light. "The Roosevelt Memorial Fountain was donated by the county of San Mateo... Statuary of three elk can be seen at the top of the fountain to commemorate the 26th president of the United States."

"It probably broke off. Guess they never replaced it."

"He was way into eugenics, you know."

"Who, Roosevelt? I knew he was kinda a sickly kid. Could have something to do with it."

"I don't follow."

"Well, ok, it was most-likely just good old fashioned ableism, but self-loathing is also a bitch. Those two together, well..."

Later, Cam wanted a decaf for the ride home, so we stopped by the Espresso Hut coming off the freeway. The paper and plastic cups were piling on the side door and in between us. We pulled up to the window and someone said my name. The barista leaned out the window before she had a drink to give us and waved using her entire arm. "Gabi! Oh my god! How are you?"

I returned the open mouth smile "Hey!" I said. Then I recognized her. "Oh, yes, hi. Ya, I'm good. What are you doing here?"

"I moved back home. But I thought you were in Roseville?"

"Ya, still living in the area, sorta. Just visiting a friend. How's your mom doing?"

"Really well. I'll tell her you said hi." Another employee slipped around her to gather more ice from a freezer somewhere outside. My old friend, whose name I still couldn't remember, signalled a goodbye with a smaller smile and the words, "Look, hey, it was great to see you."

Cam struggled to snap her wallet closed. I waved Emily goodbye. I remembered her name was Emily when we got home. "How random. We used to work together." I turned towards the driver seat as we pulled out from the parking lot.

Cam shifted in her seat. "She's a police officer, then."

Yes. "Well, she worked in the building like I did. Before I moved to dispatch."

"So before Daniel died."

"Ya." I said.

At Cam's house we blew up the air mattress. It was too big for either of our houses, but Cam thought she would have guests more often.

“Alright, I know you know this.” Cam lay on the couch above me, and I had to stretch my neck to see she was looking at her phone. “There’s a quote that’s like, ‘I believe in hell. I just don’t believe there’s anyone in it.’ It’s by someone important.”

I rolled over from the side of the air mattress facing the heater.

“I need something to comment on my aunt’s post,” she explained, sticking her phone’s bright screen too close to my face for me to see.

I shrugged my shoulders. “Catholic Church is supposed to be scary. That’s what makes it fun.”

Cam actually laughed. “Is that a suggestion for a comment or just a mantra of yours?”

“I wish.” I responded. “That’s the sort of trauma people our age are supposed to be dealing with.”

Cam placed her phone glass side down on her forehead. She stared up at the ceiling and said: “Having one thing would be enough. It’s everything else that overstuffs your brain until there’s barely room for grief”

“So get off your phone.” I supplied. “Skip videos that start with ‘Please don’t scroll!’ and ‘Why is no one talking about this?’”

Cam shook her head. “It’s a skill I’ve yet to acquire. She looked down at her phone again, then got up and walked to the kitchen, saying, “I need more wine; the word systemic is starting to lose meaning.”

“Ok, well I’ll have some too,” I called into the next room. “I’m sure this one won’t taste like low calorie soy sauce.” It was an old joke, a strange joke I hoped would make her smile, but I wasn’t there to see if it worked.

“Someday,” I heard her struggling to open the bottle, a real bottle with an actual cork. I imagined her stabbing it with a tiny knife meant for cheese or pears, the handle shaped like a rooster, “you’ll forget that.”

She returned with the wine and two glasses. Cam placed them on the low table in front of her. It strained her to reach down so far. She used to joke about having the joints of *un viejito*, a little old man. She stopped that after Daniel died. Once again, I stayed silent.

“If you wanted to talk about my brother, we can.” Cam somehow said this at the same time as swallowing

I shrugged. I poured myself some wine and shrugged again, causing my glass to wobble. “Only if you did.”

Cam had to think about it. We both knew that’s what she thought about a lot, and that she’d never be finished with it. “I guess not.”

I reached for her empty glass to refill it, and then placed it back on the coffee table.

“Drive back with me tomorrow.” I tried. “You can do whatever you need to do Monday in the car. Wifi’s on me, I’ll hook something up. I think my phone can do that.”

“We’ve spent all weekend in the car. That can’t be the only thing I do. Even if you’re fine with it”

“This would be different.” That’s what I was hoping for. “I want to finally spend some time with you.”

“I thought that’s what we’ve been doing.” The dip in her voice revealed how exhausted she really was. Sometimes, I thought, Cam had the heart and soul of a *viejito* too.

On my way home, I stopped at Espresso Hut. I’d hoped to see Emily there and say hello again, but she wasn’t working.

“We went to the tree lighting,” The barista with winged eyeliner wanted to know what I was doing in town.

She looked past me into the car, then smiled. “That sounds like so much fun! I’ve been there before. Bet it’s beautiful at Christmas.”

“Do you know the park on the one end of Main Street?” I was desperate and gripped the steering wheel with one hand.

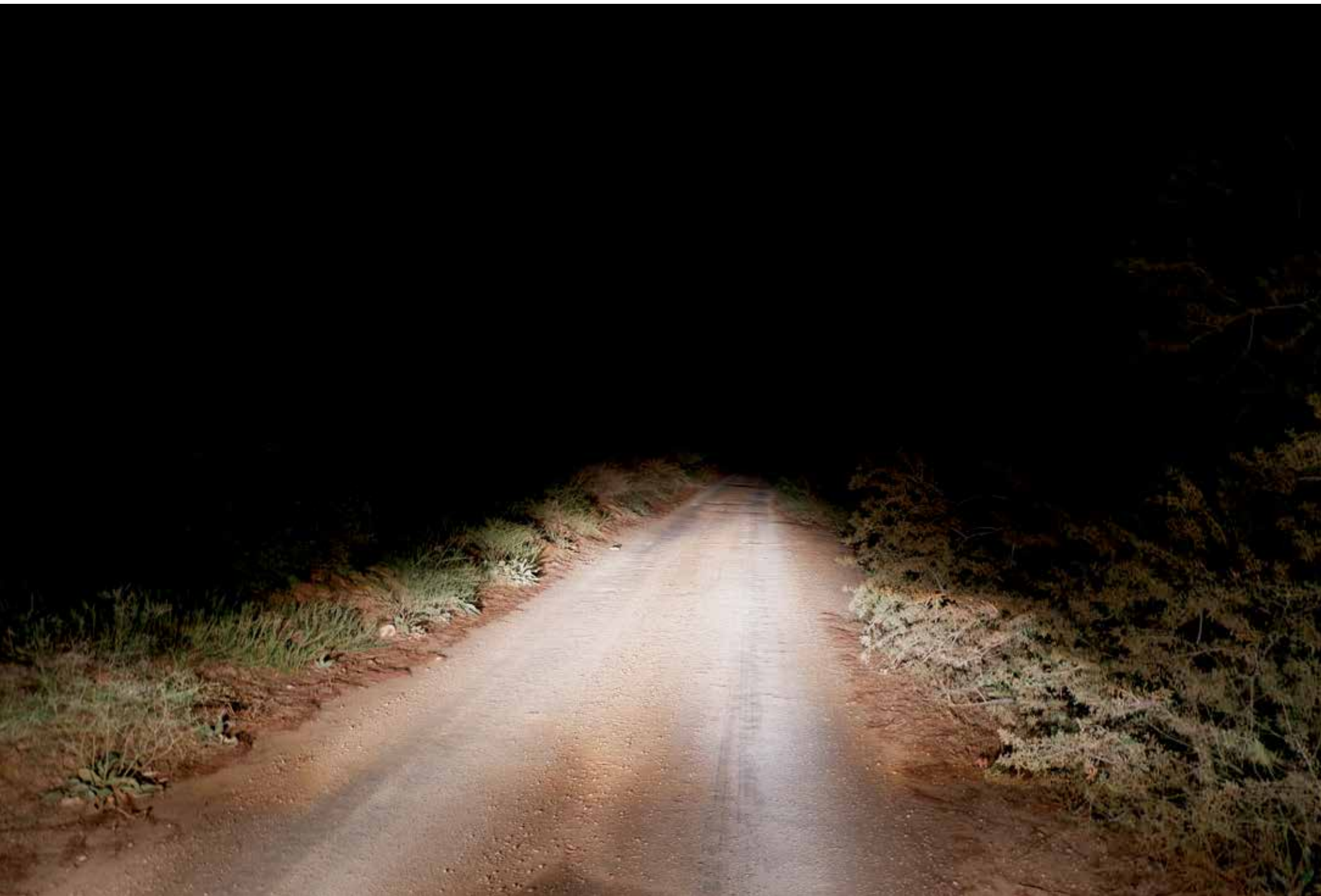
“Mm no, sorry. It was a long time ago.”

“There was— I only ask ‘cause there was this broken statue thing in the park, and my friend was wondering what happened.”

She feigned fading interest. “Huh, ya, I don’t know. Actually, it’s funny though, I was just reading something. Did you know the Egyptians used to break the noses off their statues purposefully. It had to do with—I love the way they said this in this article— ‘extinguishing the spirit’. I just find that so interesting.”

I saw Cam again the next summer. She wanted a puppy from the breeders Luna came from. Cam adopted a pitbull, and took it with her back to Santa Jose.

-Paloma Maria Freitas



Kantia 2
Nikos Kachrimanis

Erosion

after Grapes of Wrath, the movie

Crossroads. A thin middle line on the asphalt. Wet. Electric lines parcel the sky. Fog shadows the horizon. A forest of pylons lean tired into a dense grey world. A shape paces against the glare line. Vegetation clouds threaten the edges.

A dance ground: hewn wood dissects the evening gloom. Lines. Angles. Humans upright against horizontal bars. Stay within to avoid a riot. Avoid the law. Light islands, darkness beneath. The swamp. The river flows like a border. States flow into the delta. Soil flies away.

The law leers over a migrant woman's shoulder. A hand transgresses over the edge of a wooden rail. Her cotton shoulder shadows the wood. Suspicious hats. An anticipation of disturbance narrows pupils, energy coils.

She dances with her beau, thin hips align. Faces turned away from one another, upper bodies on different trajectories. Hands direct, no eyes, no smile. Hair thins. Tired waves. Suspenders and old cotton dresses. The line circles, this hot order machine.

The road runs alongside, runs and runs. The river. Soil, a dust cloud. Storms wrack the plain. No juicy peach skips down the center line, lures toward the open. No one offers symmetry. Dry sun tracks the crooked, crooked scar.

-Petra Kuppers



Baby Blue Cadillac Interstate 90 Heading West
Karl Baden

Contributors

Echo Andersson is a screenwriter and filmmaker based in Vancouver, Canada. She has previously published a book of poetry *Always Hungry and Perpetually Blue* in 2021. She produces and writes for television and film but finds the call of poetic verse a constant in her busy life. Echo’s latest film *Last Tour Home* (2023) will premiere at the Soho International Film Festival in New York this fall. When not writing and working, she finds joy in walking her dog, Gandolfini and hiking up the beautiful surrounding mountains of Vancouver.

Briana Armson is a writer, DJ, and event curator from Nova Scotia, Canada. She’s passionate about storytelling and the catharsis that comes from poetry and dance. Currently based in Toronto, her work has appeared in *Pinhole Poetry* journal, and she’s mentored with Cassidy McFadzean, Martina Evans, and Ella Frears. She also collects Jean-Claude Van Damme movies on VHS and is full of good-bad movie recommendations.

Tyler Alpern is an artist, historian, educator and social instigator holed up in a rustic log cabin in Colorado. He embraces unconventional beauty that is found in many different places from roadside litter to the nuance of a once soaring voice in decline. Alpern’s formal education took him from Los Angeles to Rome, and back to Colorado. The Library of Congress has preserved a digital archive of his work and career because of “its cultural and historic significance.” He’s just returned from an extended European road trip exploring the Balkans.

Micheal Brockley is a retired school psychologist who lives in Muncie, Indiana. His prose poems have appeared in *The Parliament Literary Journal*, *Last Stanza Poetry Journal*, and *Trailer Park Quarterly*. Prose poems are forthcoming in *Prole*, *Poems*, and *Prose*, *The Prose Poem*, and *Alien Buddha*.

Karl Baden’s photographs have been exhibited at Robert Mann Gallery, Zabriskie Gallery, Marcuse Pfeifer Gallery, International Center for and Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Anderson Yezeriski Gallery, The Institute for Contemporary Art and The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and Houston, Musée Batut, France, Photokina in Cologne, Germany, Photographers Gallery and Somerset House, London. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and Massachusetts Cultural Council. His work is in the collections of MoMA in NYC, MFA Boston, MFA Houston, Polaroid International Collection and Guggenheim Museum. He has been on and off the road for 50 years.

Paul Beaudoin is a distinguished composer, visual artist, and writer with a PhD in music composition and theory. His work spans ambient music, minimalism, and sound and visual media integration. As a writer, Beaudoin has contributed extensively to contemporary art and music discussions, offering fresh insights into the creative process. His creative works deeply engage with perception, temporality, and the intersections of image, sound and history.

Alan Bern, a retired children’s librarian, received an MA in Creative Writing from Boston University studying with Anne Sexton and classicist Donald S. Carne-Ross. Alan has published three books of poetry and a hybrid fictionalized memoir, *In The Pace of the Path*, Uncollected Press, 2023. He has another hybrid book, *Dreams of the return*, forthcoming from Old Scratch Press, and a chapbook, *because lack*, forthcoming from back room poetry. Recent awards: Longlist, The Bedford Competition (2023); Winner, Saw Palm Poetry Contest (2022). Recent/upcoming writing/photo work include: ArLiPo, Feral, Porridge Magazine, and Mercurius. Alan’s fine press/publisher with artist/printer Robert Woods: linesandfaces.com.

Adrienne Brehmer, born 1968 in Koblenz, Germany, and raised in Bonn, works as a freelance writer and book author in Cologne. Since 2008, she has published numerous stories and poems in various media. Brehmer founded a reading series for experimental literature and participates in art book fairs. Her work blends lyrical prose with visual and performative arts.

Bill Leigh Brewer has been capturing the Mojave since the 1980s. During this time his early focus on Joshua Tree National Park widened to include all of the Mojave and the lower desert areas of Salton Sea and east. While the Mojave is home base he frequently works in Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico. His work shows an evolution away from capturing pristine nature to exploring the man-altered landscape. You can see more of his images at www.billybrewer.com

Luca Brt is an Italian photographer who lives and works in Rome. Always passionate about photography, he started shooting with his father’s analog camera, and over time he deepened the techniques of development and

printing in the darkroom. He has had several solo exhibitions, publications and group exhibitions, he also runs a photographic association that organizes workshops and various activities.

Allison Burris grew up in the Pacific Northwest and currently lives in Oakland, California. Her poems embrace the whimsical and cozy, explore human connection, and affirm the power of stories. She received her MLIS from San Jose State University and her poetry appears or is forthcoming in various journals, including *After Happy Hour Review*, *Passionfruit*, *The Marbled Sigh*, and *Avalon Literary Review*. Connect with her via <https://linktr.ee/allisonburris>.

Lorraine Caputo is a documentary poet, translator and travel writer. Her works appear in over 500 journals on six continents; and 24 collections of poetry – including *In the Jaguar Valley* (dancing girl press, 2023) and *Santa Marta Ayres* (Origami Poems Project, 2024). She also authors travel narratives, articles and guidebooks. Her writing has been nominated for the Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize. Caputo has done literary readings from Alaska to the Patagonia. She journeys through Latin America with her faithful knapsack Rocinante, listening to the voices of the pueblos and Earth.

Peter Carellini is a filmmaker, photographer, actor and writer based in NYC. His photography and poems, short stories, and essays have been published in over a dozen publications - including *Travel + Leisure*, *Bruxelles Art Vue*, *Rabble Review* and *Mythos Magazine* - while his directorial, no budget film debut “Hello, World!” had its public premiere at the Greenpoint Gallery in October of 2021. He currently works as a SAG background actor in several NYC film and television productions, while workshopping upcoming screenplays and a full novel. In his spare time, he loves the disco, cooking tomato sauce, and traveling the world.

Susan Dipronio, published writer of poetry, plays, non-fiction; award winning analog photographer. They are a recipient of both “The Art for Change Grant” and “The Transformation Award” from The Leeway Foundation. They conduct memoir writing workshops with women identified, the houseless & cancer warriors, founded “Pink Hanger Presents” and co-founded “Wicked Gay Ways”. Their plays, films and photography have appeared in the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, in New York City, in Boston and Toronto, in India and Chile.

Brian R Donnelly is a visual artist based in Toronto. Trained as a painter at OCADU, Donnelly’s work centres around themes of identity and its distortion. Exhibiting internationally since 2007, he began experimenting with and presenting video-based work in 2017.

Christopher Dunn holds an M.A. from Boston University and a Ph.D. from the University of Houston. He enjoys long, moonlit walks on Galveston Beach, picking up trash for the Surfrider Foundation, and snowboarding while listening to Leonard Cohen.

Betsy Fagin is the author of *All is Not Yet Lost* (Belladonna), *Names Disguised* (Make Now Books), and *Fires Seen From Space* (forthcoming, Winter Editions). Her work has received support from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Provincetown Community Compact, and the New York Foundation for the Arts.

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

Nathanaël Fournier is a street photographer from France. He only works with film cameras. He is one of the co-founders of “Les Films de la Caillasse”, an organization who aims to promote documentary cinema and film photography by organizing exhibitions, screenings and workshops. He now lives and works in Aubusson, France.

Paloma Maria Freitas is an American writer and theatre-maker currently based in the UK. She received a BFA in creative writing from Southern Oregon University. Her short fiction and poetry have been published by *Midway Journal* and a *Messy Misfits Club*. Additionally, her play “Pen Marks” debuted at a London arts festival in June 2024

CJ Giroux is a lifelong resident of Michigan. He teaches writing and literature classes at Saginaw Valley State University and received his doctorate from Wayne State University. His most recent chapbooks is *Sheltered in Place* (Finishing Line Press), and he serves on the staff of *Dunes Review*.

Melina Gómez is a photographer and filmmaker based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She studied cinema at UNA

and works at the Museum of Fine Arts. She also took poetry, theater, dancing workshops to complement her work. At the present moment she's working in a short sci-fi film about the political context in her country.

Beate Gördes, born in 1961 in Herten, Germany, lives and works in Cologne. With a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Applied Sciences Cologne, she has exhibited widely since 1985. Her focus has shifted to video compositions with electroacoustic sounds, and she regularly collaborates with Brehmer on interdisciplinary projects

Helga Gruendler-Schierloh is a bilingual writer with a degree in journalism and graduate credits in linguistics. Her articles, essays, short stories, and poetry have appeared in the USA, the UK, Canada, and South Africa. Her debut novel, *Burying Leo*, a McToo story, won second place in women's fiction during Pen Craft Awards' 2018 writing contest.

Sharon Hilberer lives, works, and writes in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on the northern prairies of mid-continent USA. Her writing is found mostly in her friends' in-boxes, but occasionally in publications including *Kosmos Quarterly*, *Of Rust and Glass*, and the *Parcham* online journal.

Jae Hodges is digital photographer and artist, author, genealogist and traveler based in Central Florida.

Felipe Aramburo Jaramillo, a Colombian biologist, is the winner of the XXVIII Ramón de Zubiría Story Contest and took third place in the II "Dancing with Elena Garro" Story Contest. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D in engineering and is enrolled in the Caro y Cuervo Institute's creative writing program.

Nikos Kachrimanis was born in 1983 and is based in Athens, Greece. He has studied Dentistry in Athens and pursued his PhD in Dental Biomaterials in Germany (2013). Actively practicing photography since 2002, he took his formal education in the visual arts in 2016 ("Photography: Theory and Creative Practices", Athens School of Fine Arts, Greece). He is an independent photographer and collage-maker narrating stories: fairy tales, travel or crime stories, the 8 o'clock news, praising the poetry of the banal.

Richard Kitchen is an artist, writer and performer based in York. He is a former teacher of literature and drama, both of which find their way into his visual work. He mainly works with analogue and digital collage but also enjoys recording road journeys by making abstract sketches in response to movement. He advises: this is safer done as a passenger rather than while driving (although it can annoy fellow passengers). Richard is a co-founder of Navigators Art, a fluid collective of artists, writers, musicians and performers who engage with community projects, exhibitions and live events.

Jenny Kowalski is a graphic and interactive designer in Pennsylvania whose work explores interactions between text and image, between designer and audience, and between physical and digital space. Her practice includes creative coding, fiber arts, branding, and digital design. Kowalski's work has been featured in regional, national, and international exhibitions and has been recognized by *Graphis*, *Graphic Design USA*, and *Creative Quarterly*. She teaches graphic design at Lehigh University.

Petra Kupperts (she/her) is a disability culture activist, a scooter/wheelchair user, and a community performance artist. Her fourth poetry collection, *Diver Beneath the Street*, investigates true crime and ecopoetry at the level of the soil (Wayne State University Press, 2024). Her previous collection, *Gut Botany* (2020), won the 2021/22 Creative Book Award by the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment. She teaches at the University of Michigan and was a 2023 Guggenheim Fellow.

Donna Langevin's latest of six poetry collections include *Timed Radiances*, Aeolus House 2022 and *Brimming*, Piquant Press 2019. She won second Prize in the 2014 GritLIT contest, first prize in the Banister Anthology Competition 2019, and in the Ontario Poetry Society Pandemic Poem contest, 2020. A fictoire/memoir *A Story for Sadie* was published by Piquant Press 2023. *Summer of Saints* was produced by act2studioWORKS at the Fresh Picks: The Sandra Kerr New Plays Festival, 2022.

John Laue, a widely published, prize-winning poet, writer and photographer, has photos featured in local, national, and international magazines and juried shows.

Alexander Limarev is a freelance artist, mail art artist, poet, visual poet and curator from Russia/Siberia. Participated in more than 1000 international projects and exhibitions. His artworks are part of private and museum collections of 72 countries. His artworks as well as poetry have been featured in various online publications including *Bukowski Erasure Poetry Anthology* (Silver Birch Press), *Briller Magazine*, *Iconic Lit*, *Caravel Literary Arts Journal*, *Maintenant*, *The Gambler Mag*, *Tuck Magazine*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Superpresent*, *Killer Whale Journal*, etc.

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V.P. Loggins is the author of *The Wild Severance* (2021), winner of the 26th Annual Bright Hill Press Poetry Book Competition, *The Green Cup* (2017), winner of the *Cider Press Review* Editors' Book Prize, *The Fourth Paradise* (Main Street Rag 2010), *Heaven Changes* (Pudding House 2007), and one book on Shakespeare, *The Life of Our Design*. He is co-author of another, *Shakespeare's Deliberate Art*. His poems have appeared in *The Baltimore Review*, *Crannog*, *English Journal*, *The Healing Muse*, *Memoir*, *Modern Age*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry East*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Southern Review* and *Tampa Review*, among other journals. See www.vploggins.com.

Özlem Mehder was born in Turkey in 1994. She graduated from Ankara University Anthropology BA (2016) and Forensic Anthropology MSc (2018) programs. She has no professional training in the visual arts. She considers painting and creating illustrations as a means to portray her experiences in "a different language". She enjoys freezing her memories and travelling in time by combining them with visual arts. She is a self-taught amateur artist and happy to be a lifelong student: She is fascinated by the idea of "being on the road".

Cori Matusow is a writer and creative in NYC who grew up as a feral GenXer. This year, she published "Tomboy" in the Spring 2024 issue of *Superpresent* and "Run-Catch-Kiss" in the Summer 2024 issue of *Blink-Ink*. Cori has forthcoming publications in the *New Croton Review* and *under the gum tree*.

Joan Mazza has worked as a medical microbiologist, psychotherapist, and taught workshops on understanding dreams and nightmares. She is the author of six self-help psychology books, including *Dreaming Your Real Self* (Penguin/Putnam), and her poetry has appeared in *The Comstock Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Adanna Literary Journal*, *Poet Lore*, *Slant*, *The Nation*, and elsewhere. She lives in rural central Virginia.

Jennifer McCormick is a writer and artists based in Malmo, Sweden. Her work is published in *Ordkonst*, *New Writing Scotland* and *Amsterdam Review*, among others. She was born and raised in Glasgow, Scotland and is a proud member of its *City of Poets*.

Michael McFadden's artwork explores and celebrates sexual freedom as a form of resistance to multilayered stigma and trauma, both historical and ongoing. His work examines the inner workings and the visceral charges of sexual connection, as they manifest in the context of everyday life. In 2020, Michael moved from NYC to LA via cross-country roadtrip with my boyfriend in the midst of a global pandemic. Traveling through the rural southwest post-BLM proved illuminating for the interracial, gay couple. Michael received his M.F.A. from the ICP-Bard's Program in Advanced Photographic Studies. He currently resides in Los Angeles.

Kelly Moran has a formal education in Art Making and has pursued informal education through apprenticeships. Her national and international exhibitions list is long through gallery affiliations, art fairs and residencies. Moran Has established studios in many locations and is presently located in Houston, TX. She is involved in her art community through many art Organizations, shows she has curated and teaching. Her Love of Road trips stems from her family's relocation from rural New York to Rural Florida and her road trips in the US and around the world. These Road trips have seeped into her narrative digital collages.

Devon Neal (he/him) is a Kentucky-based poet whose work has appeared in many publications, including *HAD*, *Stanchion*, *Stone Circle Review*, *Livina Press*, and *The Storms*, and has been nominated for Best of the Net. He currently lives in Bardstown, KY with his wife and three children.

Rina Palumbo (she/her) is working on a novel and two nonfiction long-form writing projects alongside short fiction, creative nonfiction, and prose poetry. Her work appears in *The Hopkins Review*, *Ghost Parachute*, *Milk Candy*,

Bending Genres, Anti-Heroin Chic, Identity Theory, Stonecoast Review, et al. <https://rinapalumbowriter.com/>

Jared Pearce grew up in California and now lives in Iowa. His last road trip was biffed by an head-on collision that destroyed two vehicles, maimed two others, broke several ones, and slapped us was amazing welts and bruises.

Michael Possert Jr., born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, built his first miniature at age 5 and filmed his first 8mm movie at age 8. After graduating from Central Michigan University with a film degree, he moved to Los Angeles where he worked as an artist and craftsman designing and fabricating special effects miniatures and props for over 35 years in the entertainment industry. Michael has always strived to tell a story with each piece he makes, whether for movies, commissions or personal expression.

Mike Reis is a writer and environmental historian whose poems have appeared in *Narrative Northeast, North of Oxford, Woven Tale, Gargoyle, Crossways, Lucille, The Broadkill Review, The Galway Review, The Raven's Perch, Grand Little Things, Amelia, Northern New England Review, The Seventh Quarry*, and *WWPH Writes*. His work has also been published in the anthologies *Cabin Fever, Pandemic of Violence II: Poets Speak*, and *Traitor/Patriot: A Reflection of January 6*.

Veronica Romanenghi is a photographer, art director and a poet based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She has published two books of photography and participated in many others. She is actually working on “Hanging by a thread.” a photographic essay based on the suffocation that the domestic world generates in women in general, and the world’s attempt to domesticate them. She uses and places objects out of context in a domestic environment that generates strangeness and confusion. She os also studying to become an Actors Director.

Ed Ruzicka third book of poems, *Squalls*, was released in March. Ed’s poems have appeared in the *Atlanta Review, the Chicago Literary Review, Rattle, Canary* and many other literary publications. Ed, who is also the president of the Poetry Society of Louisiana, lives with his wife, Renee, in Baton Rouge.

Graeme Shimmin was born in Manchester but lives in Donegal, Ireland. He’s been a full-time writer since 2010. His second novel, *A Kill in the Morning* (Random House Penguin, 2014) won or was listed for multiple prizes, including the Terry Pratchett Award and the Arthur C. Clarke Award. Since then, he has worked as a writer and editor for novels, videogames, television and Hollywood. He has also had multiple short stories published, has edited two collections of speculative fiction short stories, and runs a popular writing advice website. You can learn more about him at <https://graemeshimmin.com> or https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graeme_Shimmin

Hal Shipman’s artistic practice is centered around the narrative power of the family story and his family roots in rural West Texas. He centers this work around the story of his great-uncle, Bill Gavin, who lived and died of alcoholism, while in the closet in Abilene. Hal received his BFA Studio Art (Photography) from Rice University in Houston in 1989 and his MFA Studio (Photography) from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2024.

Andy Steckel is an engineer and amateur cartoonist living in Northern California with his wife, daughters and lemon trees. He mostly draws single panel cartoons, some of which reflect his progressive politics. His work has been published by *350BayArea, IndyBay, CauseWeb, AnimalCartoon.Net, StreetSpirit, BoredPanda.com* and elsewhere.

Ian Stokes is a Transgender LA-based short film director and visual artist with a distinctive eye for performance. After living in the United Kingdom for three years, Ian developed a deep love for Americana, particularly his SoCal roots. Through this new lens, he extracts and reimagines the core elements of Americana, playing with its themes, motifs, and styles to create bizarre, abstract, and emotionally impactful visual art. His work shines a spotlight on the abstract, the complex, and the unusual, offering a unique perspective on familiar cultural motifs

Don Strandberg is an artist living in San Diego, Ca. He earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in painting and printmaking from UC Sant Cruz. Decades of painting and music production have expanded to include experiments in video and sound recording. Recently, language is factoring into his work in the form of ‘word art’, or the isolation of written language in graphic form, similar to ‘Concrete Poetry’.

T Lavois Thiebaud is an artist from Texas. *Glasstire* publication describes their work as “tender, and intimate and strange,” exploring the transmission of poetry through film. “They are exemplary of the crossroads intersection of magick and art. Bury your bones and charms there, recite your chant, and sing your midnight song. They will consecrate your act and open the way. Their ease in performance is uncanny, lovely, and brimming with wit. In

this way, they assist and clarify new schemes of things, having dispatched the wrack and ruin of dour inheritance. And we desperately need new such beginnings and transitions. -KPFT Dallas

Maria Titan is a mixed-media artist, color lover, storyteller. She paints in acrylic, watercolor, pastel, pen, and ink. Sometimes on wood and canvas but paper is her first love. Born & raised in South Africa, she holds a BA degree in Fine Art at the University of the Witwatersrand. She currently lives in Nicosia, Cyprus.

Denise Utt is a poet living in New York City. Her poetry has appeared in the *Bellevue Literary Review, Paterson Literary Review, Superpresent*, and elsewhere. Her lyrics have been recorded in the R&B hit, What I Wouldn’t Do (for the Love of You) and the jazz song, I Don’t Want No Happy Songs.

Keith Douglas Warren is a lifetime artist and retired Registered Nurse. He has been working with Asemic writing over the past several years exploring the endless possibilities of the artform. Currently working in MetroWest Boston, Keith has shown his work over the years in Boston and Provincetown Massachusetts, USA. The work has a life of its own, as art often does. In general Keith uses ink and watercolor on various papers, accompanied by colored pencil

Patrick Willet is a contemporary American visual artist known for his highly detailed work in watercolor and ink. Willett’s work explores our sense of place and direction often focusing on the details of places and objects burned into our memory. His work frequently evokes ancient archeological patterns juxtaposed into our contemporary world

Aaron Williams’ poems were accepted by *Vallum, The Healing Muse, The Scores, Boog City, Panoply*, and *Kansas City Voices*. Two of his *Poetry Slab* concrete poems are displayed as public art in Missouri and Illinois. Aaron is Founder and Champion of The 7th Grade Poetry Foundation and Publisher and Editor of six annual student poetry anthologies resulting from past programming. He is a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Sharon Whitehill is a retired English professor from West Michigan now living in Port Charlotte, Florida. In addition to poems in various literary magazines, her publications include two academic biographies, two memoirs, a full collection of poems, and three poetry chapbooks. Her latest, *This Sad and Tender Time appeared* (Kelsay Books) in December 2023

Carolina Yáñez is a Tejana artist and activist working with various mediums to explore ideas regarding Tejano culture and politics, history, place, gender-based issues, mental illness and how they all intersect in her identity. She utilizes photography and video, fiber, ceramics, and print in her practice to speak on her experiences of childhood, immigration, tradition, pain, beauty, and celebration. She received her BFA from the University of Houston in 2023 and currently attends Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas on the Meadows Artistic Scholarship, pursuing an MFA in Studio Art.

Jacqueline Zalace is a poet based in Austin, Texas where she lives with her partner and cat, Evie. You can find her work in places like *Autumn Sky Poetry, [Alternate Route], Clockwise Cat*, and *Book of Matches*. Aside from writing, she spends her time playing video games, painting, and reading.

