

Superpresent

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SUPERPRESENT

Superpresent

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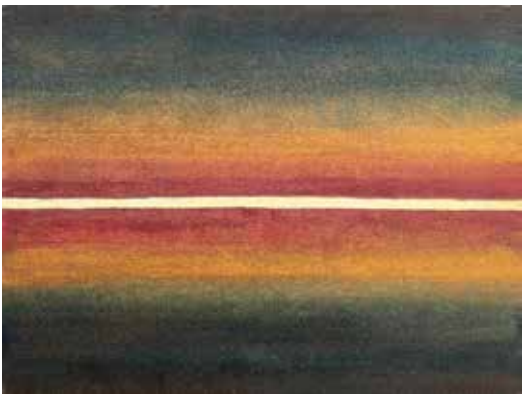
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Front Cover
Urban Mentisphaera
Ugo Milano



Back Cover
Untitled
Yifeng Li



End Paper
Insomnia
Ekaterina Okiforova

EDITORS' NOTES		4	Natalie Christensen	Insistent Whispers #11	20
PROSE			Josie	Voyager's Echo	22
Tupelo Hassman	The Birds Are Sleeping	9	Berholdus Sibum	Marks 25	23
Anna Birch	Santos, Woodcarving, Popsicles	12	Morgan Bisoux	Lingering Memory	24
Bonnie Sykes	I am Haunted by Coastal Towns	21	Ellie Goodliffe	Elwoods Trace	27
Caleb Murray	For Michael Collins	25	Helge Paulsen	shoot your shadow (your own echo)	28
Duke Stewart	His Image	37		stone cloud – echo of the past	76
Duncan Forbes	Visiting Burnt Norton	53	auroraerica	Self portrait	31
Ayre Fromme-Diaz	Blood-Curdling Scream in the Swiss-Italian Alps	59	Maria Sirtizidou	Echo 2	35
Lucian Cubric	Sundays Are Longer	66	Francesca Dei	Goddess Bastet	40
Yash Seyedbagheri	To Live	74		Instinct	41
Shazia Mirza	Crustacean With a Spine (Echoes of the Maternal Body)	75	Sarah Misselbrook	Pause, Kneel, Reflect	51
Tamara Kaye Sellman	Selvage	78		Dust to Dust	63
POETRY			Gordon Massman	She Strayed from the Herd	52
			Ayanava Sil	Poetry of the ordinary	57
Carol Wyatt	The Rites of Civility	7	Hoho Kuo	Hail to the tree	58
Lara Dolphin	The Expectant Handmaid	14	Jiaqi Liu	She stood beyond time	60
Duncan Forbes	Siren Song	15		The Physics of Almost	62
	Echo to Narcissus	33	Lianne Kamp	Boundless	61
	Leda Replies	34		Echoes	107
C.J. Giroux	Aubade Echo	18	Ekaterina Okiforova	Crystal Rose	70
Andrew Robin	Fuck This Poem	29	Haven Lindsey	Birthday Girl	72
Chloe Yeo	white man's catcall	42	Ma Yuelei	Sphere Series	73
Richard Collins	Crayolaese	43	Ugo Milano	Echo of Göttingen	77
	Small Towns and Nightgowns	83	Vincenzo Cohen	Abandoned House	85
Erin Weeks	Magno-Lalia	64	Katarin Radovic	Cascade	88
Stephen Gibson	A Poster of Janis Joplin at Seattle's Museum of Pop Culture	71	Arthi Duraisamy	Cit	93
Maria Faust	Things I Perceive	79	Andriy Kalkov	coreNion	95
Gloria Monaghan	Bird Destiny	86		Graphie	96
Wortley Clutterbuck	Hypocrisy	87	Bowen Wu	Sonibaux	97
Neal Allen Shipley	Musicophilia	91	Agnieszkowa	In her red silence	100
Kaylee Baucom	The She in Me	99	Edoardo De Falchi	The ghost was walking n the fog	101
Barbara Krasner	The Bloom of Splinters	103		A tip for the mountain, on the mountain peaking	102
Justin Hollis	Untitled	104	J.B. Pravda	Dot Parker's Fresh Hell at Algonquin Roundtable	105
Mukut Borpujari	The Echo	108	VIDEO AND SOUND		
ART			Lize Briel	Echoes: A Minimalist Dialogue	47
Yifeng Li	Auspicious Animal	8	Sarah Misselbrook	From This Distance	47
	Morning Gow over Cloudy Mountain	89	Paul Khahliso Matela Zisiwe	Nduduzo Makhathini And The Cure Collective Video Art	48
Aleksandar Eftimovsk	Resonance	13	Nadja Elipda Murze	Wanna Talk?	48
	Sound of the Universe	92	Desira	Amara: Binary	49
Adam Niklewicz	Miron	11		Amara: Heaven	49
Jinglu Zhao	Ray of Light	16		Amara: Sadness is My Lover	50
Annebelle Young	Stuck	17	Ataman Girişken	Echoes	50
Dănuț-Adrian-Iași Chidon-Frunză	Childhood Places	19	CONTRIBUTORS		
					109

Donors for Volume 6

Superpresent would like to thank the following people
who have generously contributed to the journal:

E.J. Clement

Duncan Forbes

Nancy Giles

Lee Harrison

Richard C. Rice

Jane Schmitt

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Editors' Note

Echo wasn't even a goddess. She was a nymph who was sexually harassed by some asshole who had a lot of power and, like a lot of women, she was forced to just repeat what she heard, forever. But she did become the theme for this issue, and hopefully there's some consolation in that. Actually, they became the theme for this issue: "echoes."

This go-round, Superpresent asked contributors to think of echo in their own ways. We didn't receive the photo of a bat promised by one 14 year old niece when told the theme ("echo location," she smugly nodded). We did, however, receive work that reminded us of Emerson's letter to Whitman on first reading "Leaves of Grass": "I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start." Some of the contributors this issue are gifted beginners while others are seasoned (weathered?) makers. One favorite is "Fuck this Poem," by Andrew Robin, which presents a poet fighting back and forth with his creation. Another approach to the theme is offered by Carol Wyatt in "The Rites of Civility," in that she considers the current political situation as it echoes the founding of the nation.

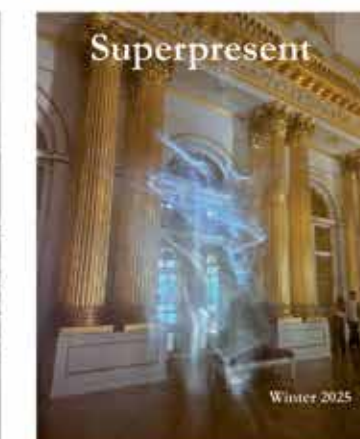
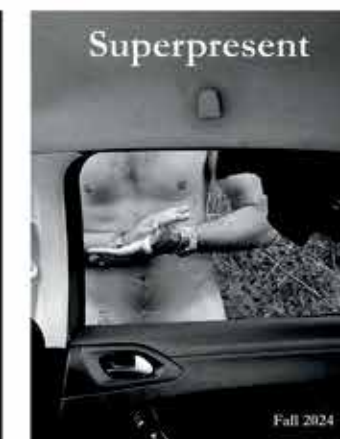
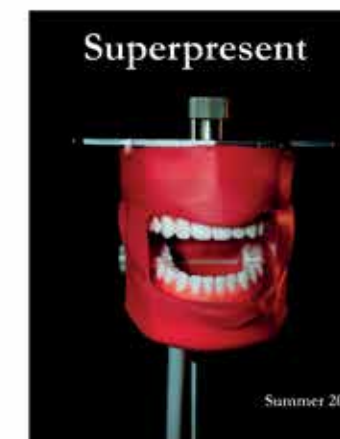
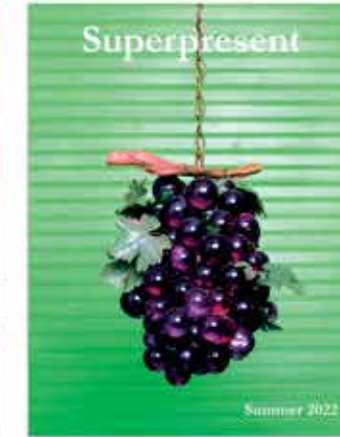
Exploring an idea rooted in sound (the rebounding waves) can be challenging for visual artists. One especially creative work comes from Aleksandra Eftimovski, whose sculptures, inspired by sound waves themselves, revel in natural and beautiful forms. Similarly, Adam Niklewicz uses the echo of light itself to construct his deceptively simple photographs.

We always appreciate it when contributors make us laugh and then think and then laugh some more and then think some more. Annabelle Young's double-ended sculpture did that for us. And Bowen Wu's quirky homemade musical instruments may beg questions about the reverberations of music doubling off itself. Or not. But they are fascinating.

After much consideration and one round of noodles, the powers that be decided that the theme for the next issue of Superpresent is "Beginnings." As Emerson wrote to Whitman. . . . Never mind, we've already used that quote. Echo that.

And just a final note, Superpresent is still free to submit to and free to read online but we continue to rely on the kindness of strangers. And friends. If you like what you see here, please consider a subscription or even a contribution. Come see us online at superpresent.org.

-The Editors



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The Rites of Civility

*When in the course of human events,
With hubris of penis an pride of hide,
Setting aside so many rights, in truths self-evident
To them, freedom limited and equality poorly defined*

*Still by wrestle of conscience and purse.
Now we find ourselves where histroy rhymes
It is out right, it is our duty to throw off adverse
Injuries and usurpations that fuel such outrage of the times*

*Once and yet again, we must recall and affirm
Like those who had the grit and spine to list the violations
Of the once and now would-be king who shuns
The laws, the rights, altering fundamentally the Forms
Of our Government. For pretend offenses, he transports
Us beyond Seas to be tried or left in isolation
He has incited domestic insurrection,
obstructed Justice, required Judges to submit, conform*

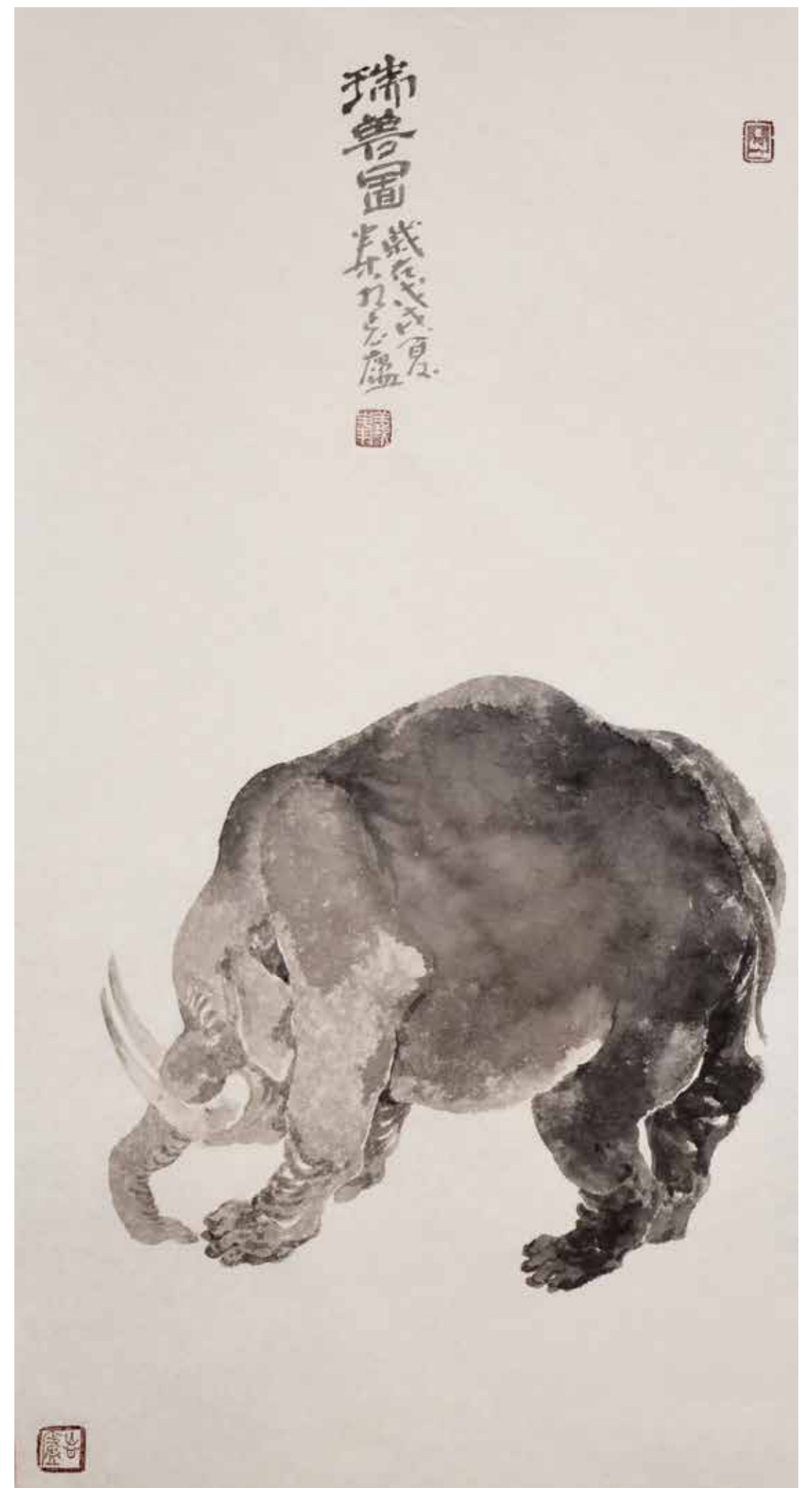
*To his will alone. He has kept among us, in times of peace,
Standing Armies without consent of the Legislature.
He has given assent for depriving us in many cases
of the benefit of Trial by Jury. Ruling by caprice,
He rants and puffs (and sleeps), this freak of nature,
All rules of civility abandoned. We need to restore common grace.*

*A Prince, whose character is marked by every act which may define
A Tyrant, is unfit to be a ruler of free people. Our wracked democracy
this ever less-than perfect union of-by-for We the people aligned
To defend what is weakened daily by lunacy*

*Of two-bit leaders. Leaders? No. Shameless gilded slumlords,
And shame on us to leave it unrestored.*

-Carol Wyatt

Auspicious Beast
Yifeng Li



The Birds Are Sleeping

The windows over the shop's cages return to darkness as my headlights fade. He lives above this tropical bird shop and when I go over to his place, to their place, I park in the alley so I can look up at his windows where he sleeps above the sleeping birds. I park in the alley and I turn off my headlights.

I never get out, never cross the street, have never been inside, because she's there and because (whatever else you think about me) I'm not the kind of person who would throw it in another person's face that this person she thinks is hers, is daily giving it to someone else behind her back and all the other ways a person like that would give it or take it.

There are certain kinds of people. You know which kind you are. You do. (*You* do.)

When he stops by my place one night, my place that is on the ground floor, my place with no adjacent birds, and it's already late and becoming apparent that he's not going to be able to drive home, to the place above the bird shop, well, I'm not the kind of person who'd get a guy drunk in order to have her way with him, no matter that I did buy the whiskey and I did pour the whiskey and I did sip the whiskey too, but not as fast as him, and no matter that he was drunk when he came in and I didn't wait to crack the seal on the bottle, but (as you can probably tell) I am the kind of person who'd be glad if he had to stay. Was made to stay. Because driving really was too much this time around.

Even if I am the kind of person who'd have driven myself in that condition, in any condition, late at night, over to the alley across from the bird shop to look up at those windows, darked above the giant parrot painted below, and inside, all the cages locked up.

Even if I am the kind of person who remembers those drives only in flashes, of the freeway and blurred lanes, the drivers honking around me, of the painted parrot wings in streetlight.

I am the kind of person who can't remember the rest and I'm not the kind of person to let this stop me (and you can't stop me either) from doing that again or him again when the sun comes up and the covers come off at the bird shop and he shows up at the door and the covers go off and the covers go on.

I am the kind of person who might hurt someone, with my car, with him.

And I am the kind of person who can only see those hurts in flashes, quick secrets from myself, bright feathers under a bird's wing, and I am not that other kind of person (a person like you? Maybe.) who can see the hurt she causes, only because in some ways I am both a lucky and unlucky sort of person, the kind of person who hasn't yet had a real reason to find out what kind of person she is.

When he needs his truck moved because he just pulled up, double-parked, he wasn't going to stay but for the fresh bottle of whiskey but for that permission inside it, and then we'd had one drink, two drinks, half the bottle, I'm the kind of person who'd go out and move his truck for him (just like I'd do for you, like you'd do for me, regardless of who you think I am, because you know who you are, don't you. Don't you?).

I'm the type of person who'd pour him another drink while he waited, in my house, with my things, and so I pull the truck around the block, and this moment in his thing, him

in my things, well, (whatever you've decided about me), I'm not the kind of person who would do this, but when I go to take the key out of the ignition it occurs to me, it occurs to me, that if I were a certain kind of person, the truck being old and the key being worn and thin and bent already, if I were a certain kind of person, I could break the key right off in the ignition and then he'd be the kind of person who would be stuck.

He'd be the kind of person who'd be stuck at my house for the night.

Not that I am the kind of person who'd do such a thing, despite all the persons I've already surprised myself by being (surprised both of us, you aren't the kind of person who can hide your surprise from me). But you never know who you are until you are in that moment, hand on the key, and when I go to pull it out of the ignition, there I am. In just that moment. Stuck between one kind of person and another. Between one person and another.

The key broke off so easily then it was easy to lie about how it happened.

If I were the kind of person to do that.

-Tupelo Hassman



Santos, Woodcarving, Popsicles

Hank was working the counter when a tourist entered to pay for gas. The driver had hit the brakes and turned into the station. His enthusiasm as he bought an orange popsicle didn't surprise Hank. That sign, painted long ago on the whitewashed wall, "Santos, Woodcarving, Popsicles," drew visitors.

The customer stripped the paper from his popsicle, wrapped it around the double sticks, and began to suck at the treat without splitting it in half. When he inquired about the santos and woodcarving, Hank explained that he was not the original owner, and those items were long gone. It would have been hard to cover the black letters on the outside wall, so he hadn't tried.

"I never expected to see this place," the customer marveled, looking around. "My mother told me about it, but she was uncertain where it was. Out west somewhere. That was all she said. She bought one of the santos and a napkin holder with a sun motif. Rising or setting, I was never sure which, but it was always on our table, full of paper napkins."

Hank sighed and lit on the stool behind the counter. He relaxed as the customer unfolded a tale of his late mother's infatuation with what must have been the first owner, the guy who whittled novelties for the tourist trade. She, too, had stopped for gas, long before self-service. In those days, station owners checked the oil and tire pressure and wiped the windshield.

"My mother wasn't even Catholic," he said. "Just suddenly fell hard for the guy who took care of the car." He paused, as if to gauge Hank's reaction, then went on. "My God! How she described him!" He rolled his eyes. "Not the kind of thing that a fellow enjoys hearing from his mother, if you know what I mean."

"Anything come of it?" Hank asked.

The man shrugged. "Me, maybe." Hank's eyes widened, and the customer added, "It was the sixties. Mom was a free spirit on a road trip." He tossed the popsicle paper and sticks in the wastebasket, then took his keys and phone from his pockets. "May a take a picture of the sign?"

Hank nodded.

As the customer drove off, Hank waved and walked to the small adobe house adjacent to the store. He looked at the old man sitting in a recliner in a corner of the front room "Good Lord, Dad!" he swore, shaking his head. "How many times is it now?" The old man held out his hands, raised his eyebrows and smiled sheepishly.

- Anna Birch

Miron
Adam Niklewicz



Resonance
Aleksandar Eftimovsk

The Expectant Handmaid

after "Arrival" by William Carlos Williams

And still she stoops somehow,
finds herself gathering pieces of
kindling
in the quiet forest—
smells the cyclamen
unfolding their showy and savage petals
about her feet.
Her sparkling pure soul emanates
fueled from wilds within
like a fire. . . !

-Lara Dolphin

Siren Song

We are the Sirens
of the Siren song
we are the Sirens
where the islands sing
breaking the silence
of the seas' environs
and we know everything
before hereafter and beyond
you need do nothing
and go nowhere wrong
we emulate we are
the flute the lute the voice
stay here and don't go far
no need you have no choice
but to enjoy our singing here
enjoy the flow come near
and join our song and archipelago
we are the Sirens and we always know
not fish nor birds your friends not foe
we chant beguiling and enchanted words
in any language to our visitors
we are the tone the tune the time
the mood the melody and mode
the muses in the music
the lyric in the lyre
we capture memory
we tap desire
memory dismembered
and desire disowned
in all the purity
of sound remembered
and remembered sound

-Duncan Forbes

Ray of Light
Jinglu Zhao





Stuck
Annebelle Young

Aubade Echo

Dawn before me, dawn behind, I try to mirror the quiet light
slipping between black-out curtains without waking wife, child, dozing calico.
Cicadas echo khakied grasshoppers with early autumn wishes.

When ready to ride, I lift the garage door, careful it remains in its rusting track.
I nose my vintage Schwinn, its balding tires, toward the sherbert-colored sky.
Dawn before me, dawn behind, I try to mirror the quiet light.

At the rail trail, I count the wild turkeys following the drainage ditch,
the stands of chamomile, purple aster that slip up from cracked creek bed.
Cicadas echo khakied grasshoppers with early autumn wishes.

A lone heron bisects the sky, September clear, in this drought season;
the wind turbines' blades laze west to east like a VH1 video in slo-mo, muted.
Dawn before me, dawn behind, I try to mirror the quiet light.

Caught between intersecting shadows formed by cell towers,
like steel maquettes waiting for wheat paste, papier mâché,
cicadas echo khakied grasshoppers with early autumn wishes.

At the trail's midpoint, on a bench dedicated to Dawn M. (2001-2020),
I toast the day with my thermos of green tea, honey sweetened.
Dawn before me, dawn behind, I try to mirror the quiet light
as cicadas echo khakied grasshoppers with early autumn wishes.

-C.J. Gironx



Childhood Places
Dănuț-Adrian-Iași Chidon-Frunză



Insistent Whispers #11
Natalie Christensen

I am Haunted by Coastal Towns.

A part of me lingers in a video store whose carpet is stained and smells of dust. They still stock VHS tapes which sit comfortably between double-feature DVDs. On a Tuesday you can get two new releases for seven dollars. We get fish and chips and sit on an ageing floral couch to find that the discs are scratched and put in the wrong cases. The new releases are from three years prior and we've watched them enough to have favourites.

The caravan park is eerily quiet and the gravel road leading to it is marked with deep tyre tracks. My sisters and I race up and down the hill staring out at the ocean until night falls over the bay. The sky is inky and strewn with pale clouds, you can see the stars lying on your back with a sleeping bag underneath your head. You can feel bindis beneath your feet and the cover of mist in the air. The world is different, framed romantically, tinged with the smell of salt.

The echoes are hard and fast. Like poltergeists as opposed to phantoms. They play with my senses and whisper sweet nothings in my sleep. I see them with beckoning hands across the supermarket asking that I return. Somewhere in the abyss I roam the sandhills with a stick in my hand. Somewhere, I am walking barefoot to the fish and chip shop with sunburnt skin. I watch myself through dreams collecting cuttlefish and pippies amongst the rocks. They encourage me to forget the waste.

The tides that reek of undertow and rot. The afternoons that ended in angry phone calls and raised voices. I watched DVD's alone in the tiny caravan loungeroom and sleep restlessly in a bunkbed. I listen to the crash of waves and hope to be undisturbed for the night. It's the solitude that makes coastal towns unique. It comes back to me in the car, driving on an open road with canola fields on either side. There are snapshots of memory that return in fractured pieces. They hide behind trees and in telephone boxes waiting for a coin to drop on the footpath. I camp with my siblings on the verandah until nine o'clock when mum finishes talking with my aunt. There are grey periods which last hours or days or weeks. Nobody speaks and we visit the cemetery in silence. We aren't here to grieve but the setting provides context for the pervasive dark.

The internet brims with nostalgia. I watch countless videos in pastel hues. There's glass tables and green plastic chairs. The pictures of milk-bars are faded and the surf shops wither away with the clapboard beach houses.

The echoes are piercing but I can't go back. I listen to the chanting through the stillness. I hear their voices and feel pity for their loneliness. The past can't exist without me returning to it. I pass through on the drive home from another forgotten dream. We stop and stare out at the ocean. The ice cream melts in our hands and the video store is stripped to make way for a chemist.

-Bonnie Sykes



Lingering Memory
Morgan Bisoux



Marks 25
Berholdus Sibum



Voyager's Echo
Josie

For Michael Collins

The cold dark glass plane before him revealed nothing of the engorged and swelling ocean beyond the hypnotic and subterranean whoosh, crack, and sighs of the waves, and allowed his memory to drift, back, backward, through the undercurrent though not dangerously far, not regressive into unknowable depths and imaginary cullings, but simply to earlier in the day, a few hours before, on the grass with his in-laws watching the sunset. They faced southwest, the breaking and blistering sun spreading mauve and amber and copper like smeared pigment to their right, and the mint and turquoise splitting against the rocks and revealing white foamy innards amongst the kelp to their left. He had been here once before, a few years prior, before he and Patricia were married; her mother and father frequently vacationed in Maine. The sweet salty air was enormously refreshing for a few days, but after a while he felt damp and lethargic.

They sat in a semi-circle on the lawn just above the rocks, he and Patricia and her mother and father, overlooking the long tendril of the Atlantic that reached up the bay.

“There was never any loneliness,” he said, a rote answer to a routine question, that had coarsened and calcified already, in his view. “I took it as an opportunity to reflect. Such isolation on a magnitude literally never experienced by a human being before counted for me as profound solitude, as peaceful introspection, but never loneliness—I felt more connected than ever before, to those two on the moon I was responsible for, of course, but also to the three and a half billion people back home.”

“You were a celebrity,” his father-in-law said.

“I had perhaps a moment of fame, but I have neither the public persona nor the fortitude for celebrity.”

“I mean you *are* a celebrity. Some English long-hairs wrote a song about you.”

“Is that right?”

“Jethro someone. I read it in the paper, I clipped it somewhere in the house.”

“I hadn’t heard that. It’s certainly part of the culture now, not just me.”

“I could hardly make it halfway through that movie with the chimpanzees without falling asleep.”

“But honestly, Michael, you weren’t frightened?” his mother-in-law asked.

“No.”

“I would have been scared to death.”

“Fear occurs when the unexpected, or unknown, happens. When you plan for every possible known contingency, you’re less likely to screw up, and therefore less likely to be

afraid.”

“She doesn’t want a treatise on fear, Michael. She wants to know how you felt,” his wife said.

“I already told them how I felt.”

Against the lapping of the ocean waves, the predictable kinetic force lurching at the periphery of every continent, his mother-in-law said, “Still, it must have been nice to have those radio transmissions you talked about.”

“Sure,” he said.

A seagull screamed and hovered and moved on.

He continued: “The far side was radio silence. About twenty-five, thirty times—a blight rock, two besuited doughboys in the trenches, and an immensity, a void, a chasm unfillable by language.”

“Because of the distance, you mean? The size?”

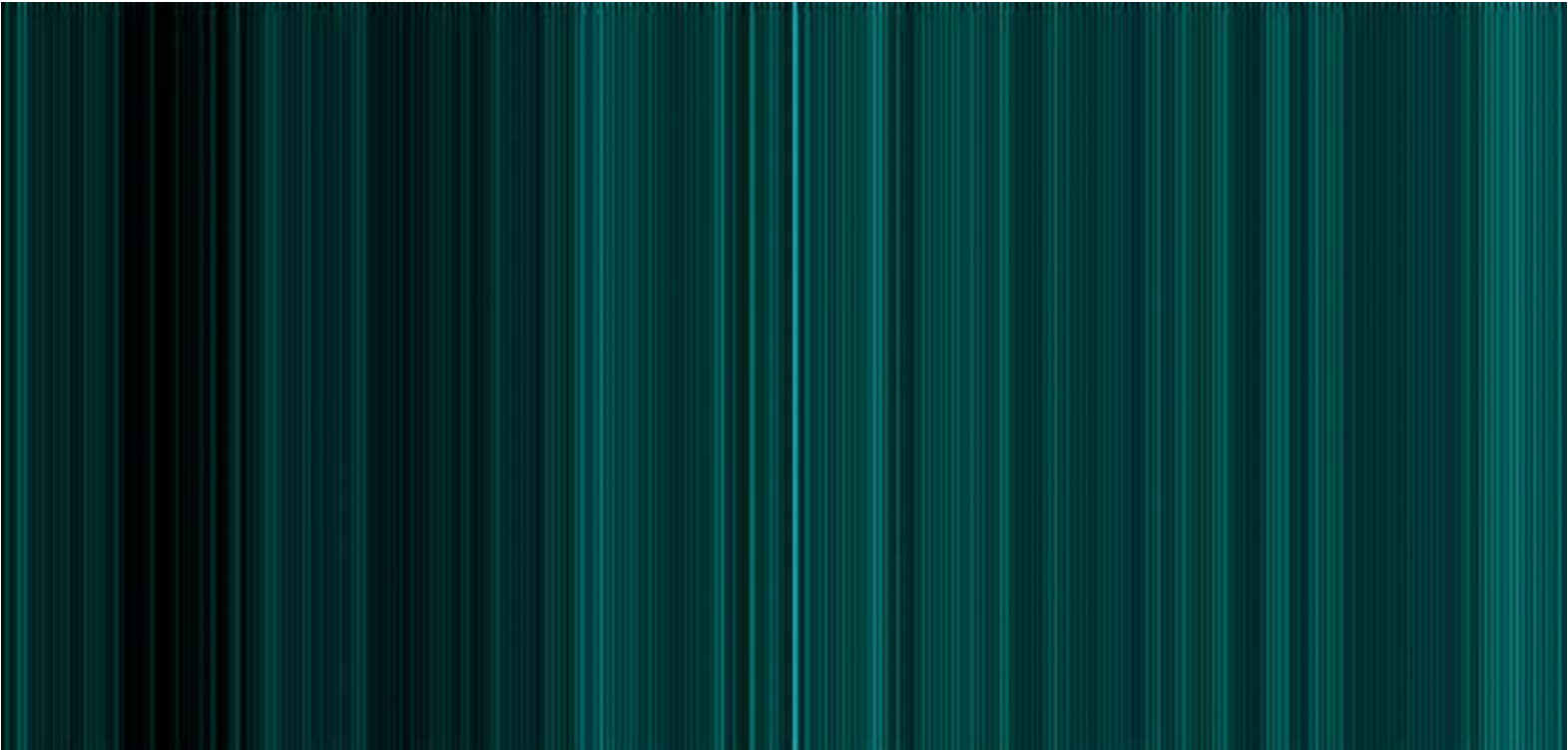
“Because it’s a vacuum.”

“I see.” She nodded in that slow, methodical way that demonstrated she did not, in fact, understand. Not at all.

But perhaps that was the point. In the lunar orbiter, somewhere between the radio-speckled stress of waking hours and the spasm-riddled chaos of sleep, he had imagined a series of warning flashes, inscrutable bursts and sirens, and panicked unintelligible outbursts from mission control, a fantasy so visceral that his tumescent heartrate recorded in the official logs back in Kennedy, and, instead of bringing himself back to real life, to the sane checklist of his training, he allowed himself to float, if only in a briefly controlled hallucination, in a liminal state: his craft was as a stone skipped across a vast ocean with no end and therefore, presumably, no beginning, but instead a dark and multi-dimensional surface of spacetime through which he could ride eddies, whirlpools, solar currents. As the hallucinations fell away, once again revealing a minor craft, a dead rock supporting two celebrity coworkers, and a distant home, he felt like he knew the distance between him and everything he saw, all of the links and ambiguities and such; and yet he knew—*knew!*—simultaneously, that he had no such knowledge, because no such knowledge is possible.

“Just so everyone knows,” Michael Collins said, on the far side of the moon, looking through the cold glass pane, “That rock is not the right size, not at all. I should probably tell someone about that.”

-Caleb Murray



Elmwoods Trace
Ellie Goodliffe



shoot your shadow (your own echo)
Helge Paulsen

Fuck This Poem

I don't want to tell you about anger.

But I went
walking today
and hated
everything
I saw.

Fuck you
sparrow.
Fuck you
earthworms.
Fuck this
wind, fuck
all oceans,
fuck you
rain.

Listen.

Don't
call me
anything,
not even a poet,
I kill language,
i screw up
even the
smallest
stanza.

Don't
come to
my poems
for wisdom.
Come for
failure and
shame.
Come get
a dick-punch,
come cry

your fucking
eyes out like
your only
brother
died.

Or
better
yet, don't
come at all.

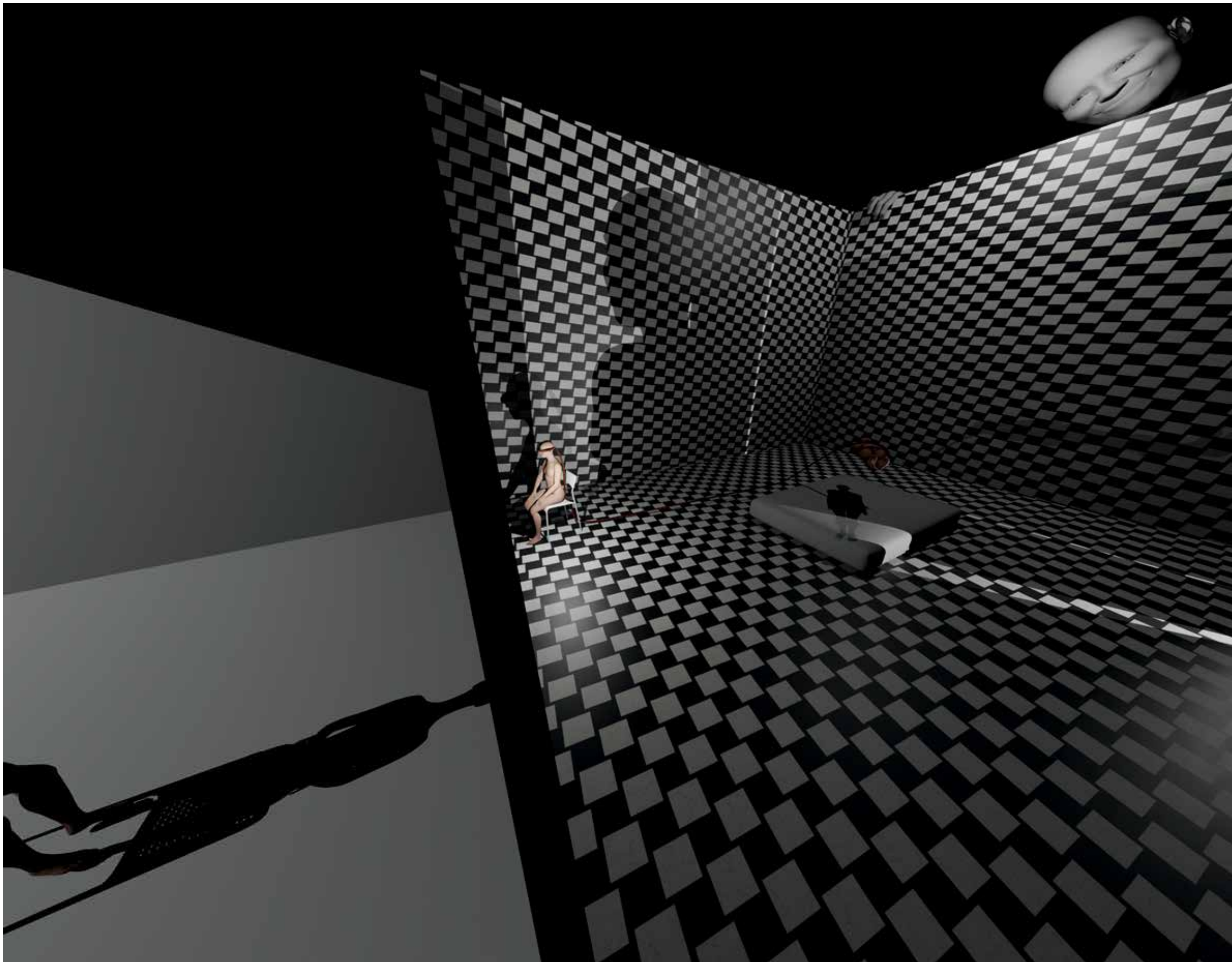
Sometimes
I have to
stop and say
to my poem,
poem, eat
shit. I'd kill
you if I could.
Crucify you,
nail you on my
wall and throw
darts at your
feet.

But
then I'd
have used you
as a metaphor
for Christ,
and you
didn't
earn
that.

Shit.

Look
at me, I'm
one to talk.
I'm fucking lost here,
I can't even
end you
right.

-Andrew Robin



Echo to Narcissus

We've all met men like you.
We'd call you arrogant if self-regard
had not already captured your imagination
and framed itself in mirrors where
you're practising to be an actor – yes, of course.
And in the modern world you could have been
a film star or a rock god or an athlete.
But look at you looking at your own
admirer in the mirror of the water
in transfixed adulation of your image.
You meet your lookalike and fall for it.
Even those struck dumb have an inner life
with an internal monologue of echoes.
I love you too and would go anywhere
you go even with your selfish mega-ego.
I cannot speak unless you say the words.
Yellow flag irises border the narrow river
or rock garden rivulet that lies between us.
You look as if you want to cup
your own reflection's beauty and to drink it.
I am a late pre-Raphaelite schoolgirl belle
with one breast bared to tempt your beardless lips,
the other coyly covered in pink fabric.
I am a water nymph and I can only echo
what you Narcissus say. I am a silent voice
but you become a suicidal flower,
the white narcissus with its red corolla,
a nodding nobody of self-regard.

-Duncan Forbes

Leda Replies

God against girl. But it was not a contest.
How can you push away incoming swan,
The blood beneath his feathers hot with lust,
His charm and early elegance a con?
Engrossed in his self-gratifying feast,
The wings beat with a supernatural force.
Was I possession or was he possessed
And is conception then a moment's truce?
I cannot now remember shape or grip,
The smell of godhead or the feel of feather
But think of him now as a swan-like creep
Who left us in confusion to discover
War and destruction, patriarchs and rape,
Then broken eggs of anarchy forever.

-Duncan Forbes



Echo 2
Maria Sirtzidou

His Image

To see what I've seen: a six year old, one leg inches shorter than the other, finds his legs equal; or a sixty-two year old grandfather whose life-threatening fistula the size of a baseball on the side of his neck, mysteriously dissolves. Now, he keeps on his mantle a set of x-rays documenting the miracle, which he shows to anyone who asks, "what's that?" Miracles happen: that should be my bumper sticker.

Still, at times I'm skeptical. Turn on any religious channel and listen to the cool suave tilt of the tele-evangelists, their faces coated with powder, dyed hair, and mascara for the women to showcase their black streams of tears. It's enough to curdle the stomach. Their programs remind me of a boxing match between health and sickness. On stage the foes are cancer, bursitis, arthritis, any malady. Even some kid who's flunking algebra. The tele-evangelists understand something we mainline ministers have forgotten—a lot of suffering needs to be relieved.

I paid for two lines in the local paper advertising our healing service. Three people came the first week, parishioners in their seventies, bored by life, disabled by grief, too much time on their hands. I placed a dollop of holy oil on their foreheads. It was so unremarkable I could have been running a cash register at Wal-Mart. To top it off, Mrs. Myers asked me if I had heard the rumor about Ms. Thomas, caught in the bathroom at an interstate truck stop with our Mayor. I ushered her out, two fingers pinching her bony elbow. The next week the service picked up.

They came from a halfway house across the street, a nondescript brick dwelling with half moons on the shutters, the last house on a shady cul-de-sac. Nothing to give the home away other than a state sanctioned handicap rail that split the yard in two. The house was part of the current zeitgeist to mainstream the mentally disabled, to help them swim once again in the current of society. But most were dog paddling, just trying to stay afloat. They flocked together on the back row. Twelve visitors in all, an auspicious number, twelve disciples, twelve tribes of Israel, etc.

These were the behaved ones, having earned enough points for a day trip. Though the mannerisms of a few gave me pause, I knew the tongue thrusts, bobbing heads and rocking torsos had more to do with the medicine they took than their illnesses. When it came time for me to administer oil at the altar, none of their group came forward. Finally a woman who had a shaved head asked, "Do you serve food here?" She had gotten us confused with the kitchen at St. Michael's. The aide quickly shushed her. They all stood to leave when I blurted out, "Wait a minute. I have something to give you."

I can't ever tell when God is going to appear. My just being here as an inner-city priest was something of a miracle. It was the last job I expected at this point in my life. I once owned one of the most profitable auto parts chains in the southeast. Any make, any model—I could get its parts. An axle bearing for a 1966 Land Rover in the Congo? No problem. I had a thirty thousand-foot storehouse on the outskirts of town, a worldwide customer base; where in some places to get a part overnight meant the difference between life and death.

One day a man showed up at the warehouse. He struggled with his English. He sounded Russian. My gut told me something wasn't right. But the ways of evil are as mysterious as the ways of God.

"I could use a favor," he said, he had wrists like a ballerina. "And time is of the

essence." He had a truck parked in storage. A bread truck. The kind of bread that Dana, the children and I ate everyday. The truck was loaded with cocaine.

What astonishes me to this day is how Mr. Y trusted me. Suppose I had called the police? What did he see in me? How did he know I needed cash? I'd made a few bad business decisions. Trusted a couple of partners when I shouldn't have, forcing me to borrow money from the street.

He needed a favor. Again he repeated. "Time is of the essence." I shipped his drugs, hiding the bundles in quarterpanels, shafts, crankcases, radiators, fuel tanks. For my part I received two hundred thousand dollars in an offshore account. I was skeptical but when it finally got to the point of transferring some of the funds through a New York accounting firm the money was there. I was delirious until the investigation.

Mr. Y's cartel had been infiltrated by the DEA. They grilled me for three hours but I refused to break. I had used no employees, hiding the bundles myself. But the terror of exposure—jail, losing my wife and children, the public humiliation: I lost weight. I couldn't sleep. The fear of arrest tormented me. The thing about these investigations is the authorities never tell you when they are over. Ultimately, I gave away nearly ninety percent of the funds to charity. Mr. Y's name was mentioned briefly on the news: he had been shot and killed.

I knew Mr. Y was the only one who could finger me. Had he done so before he died? Like Poe's telltale heart—my own misdeeds beat louder and louder. I feared Mr. Y's associates, but I feared the local DA even more. And then my mental health collapsed.

If there is a hell, it would be a state sponsored psyche ward. The mural prints, the punctilious nurses, the doctors in button down coats and Disney-themed ties, the Muzak—none of it camouflages the manifestations of neurotransmitters gone awry. I took the pills. I sat in on the groups. I lasted as long as my insurance would allow and in the end I got better. I felt that I had served my penance. I no longer needed to punish myself. I was forgiven and I prayed every night that no one was going to come after me.

I went to seminary. Dana chose not to accompany me. My Bishop remained supportive. He said, "Some decisions are supposed to cost us our relationships. That's the price of following the Gospel." Fortunately our children were in college, scattered across the country. After seminary when the Bishop assigned me to St. Emmanuel, an inner-city parish in a high crime district, I jumped at the chance.

*

I watched five regulars walk to the altar for the laying on of hands, I waited for the halfway house residents on the back row but they had not come for healing. They had come to be fed. From the reserve sacrament I retrieved eight pieces. I broke the bread. A black man from the group, tall, angular, his cheeks scarred, his mouth stuck in a rictus, held out his shaking hand. I handed him a pinch of bread—the body of Christ; he swallowed, licking his lips. "Not bad."

He kneeled and I placed my hands on his head. He belched—onions. I detected disappointment in the crowd, the mouths bowled over, enough wrinkles one could last a lifetime tracing all the curves. Eventually they all edged forward, even the aide. I fed them the Host and laid my hands on them. A few thanked me. The aide got tears in her eyes.

Mental illness is pain, no way to deny that. But like the saints of old who sat upon piles of rocks in the wilderness and ate cactus for breakfast—suffering transformed them. Crucify the self and His Image steps forth. I was able to provide those eight individuals a consolation. And it mattered. If you’ve ever been stuck in a psyche ward, then you know what I mean.

Now they don’t come often but when they do, I listen. I like to keep things simple. The sacred is all around us—and the way to cultivate the sacred is to honor all lives. the good, the bad, the ugly, especially the ugly. No life should be discarded, for we’re all pieces of a puzzle which given time and a little grace fit together to form the fleeting face of God. Even that stranger entering from a side door, dressed all in black, hands hidden in the topcoat pockets, and waiting for the church to disperse.

-Duke Stewart



Goddess Bastet
Francesca Dei



white man's catcall

say something chinese to me girl,
a white man groans into the road

always two steps ahead
of my seoul-less tongue

one foot
somewhere in the flute of my lungs

i exhaust the memory
until i boil alive.

two feet:
i exhale the dusty busan curses

my grandmother fed me secondhand.
a bitch does not pickle her breath,

spit brine at the homeless man
but a gashina would

she would harvest a smoking bite,
something sexy that slurs

something korean girls know
and american girls don't

sex-she she is

and what if,
he knows, but

what if,
i stomp myself

into his american
sidewalk.

Instinct
Francesca Dei

-Chloe Yeo

Crayolaese

Long before the poetry of wine-tasting echoed
in deep chalk cathedrals the Romans called crayères
ekphrastic talents turned to synaesthetics;
long before the romance of distillery-speak spoke
of oaky fumes whispering notes of earth and smoke;
long before the mellifluous rhetoric of menu-seduction
shaved truffles and deconstructed raspberry reduction
—depicted by ingenious palettes of the palate;
long before the lyrics of Linnaean labels
not to mention prolix paeans of the pulpit
in Greek, Sanskrit, and High Church Latin babble ...
at least for me, there was Crayolaese.

Crayolaese, the poetry of kids at their ease
teasing out the ties between what is said and seen
coloring books propped on bony knees
(scraped, bruised, scabby from climbing trees)
immersed in quiet meditative focus
keeping kid blushes between the lines
but swinging for the fences every time
now and then going to the bullpen of Crayola 96:
for a choir of pinch-switchhitters
a dugout of left and right-handed relievers
a rainbow of familiar or exotic names
called in to win the unwinnable game,
to master the magic of verbal hocus-pocus.

How to choose just the right color,
another subtle tint like none other?
Forget about all the throwaway hues
mere reds, mere yellows, mere sky blues,
too easy, too literal, too lateral, too true.
Pass over the cliches and dead metaphors too
like Dandelion, Thistle, Straw, and Maize
retire them into the unevocative haze.
Give us instead the next generation of grays
spanking new metaphysical conceits,
subtleties, like when we were learning to shade
or mix or bear down hard for a wax impasto.

Where have all the colors I remember gone
—victims of history like Prussian Blue
as extinct as its namesake in 1952
outfitted now in Midnight, less bellicose mufti
—or Flesh (retired for good reason in 1962
and discreetly rebranded more PC as Peach)?
What of those Mauvelous puns, such psychedelic cues
—Unmellow Yellow, Banana Mania,
Neon Carrot and (bad trip) Screamin Green,
Purple Pizzazz and Razzle Dazzle Rose—
each with its own distinctive aroma
like the warm girls we sat behind in class—
tropes of hope and despair that painted the world
for us, not just in pigments of our imagination
but bright syllabics too, a world beyond pranks
homework, and puppy love, filling in the blanks
our parents drew for us in outline for us to augment,
along with a gift for some holiday or birthday,
a box of pastels, a dictionary, a coloring book,
or best of all, empty pages, a whole ream,
chalk-white color of all colors,
the world, freedom, the void,
the word.

-Richard Collins

VIDEO AND SOUND

Echoes: A Minimalist Dialogue
Lize Briel

Echoes: A Minimalist Dialogue (2024) by Lize Briel is a two-movement orchestral composition that integrates the uHadi (a bow instrument from Southern Africa) not as a soloist but as part of the orchestration. Drawing on minimalist structures and rhythmic repetition, thematic material is echoed across changing instrumentations. The first movement's introspection contrasts with the second's bold, chordal climax. Performed by the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, featuring Dr Ncebakazi Mnukwana on uHadi. *Echoes* won the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra Composer's Competition in 2024, making Briel the first woman composer to win a South African composition prize.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7CNirHIAN4>



From This Distance
Sarah Misselbrook

The artist collected words and phrases over eight months, reflecting on her practice in the isolated environment of La Vall during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Misselbrook then invited 24 other people to record themselves saying these words and send them digitally from around the world. These contributions were then edited to form a sound collage accompanied by images of the River Ebro and ants from La Vall, exploring the question: 'What can I do from this distance to change, to dissent?' In the work, the artist 'embodies all roles: art, artist, and audience,' and reflects on decay and fragility, being 'part of a whole, a hole in part.'



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkfVFfo6vJE>



Nduduzo Makhathini And The Cure Collective Video Art
Paul Khahliso Matela Zisiwe

I have witnessed a serene evolution that embraced spirituality in all its sonic metaphors that linger to soften even the staunch hearts of those who denigrate African virtuosity. The IKHAMBI sessions at The Pan African Station in 2017 struck a chord in my soul that left me bereft of breath. Music that brings the mystical into the suspended space of memory, perfectly crafted yet imperfectly translated through nuanced flaws, broken scales irregular in form, with proportions that lend an uncanny effect of improvisation and mishaps. Listening to Nduduzo's Ikhambi felt akin to a reawakening, whence my inner contemplation is invaded by a foreign entity pent on inducing visions and memories buried with a thousand murdered ancestors. Ikhambi left me amused by its eccentricity which roused my personal dissonance of feelings suspended between two worlds, furthered through and located in the disorienting headspace between the two, hence I found myself interpreting its essence through video art.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGDBZ8eAr6M>



Wanna Talk?
Nadja Elipda Murze

Streets, signs, doors, walls, drawings and symbols on them: they change everyday. What do they tell us now? This poetic visual essay urges the viewers to construct new meanings from fragments of places, traces of other meanings, merging them into new stories about what they were or... could be. The film was "distributed" through placing provocative QR-codes all around the globe, in the most unspeakable places: from toilets to galleries. It encourages audiences to encounter films "in the wild", beyond the conventional cinema constraints. "Wanna talk" is an attempt to visualize this dialogue between the lost and the present to create... meaning. Always in flux, never fixed... never self-contained...



<https://vimeo.com/1066533025?fl=pl&fe=sh>



Amara: Binary Desira

Binary is the first chapter of *Amara*, a five-video cycle loosely inspired by *The Indifferent Ones* by Alberto Moravia. The project develops as a symbolic narrative rooted in a conflicted, coercive relationship between mother and daughter. As an opening chapter, *Binary* establishes the logic of control and mutilation. The cutting of hair, the bandaged face, and the distorted reproduction of the daughter's features on gauze become visual metaphors of maternal domination. Rather than describing events, the video inhabits the daughter's unconscious space, translating psychological oppression into fragmented gestures and a body shaped by external authority.



<https://youtu.be/j5i8HfCE464?si=ml5VyvUvskEDKPe9>

Amara: Heaven Desira

Heaven is the second chapter of *Amara* and represents a moment of awakening. Here, the daughter begins to recognize her own beauty as a potential weapon. In the video, she attempts to reattach the hair previously taken from her by her mother, using it to reconstruct her face. The gesture is unstable and incomplete, yet intentional: an act of reclaiming what was denied. Beauty shifts from passive attribute to strategic awareness. *Heaven* marks a fragile turning point, an emergence of agency that does not resolve the conflict, but introduces vision, doubt, and the possibility of reversal within an inherited structure of control.



<https://youtu.be/BeRBJedPI8E?si=c43QHcxVBhMRkchD>

Amara: Sadness is My Lover Desira

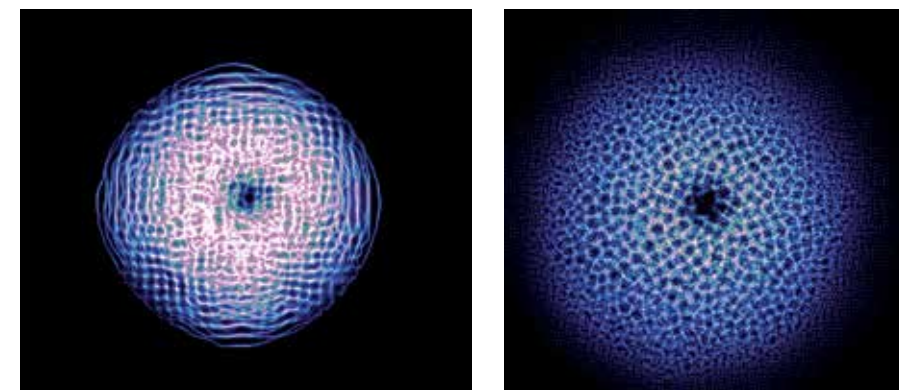
Sadness is My Lover is the third chapter of *Amara* and the narrative's rupture. Having understood beauty as a form of power, the daughter chooses to weaponize her own body by offering it to the mother's lover in an attempt to destroy the mother herself. This act becomes a tragic paradox. In seeking liberation through transgression, she turns violence inward, collapsing desire, rebellion, and self-destruction into a single gesture. The video stages this moment as psychological implosion rather than spectacle, revealing how internalized coercion can transform resistance into self-inflicted harm.



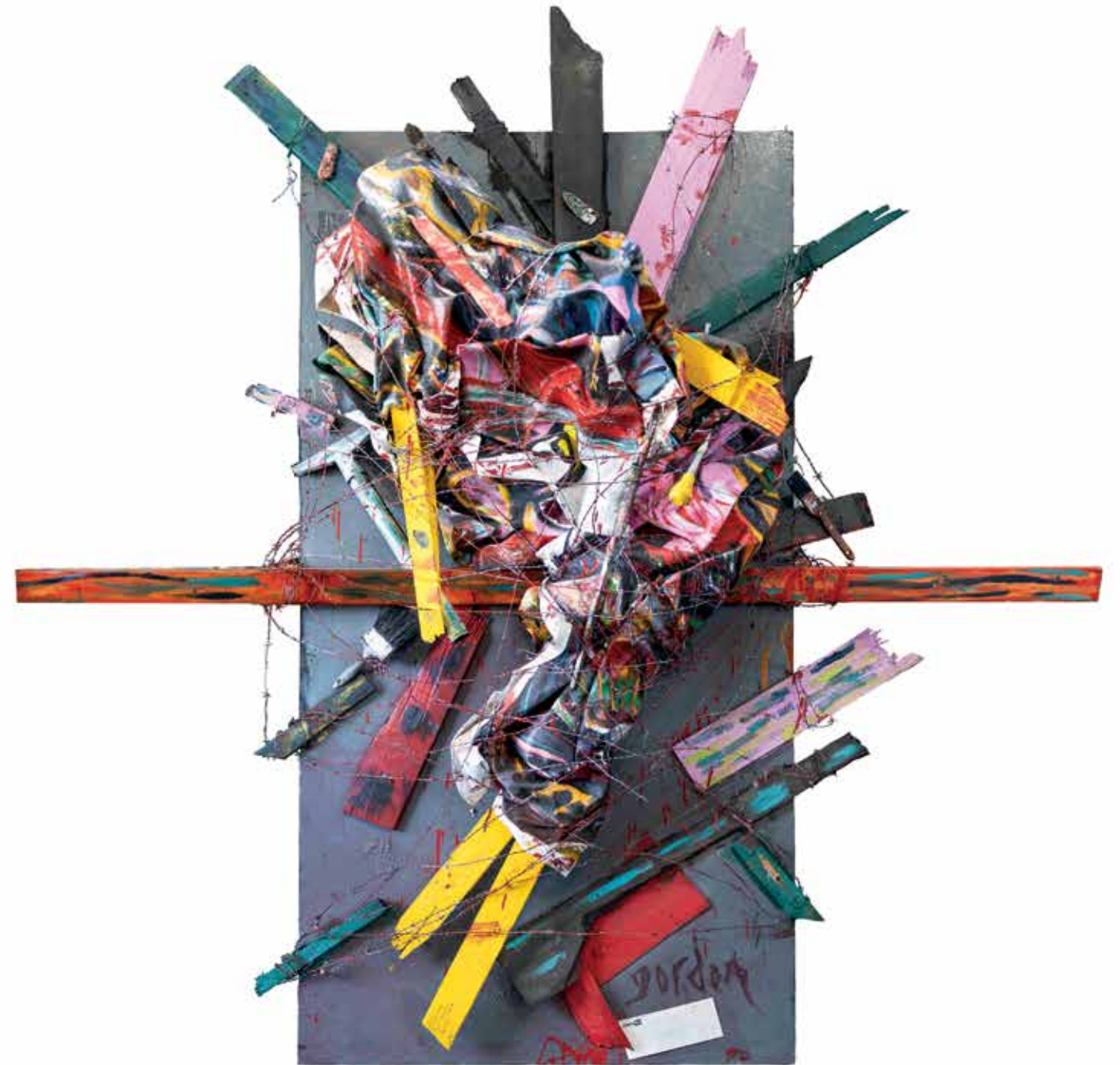
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKJHmGdINRQ>

Echoes Ataman Girişken

This video work explores the poetic intersection of biological memory and digital pattern. Generated through real-time systems, light and algorithmic motion form a cosmic-cellular space that vibrates between micro and macro scales. Waves, particles and organic geometries emerge and dissolve like breathing organisms or deep-space phenomena. The piece invites viewers into a meditative field where technology behaves like nature, fluid and evolving and perception becomes a site of reflection and presence.



<https://youtu.be/nTMPvPh4KxU?si=R0l-VInHroxBq4Wx>



LEFT *Pause, Kneel, Reflect*
 Sarah Misselbrook
 RIGHT *She Strayed from the Herd*
 Gordon Massman

Visiting Burnt Norton

We turned right at Aston Subedge and travelled up the hill to the top of the Cotswold escarpment. Opposite the sign to Hidcote, there was a discreet board with the familiar words BURNT NORTON painted on it. The long drive took us past a farm and over a cattle grid into parkland with mature trees and grasses dry from a hot summer and unusually little rainfall. As we drew near the house itself, we were directed to park the car on the hardened ground beside the drive. It was Saturday, 12 July, of this year and we were in good time for a cup of tea at 4 o'clock in the marquee.

The house, garden and estate at Burnt Norton are privately owned by Lord Harrowby and have been in the family for years. Situated near Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire, Burnt Norton is about 20 miles drive away from where we live and is usually closed to the public. However, for this one Saturday afternoon and only from 4 to 8 pm, the garden was open to a group of paying guests in support of the Campaign to Preserve Rural England. The name and setting of Burnt Norton are of course well known to readers of poetry as the first of the *Four Quartets*. T.S.Eliot published 'Burnt Norton' in 1936 as a single poem in his *Collected Poems (1909 – 1935)* before the full sequence of four poems was conceived.

It seems that in autumn 1935, Eliot stayed in Chipping Campden with relatives of Emily Hale and that they both walked along a footpath to the Burnt Norton estate. There, presumably as trespassers, they saw the 'dry concrete' pool alluded to so evocatively in Section I of the poem which was read aloud to us, *in situ* as it were.

What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden.

With hindsight, and 'Only in a world of speculation', I wonder whether Eliot was perhaps ancestor-hunting (as in 'East Coker') and the intensity of memory and desire are registered in his hermetic language. The speaker is conscious of the reciprocal effects in the reader or listener:

My words echo
Thus, in your mind.

That word 'echo' hovering at a line-ending suggests the associative powers of language in poetry. Footsteps and words set up ideas and memories and offer a path or paths for us to follow, though uncertainly.

But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.

The very words 'echo' and 'echoes' become images and metaphors for the layers of memory speaking from one mind to itself, to another or to both:

Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner.

With the bird and its rapid speech, we seem to be entering a younger world but what or who are we meant to find there? The repeated imperative 'find them' seems to refer to 'other echoes' but how can you find an echo?

Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.

By these words, we seem to be led back among the world or garden of early memories, perhaps of childhood, and 'they' seem to become ghostly or guardian presences, ancestral perhaps or parental, 'I do not know', and they are palpably felt rather than seen:

There they were, dignified, invisible,
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
And the bird called, in response to
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,

What is that 'unheard music', one asks, 'hidden in the shrubbery' but an emotion and state of mind close to what – an epiphany? Eliot's words echo thus in your mind and, like hidden music, create an equivalent sensory response in the reader or hearer.

And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.

Is it that generations of onlookers meet here over time in looking at the rose-garden which seems to have gained some mystical importance and symbolic significance in the mind of the writer and now reader?

There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
To look down into the drained pool.

And that 'drained pool' or its local equivalent is where we were led to on this hot July Saturday afternoon. Apparently, it was designed as a swimming pool but the concrete cracked and it lost its water long before the 1930s.

Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged

For Eliot and by extension us, the dry pool then becomes the paradoxical source of a watery and mystic vision almost of oriental enlightenment in momentary and mysterious significance:

And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.

The lotos (spelt thus) is both the sacred flower of eastern mystics and the intoxicant of Greek myth. In this indirect way, Eliot uses language and cultural symbols to evoke potent if

inexplicable echoes in the mind.

With its rich and complex pattern of allusions, Eliot's poetry is of course noted for its quotations from and echoes of earlier authors and poets. As he once said, 'Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal.' And the musical qualities of the *Four Quartets* mean that the poems echo one another in themes, motifs and variations, often explored by Eliot scholars.

We learnt much else that afternoon on our first and only visit to Burnt Norton, the place. In a sense we were, like others there, literary pilgrims to a site which previously had only been imagined by us through the powers of Eliot's poetry in the echoing chambers of our minds. Seeing the literal source and location of 'an inspiration' can both add to and detract from the literary idea of the place, locating it in space but detaching it from what Eliot called 'the auditory imagination'. It is comparable to seeing the graphic film of a fiction which in reading we have inevitably imagined otherwise.

We also learnt that the old Elizabethan manor house on the site was to have been replaced by a baroque mansion like a smaller Blenheim Palace but the new house, through an unfortunate accident, was burnt along with its owner in 1741. The intensity of the fire so scorched the north side of Norton Manor that its wall had to be reinforced by a brick facing, later covered in part by a magnolia grandiflora. The surviving old manor house therefore became known as Burnt Norton. And that was the place whose garden was so significantly visited by Emily Hale and T.S.Eliot.

Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.
Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

And with that beginning of the poem we might end. However, there are significant and revealing comments made much later by both Emily Hale and T.S.Eliot and only made public recently.

In 2020, over fifty years after their deaths, further fascinating information came to light about the relationship between Emily Hale and Tom Eliot. In 1956 she deposited at Princeton University Library 1,131 letters from him to her. In her statement about the relationship which is now accessible online, she wrote:

'On one of his visits, we walked to nearby 'Burnt Norton' – the ruins of an 18th century house and garden. 'Burnt Norton', as Tom always said, was his 'love poem' for me.'

Emily Hale goes on to say:

'We were congenial in so many of our interests, our reactions, and emotionally responsive to each other's needs; the happiness, the quiet deep bonds between us made our lives very rich, and the more because we kept the relationship on as honorable, to be respected plane, as we could.'

T.S.Eliot's 1960 statement does not echo her understanding of the relationship and instead largely repudiates it. In his words, it 'therefore seems necessary to place on record my own

picture of the background of this correspondence, and my present attitude towards it.'

For such a private man and esoteric poet, Eliot makes some highly revealing remarks about his aversion to autobiography in his own case.

'It is painful for me to have to write the following lines. I cannot conceive of writing my autobiography. It seems to me that those who can do so are those who have led purely public and exterior lives or those who can conceal from themselves what they would prefer not to know about themselves – there may be a few persons who can write about themselves because they are truly blameless and innocent.'

One wonders whether any individual has led a 'purely public and exterior life'. Eliot here seems to be unconsciously echoing Orwell's view that 'Autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful. A man who gives a good account of himself is probably lying, since any life when viewed from the inside is simply a series of defeats.'

Eliot writes:

'In my experience, there is much for which one cannot find words even in the confessional; much which springs from weakness, irresolution and timidity, from petty self-centredness rather than from an inclination towards evil or cruelty, from error rather than ill-nature. I shall be as brief as I can.'

He says that he 'fell in love with Emily Hale in 1912' and before he left for 'England in 1914' he 'told her that I was in love with her.' ... However, and I omit much in that one ellipsis, 'Upon the death of Vivienne [his wife] in the winter of 1947, I suddenly realized that I was not in love with Emily Hale. Gradually I came to see that I had been in love only with a memory, with the memory of the experience of having been in love with her in my youth.'

'From 1947 on, I realized more and more how little Emily Hale and I had in common. I had already observed that she was not a lover of poetry, certainly that she was not much interested in *my* poetry; I had already been worried by what seemed to me evidence of insensitiveness and bad taste. It may be too harsh, to think that what she liked was my reputation rather than my work.'

Both statements are well worth reading in full for the light they shed on both Eliot and Emily and their divergent views of their relationship. The annotated letters are also published in full online. Letter writing is (or was) usually a reciprocal art and not one-sided like a diary or journal and, when there is a genuine correspondence, intimate echoes and intricate exchanges are set up over time even over long distances. However, we now have only one respondent and no answering reciprocity. On his express instructions, Emily Hale's letters to T.S. Eliot in his possession were all destroyed in a 'coal-burning furnace' in a London flat. Just twenty-six still exist.

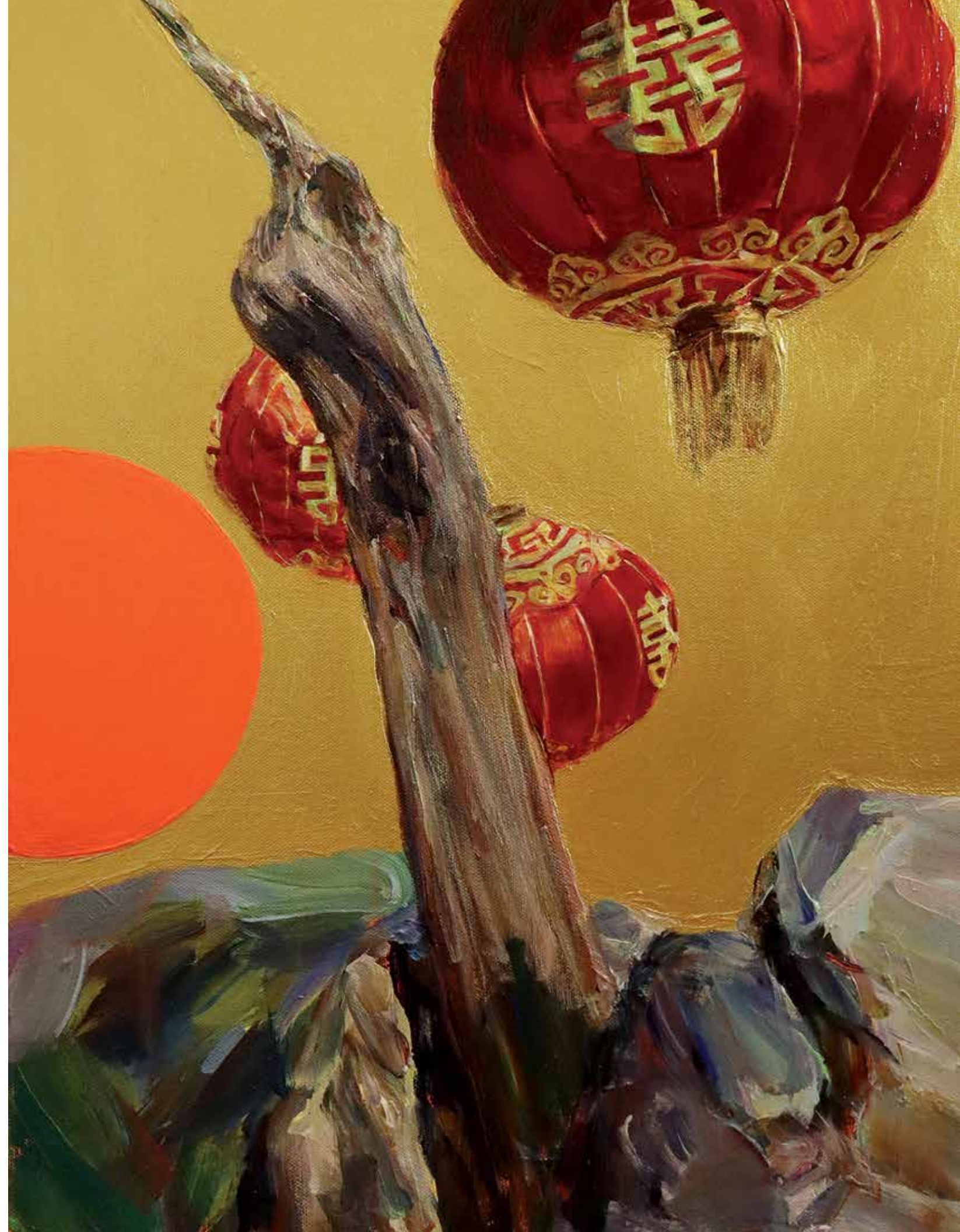
In 1938, Eliot had asked John Hayward to be his literary executor, asking him to destroy 'any letters at all of any intimacy to anybody'. 'In fact,' he added, 'I have a mania for posthumous privacy.' On his side at least, letters were burnt and further possible revelations cremated. As the poem says,

human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.

-Duncan Forbes



Poetry of the ordinary
Ayanava Sil



Hail to the tree
Hoho Kuo

Blood-Curdling Scream in the Swiss-Italian Alps

Near Raron, Switzerland, c. 1998

@Osopeluche and I were enjoying a car trip from Madrid to Barcelona to Provence to the French Alps to the Swiss Alps to the Italian Alps to Milano to the Italian Riviera to the French Riviera and back to Barcelona and then Madrid again.

We saw a French cover band at a town fair singing a Donna Summer oldie (“She work hawd foe zee moenee, so hawd foe zee moenee...”). We saw the grave of Ranier Wilke at a small church where the minerals in the holy water had turned the stone of the stoup green, and in a creek nearby, you could find the stones made of the minerals that make the holy water green. We followed the stations of the cross that were built along a switchback trail leading steeply upward to the white-capped heavens, which also made me think of Thomas Mann. We push-walked a pair of expensive rented bikes up part of the mountain, and then rode the brakes down again. We took an expensive tram to an expensive observation deck where there was also an expensive hotel. We ate an expensive lunch, and then I left @osopeluche at the table and wandered out beyond the limits of the observation area to see how close to the edge of the mountain I could get for free.

Silvery clouds were beginning to part. The Matterhorn (or similar horn) began to show its terrifying glory against a patch of impeccable blue. From popular American culture, I somehow associated the word “alps” with the word “scream.” I had the vague notion that screaming is something one did when they visited the alps. Screaming also had something to do with avalanches.

As if a scream could start an avalanche. I doubted that, but it seemed perfectly appropriate to try it anyway. There was hardly anyone else around because the sunlight was dimming, and the last tram was going back down the mountain soon. I would not be required to pay any extra for this important opportunity. And while, even to me at the time, these did not really seem like good explanations or excuses for what I was about to do, I nevertheless felt an imminent behavioral phenomenon welling up inside me.

The level of savagery of my scream exceeded even the one I’d hurled at Mary Tyler Moore in West Hollywood. It exceeded the loud moan of dread that had been forced out when I jumped off the cliff with @pensador. It was a scream designed (by me?) to trigger an ecological catastrophe.

Or I was just wondering if I’d be able to hear my echo. Echoes were also associated with “alps” in the North American world view.

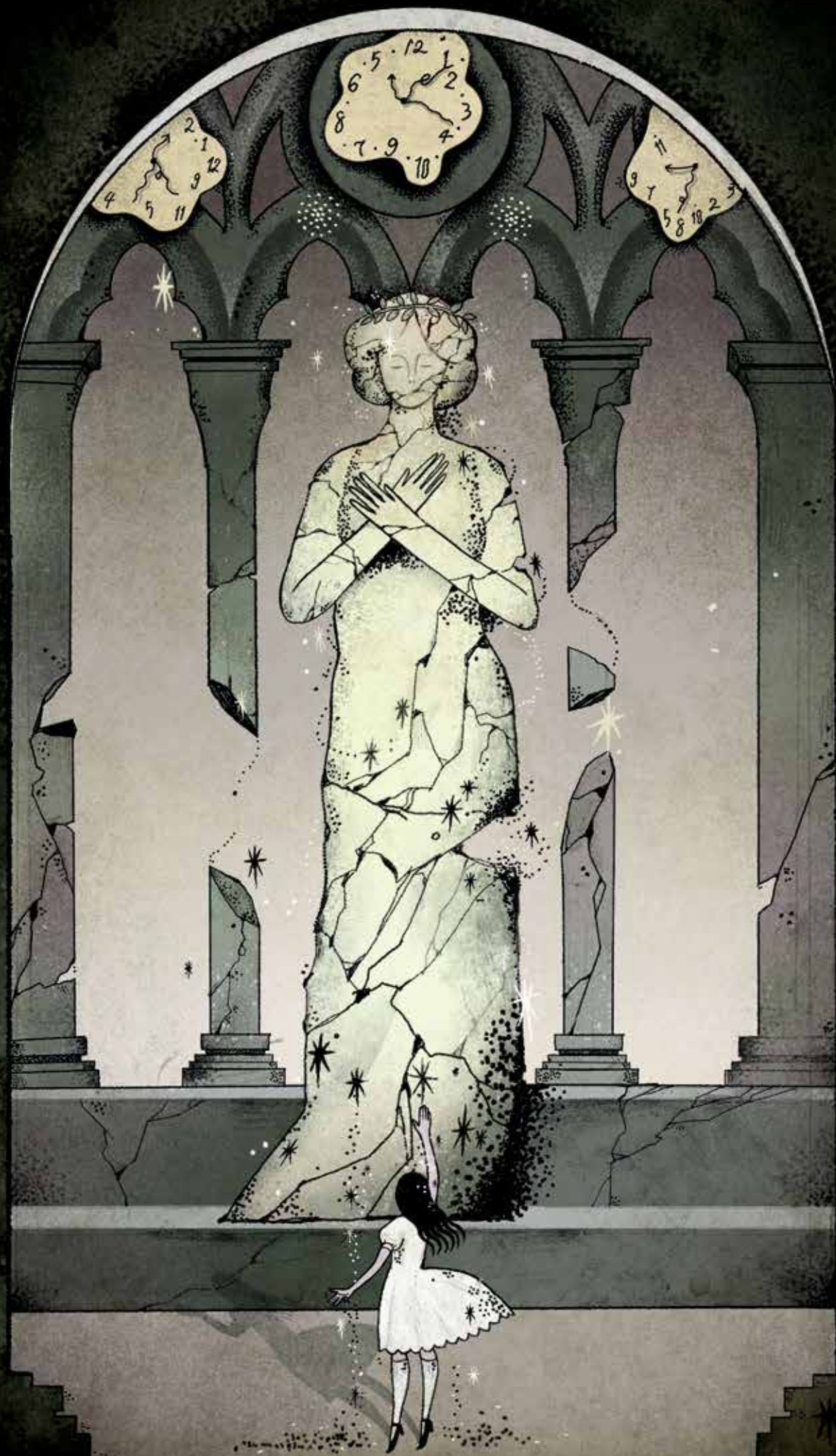
After recovering from the shock of my own scream, which did seem to charge the atmosphere in my immediate vicinity—particles of sunlit dust or plant sperm in the air seemed to change directions momentarily—I stood and watched and listened.

But this moment was interrupted by the figure of a foreboding French grandmother

now standing further up the hill toward the lodge. She stood there in huge, glamorous sunglasses, very much like Princess Grace, somehow still able to glare at me. Her hair was piled and netted atop her head with an added scarf for good measure. Her cloth coat and fur collar were sensible, and her gloved hands were partially buried in woolen pockets. Her stern and accusatory expression said everything it needed to say about American “alps” kitsch.

We missed the last tram down. There was no room for any price at the expensive inn. The desk clerk said there may still be time to hike back down before it got completely dark—if we hurried. The shadow of the Matterhorn (or similar) felt like a slow-mo avalanche descending behind us. We jogged half out of breath down the wide, steep, empty trails and cut across the grassy slopes on the switchbacks, imagining what it would be like to be lost there in the dark, alone with nature and silence and one another, so we ran even faster, and at our heels: the steady, slouching march of time and history.

-Ayre Fromme-Diaz



LEFT She stood beyond time RIGHT The Physics of Almost
Jiaqi Liu



Magno-Lalia

Glossolalia (n): The phenomenon of speaking in tongues, i.e., an otherworldly language intrinsically understood by a blessed few.

Magnolia (n): A floral tree that remains evergreen when it grows in the South.

Fields I’ve never touched remind me so much of home;
I can see yesterday’s face in their yellow grasses, like through a clean window.

This countryside does not belong to me, but I know it well. She is speaking in familiar tongues, a language I understand wherever I go, one that ponytails behind me, gathering suchlike things and binding them.

I hear this spirit-speak babbled
by roadside fruit stands withstanding June’s rhythmic swelter
and from the throats of the impish white cattle birds within drooping fences.

It sounds just the same as it did when I was coming up, when it came from my grandmother over her bucket of snap peas, pure drawl cutting through the thick damp air, becoming like a hymn along and along.

I hear it from the Magnolia tree that grows on the busy corner by the townhouse,
the place where I am a migratory bird whose song never changes;
Her leaves cover the parking pavement, her sweetclean smell lifts to my window.
Magnolia, you know, speaks in familiar tongues: every word the opening of a folktale,
every syllable grandiflora like my family tree, over-blooming with massive histories.

-Erin Weeks

Dust to Dust
Sarah Misselbrook



26

Sundays Are Longer

Waking

The dog wakes before the alarm, as he always does. Usually, by this time, they are outside. He runs beside his master through dim streets, past runners coming from the other direction. Each carries its own brief scent — grass, soap, sometimes dread — passing over him like a change in weather. Some bring dogs, and their calls echo off the road in short, nervous bursts. The air is alive then, full of sweat and asphalt and moving feet.

But today the sun is already up, and they are still inside. The alarm rings, stops, and rings again, the silence between each one long enough for him to start hoping. His master doesn't move. The man lies still on the couch where he celebrated with his friends the night before, turning only to shout a word that makes the sound stop briefly. It's one of those days again.

Sunlight floods the apartment, pale and without warmth. It passes through the tall windows along the balcony and settles over everything — the living room, the kitchen, the dining space — without finding anything soft to rest on. The walls are white, the corners sharp. Paintings line the far wall, large and tasteful, the kind chosen for rooms that need color but not meaning.

Forty stories below, the city hums faintly, a low electric sound that matches the air-conditioner's steady whir. A breeze slips in through the balcony door, held open by a folded piece of cardboard. It moves through the room like something half-alive, carrying the smell of the world outside and the faint sourness of the one within.

Boxes still stand by the wall — the same ones from when they moved in six months ago. The tape on them has lifted, curling away like old skin. A thin silver cutter rests on top of one, exactly where it was left. The dog remembers the sound it made when his master sliced a box open. *Shhhhh* — a dry rasp of cardboard fibers surrendering one by one. He didn't like that sound.

He looks at the couch. His master is still there, eyes open and unmoving, fixed on the ceiling. The bed in the next room remains pristine. The dog lies on the floor beside the couch, waiting silently.

The air is thick with old oil, damp food, something sweet beginning to rot. The apartment is open, no walls to hold the odor back; it wafts through everything, slow and sure, until the whole space smells the same.

The dog looks towards the door where his collar hangs — the letters *E S A* pressed into the metal tag. Below it his favorite toy, a bright green ball his master hides for him to find while he's shut in another room. He waits for his master to say the word *leash*. Nothing. He moves closer and presses his nose to the man's cheek. The skin is warm and the smell sour. His master flinches and turns toward the backrest of the couch.

Something changes in the air — a taste, a weight. The dog steps back, nails clicking on the cold gray tiles. One leg lifts off the ground. The hair along his spine rises; his tail folds tight. A coldness under his skin, his stomach twisting. He knows this feeling.

There — on the man's back.

A familiar shape.

A dark shape unnaturally bent. Half a body, clinging close. It rises and falls when the man breathes, as though feeding on his breath.

Boundless
Lianne Kamp

The dog lowers his head and lets out a sound, deep and soft, not a growl — the kind meant to warn but not wake. The dark shape doesn't move.

His master stirs, groans, and reaches for his phone. As he does, the dark shape leans over his shoulder, as if to see what he's looking at. His thumb moves rhythmically.

Swipe up. Swipe up. Swipe up.

His eyes empty.

Living

A *ding* breaks the stillness. The dog's ears lift, his head tilting. The master picks up his phone.

"Great job on closing the account!!! Couldn't have entrusted it with anyone better. Take a well-deserved break! I hope you're feeling proud of this major accomplishment."

For a moment, he considers responding, but his fingers don't move. The screen dims. He taps on it again and scrolls — pictures, faces, food, news.

After a long pause, he stands, shoulders rounded, the dark weight settled between his shoulder blades. The phone glows in his hand. He keeps swiping, every motion an effort.

On the table lies a small black notebook. He lifts the ribbon in its center; it opens to the last page with words, written a month ago.

"Why do you need to know the answers to the big questions? Why do you need to keep asking what this is all for? Maybe there are no answers. Or maybe they come only when you're older."

When he finishes reading, he shuts the book gently, as if it might bruise. He types a name into the phone and a number appears, but he doesn't make a call. A sigh leaves him, thin and brief.

From the table, he drifts toward the kitchen. Cold air spills from the refrigerator when he opens it. The shelves are full. On the door, photographs: a beach, a birthday, his parents, a row of photo-booth strips.

The dog follows, keeping distance, eyes fixed on the shape clinging to his master's back. He waits for it to release its grip before he attacks.

He's seen the shadow twice before. The first time, it stayed for three days and they didn't leave the apartment at all. He was still a puppy then, small and soft and stupid. The second time, there was blood and the air smelled sharp, like iron. The woman who used to sleep here shouted, cried, and took the master away. The master was gone for a long time and came back alone. The dark shape was smaller then. Now it clings onto his master the way dried mud pulls at his fur — tight, heavy, painful with every move.

The master's stomach growls. With a dull thud, the refrigerator closes, the master taking nothing. He fills only the dog's bowl. Metal clinks on tile. As he bends down, the dog sees a scar along his arm — thickened skin, folded neatly into a line. Healed but remembering.

The phone rings. A woman's voice fills the room, bright and close.

"Mom," he says, putting her on speaker.

The dog knows that voice — the one who fed him when the master was gone. He barks once.

The woman laughs, calls him a good boy. He barks again.

"Anyway, do you want to have dinner with Pop and me tonight?", the woman asks.

"Call you back later to confirm; I can't chat now," the master says. "I'm eating. And you know you can text these short questions, right? Love you."

He ends the call.

The apartment hums again. The dark weight, faint during the call, regains its footing across the man's shoulders.

Rest

Evening slides in unnoticed. The light from outside turns from white to gold to gray.

The master wanders through the apartment, circling. He rinses the plates and bowls in the sink, but doesn't finish the job.

From above, faint thumps of running feet. Children. The ceiling vibrates. He looks up, jaw tightening. "It's Sunday," he says under his breath. Then louder: "Shut the fuck up!" His voice startles the dog, who lifts his head but doesn't bark. After a moment, the noise fades.

He turns to the shelf by the window. A bonsai sits there, perfectly proportioned, its branches shaped by years of careful trimming. But it's dead. The twigs are brittle and hollow, incapable of flexing. The leaves, once green, are brown and curled, clinging only out of habit. He runs his thumb along a branch; it breaks beneath his touch. Still, he waters it carefully until the soil darkens. A faint smell of earth rises and fades.

He steps onto the balcony. The dog pads after him, stopping at the doorframe. Below, cars slide through the streets, tiny and bright. The master leans forward, elbows on the rail, chest a little over the edge. The air lifts the side of his hair, still flattened from sleep. He spits down, watching the pale drop disappear, caught by the wind, carried away.

Back inside, the dog noses through his basket and brings over his toy—soft with bite marks on the surface. He sets it beside the master's foot and rests his chin on the man's knee. Over the master's shoulder, the dark shape wavers, folding in on itself, as if the sight of the dog unsettles it. He waits for the familiar touch on his head.

It comes. The master's hand moves absently to the dog's head, thumb circling the temple, slow and gentle. He smiles. "How do you always know what to do?" he murmurs. "How are you so content?"

For a moment the room seems lighter. The dog wags his tail, eyes closing with every rub of his ear.

"Sorry we didn't get to run today," he says. "We'll play inside instead."

The hand stills. The dog rubs his chin on the master's knee; it isn't time to stop yet. The man picks up the ball and walks to the bedroom door. "Time to play hide and seek." He pauses. "Come here for a bit." His voice is soft, almost kind.

The dog follows, wagging his tail. He knows the game. He looks up. The yellow light from the living room glints in his eyes. The master meets the gaze and smiles—small, tired, meant

to reassure. The dog walks into the room and looks back before its door closes.

Inside, the bedroom is dark. The dog lies by the door, nose pressed to the narrow crack of light beneath it. His breath is slow and audible, the sound of air sliding against the wood. Outside, the apartment hums, then quiets. Everything holds still for a long moment.

A small sound follows, wrong from the start.

Sbhhh.

Softer this time, almost mute. Shorter. A brief wet whisper of something meant to stay together, being forced apart.

The dog's ears twitch. He stares at the strip of light. It wavers, then narrows as something moves across it. The yellow light bends, fragmenting on the floor as the dark shape slides beneath the door—flattened, spreading, then rising as it gathers itself into the room.

The dog moves back, stance stiff, legs braced, muscles tense. His ears angle forward; his breath quickens. The air smells faintly of iron.

He whines once, sharp and pleading.

Then he barks—to wake.

The dog doesn't understand; he only calls.

The shadow stands full, solitary and motionless before him, as if listening.

The dog keeps barking. The sound rolls through the apartment, then out the balcony door to the city below—unaware, uncaring.

-Lucian Cubric

Crystal Rose
Ekaterina Okiforova



A Poster of Janis Joplin at Seattle's Museum of Pop Culture

My wife doesn't talk about the part-time drug-dealer in the house that she lived in with nine or ten others after her high school boyfriend was killed in the war and then she ran off to Haight-Ashbury that summer, and her parents, after she ran away, who didn't know where she was, flew out to California looking for her.

They stopped kids on the street with a picture of her, asking if they knew her, and even asking drug dealers, and they all shook their heads, nope, they would know if they saw her and told her parents that a lot of others were looking for kids and had been the whole summer, including guys, living in the Haight because of the war.

Few months earlier, her boyfriend was killed in the war, her parents would say, as if it would help to identify her when the Haight crawled with runaways during summer, many who were pounced on by pimps and drug dealers, or both; Manson's weren't the only ones, tons of others were snatched up by his type but most didn't even know.

It was the summer called *the summer of love*, as most know—year before King and Bobby were murdered, but the war a shit storm most wanted no part of, to be left for others—her parents heard that, too, when showing pictures of her, and it came from middle-class runaways, not drug dealers, and would've come from most others asked that summer.

My wife saw Janis at the Fillmore—and over that summer I turned 1-A, having flunked out of college. I didn't know what to do—run off to Canada, claim I was a drug dealer or gay, or whatever it would take to get me out of the war. I enlisted in the Navy, but cracked in basic—then met her. Other peoples' stories about then have to be told by others.

In the poster, Janis is in some head-shop with some others and she's trying on a hat and fur jacket though it's summer and she's laughing (so is everyone else hanging around her), and we don't know what she's saying back to them or know anything else about the moment or Johnson or how the war is going or that she'll soon OD despite using the same dealer.

Have another little piece of my heart now, baby!—others will know that song if others don't, like the summer it was as that war raged, hard to talk about, like if I ask her about that dealer.

-Stephen Gibson



Birthday Girl
Haven Lindsey



Sphere Series
Ma Yuelei

To Live

1911 assaults me. Even in this mid-sized Colorado city, the world strikes from stacks of newspapers. In March, women leap and fly from factory windows in New York. In September, a revolutionary assassinates Russian Prime Minister Stolypin in Kiev. A week later, a train crashes only blocks away from my publishing house; I dream of iron belled locomotives shrieking and breaking through windows. In October, as the first snows barrage my city, a fanatic tries to kill my sister, deeming her “capitalistic vermin.” This same fanatic also deemed me a publishing monopolist last year.

I seize a bulletproof vest from one of my security detail. Pay guards to surround sweet Nan at all times. Avoid the opera. Stop drinking with my wife, Anastasia, at my friend Cockroach’s saloon with his raucous jokes, piano shrieking ragtime joy, scents of Don Grando cigars.

Instead, I jump at sputtering motorcars. Lie awake nights, listening to our mansion groan and settle. Day after day, I burrow in my publishing house, among clattering typewriters, scratches of pencils excising disorder. I banish shadows and flick on every light, taking in butter-colored warmth. I seek solace in execrable novels about vampires working in meatpacking plants, novels I should have banished. Try not to imagine Nan’s look when that bastard whipped out his derringer. Try not to think of Nan, who always talked of moving forward, tumbling backward onto pavement. Try to convince myself that guards and stacks of money are what Nan needs, and not the younger brother she raised, taught to appreciate the power of words, and the power of assertion.

After two months, Anastasia says, “I’d rather die having fun.”

“We can have fun. We just need to take precautions.”

“No, Nick, at this rate, we’ll die hiding from everything.” Her words wallop me.

Her once stunning grin has been replaced by frowns. Rings gather around her eyes.

“I wait up for you night after night. You hide in that office like a mouse. What kind of life is that?”

“Mice at least don’t get assassinated.” But shame strikes like a bullet.

When he was shot, Stolypin said, “I am happy to die for the tsar.” Crossed himself. And I remember reading about another attempt five years ago, when a bomb detonated in his home. Yet, he lived. Strung up revolutionaries like balloons. Yet Nan has only the coterie of guards, and I haven’t been to see her in a month. I’ve only offered platitudes over the phone. *I love you. Justice will be served. Don’t fear.* And Anastasia’s waited up for me night after night.

“I’m sorry,” I say. “I just wanted to protect us— to protect me.”

She smiles.

“Let’s get a drink.”

“But let’s see Nan first.”

I exhale. Take her hand. Discard the vest. Throw on my best fedora and suitcoat. Stride out of our mansion with Mansard roofs and hidden spots. Waltz into the clatter of motorcar horns, carriage wheels, and laughter, banishing shadows as snowflakes twirl and pirouette against a wide, open sky, hints of sun smiling through.

-Yash Seyedbagheri

Crustacean With a Spine (Echoes of the Maternal Body)

I had extra milk but no children. The surplus curdled into calcium that sealed me off from the world. It wasn't metaphor; it was geology performed by grief. Over time, I became a crustacean, armoured on the outside, liquid inside, luminous under pressure. People called me strong, but strength was never the point. The anomaly was that I still had a spine.

Dear Membrane

You're the border between what can be felt and what can't. I press against you and glimpse both sides, known and almost-known. You stretch like skin between realities. In the courtroom, you became glass; at night, you thinned into a bubble of breath.

Through you I learned that boundaries are sentient. Pain thickens them until light slows down inside. But sometimes, when sleep loosens the weave, I sense the other side again, the one where touch still means safety. That's where my morphons live: microscopic couriers carrying affection between bodies that can't meet.

Dear Extra Calcium

You arrived uninvited after the verdict. My body, refusing to obey, began producing architecture instead of comfort, bony scaffolds, milky fortifications, coral patience. The maternal body doesn't die when her children are taken; it reroutes energy. Milk becomes marble; tenderness becomes infrastructure. Even despair repurposes into collagen.

People said I'd hardened. They didn't see that hardness was how love survived heat.

Dear Concrete Bench

You sat outside the justice building, indifferent companion of every waiting mother or father. I leaned on you through years of hearings. You absorbed our fatigue and bureaucratic sweat. You know which tears were dignified and which were desperate.

If benches could speak, you'd testify that cruelty has no gender; paperwork is its only heirloom. I imagine your pores alive with morphons, still ferrying unspoken words between the parent-beings who once leaned here and those who will.

Dear Mom-Like-Myself

You're the one who got the visitation rights, the respectability, the perfume of correctness. When the judge declared me "unfit," they gave you my reflection and called it virtue.

I don't hate you. I study you the way a scientist studies a dominant species: curious how adaptation can look like grace. You were granted oxygen while I learned to breathe calcium. You call it motherhood; I call it endurance in another element.

Still, we're linked. Your comfort depends on my absence. My silence polishes your halo. One day, when empathy finally sits on that concrete bench, you might feel the hum of my morphons moving through stone into your bones. That vibration will be truth arriving late, but intact.

I write to objects because they don't flinch. I write to elements because they don't forget. My body turned language into shell and shell into scripture. Each word is an excretion hardened by pressure, still glimmering with salt.

This is my biology of survival: a crustacean with a spine, still carrying her own ocean.

-Shazia Mirza





Selvage

In the resale shop, I find my old scarf.
Not mine, at first. My mother’s, from when she was a woman younger than I am now. How it got here I cannot fathom.
She died last January and I have missed her every day since. I have also been missing that scarf, but that has been for years now. I disbelieve that I have it back, staring at it now.
It’s definitely hers, I would recognize anywhere its coarse weave, thin but strong between my fingers, the tiny little hole I wore into the corner with my own nervous pinky finger.

* * *

There is a day, fifteen years ago, that I imagine as a blacked-out square on the calendar. It probably happened then, this incalculable loss.
After that day, for weeks, then months stretching into years, I lamented losing her to the father who estranged me for being a woman of opinions. He was always driving wedges, could not accept he’d raised a feminist, a woman who spoke words and defended ideas.
I heard through relatives about my mother’s fall to lung cancer, the way she got back up again, thick hair grown in white and radiant like winter sun.

* * *

Our unexpected reunion at a wedding last summer punctuated the end of that era. I learned to tolerate the man so I could embrace the gift of this woman returned to my sphere like a reverse ghost.
Side conversations, phone calls, letters made up for lost time. When she died, she was cancer free, but also liberated from him.
I imagine now a day during our estrangement when I woke up driven to shed connections to the pain he’d caused. It must have been then that I cast off the pink and black watch plaid with its faded yarn selvage, crying or swearing, shipping it in a bag of used baby clothes to the Goodwill.
Surrendering or grieving? I cannot say. Loss is a trickster. It makes you believe the best. Or the worst. Or both.

* * *

I pay two dollars for the scarf today. I take it home, wash it in lavender-scented detergent. Fresh out of the dryer, I carry it, warm and soft, to swaddle around my daughter’s neck while she pokes at calculus equations.
My mother never knew her grandbabies as babies.
My daughter heads back to campus this afternoon, where she will participate in a dance installation as a protest at the U on Inauguration Eve. She is a troublemaking replicant of free thinking packed inside a body of grace and strength. She wears pink well. She cannot know this gift to her, with its holes and piled-up fringe, is a talisman to ward off history, a loving embrace toward her future and mine, inseparable, a secret time capsule into the universe of someone she barely knew.

-Tamara Kaye Sellman

The Things I Perceive

When I pass the tracks, I see the past on the bench.

When I cross the stairs, I feel your deep embrace.

I inhale and the smoke of the sun is inside.

The water at the lake, your smile, the pleasure, the tide.

The lines we drew, the moments, the sky.

I go East, you go West, and change is the truth that unites.

-Maria Faust

Attempt to Observe Mentispha No. 1
Ugo Milano





Brightness
Aleksandar Eftimovsk

Like a Wave

Because I come back to you,
even when I've been having trouble
getting the salt out of my mouth.
Spit, Spit

Feel me at the soles of your feet
submerge in my essence,
I will try my best to calm you.
Try, try.

Crying into an ocean is natural,
There's a reason tears are also salty.

I'm a body of water,
and my body is water.
Simple,
but usable in so many applications.
I will be whatever you want me to be.
Please let me be wanted by you.
Please, please.

-Esther Windt

Small Towns and Nightgowns

They say to write what you know, although
that's easier said than hummed

When you want to write full-throated songs
about what you've never done

Like birds for whom sound itself is sacred
like innocents for whom sex is scary

What if you want to write about
things you know you know nothing about

Outside the shadowbox of your history
exploring unlive d misery and mystery

Like *small towns and nightgowns*, a perfect
title waiting for a poem to crown.

In all the cities where I've slept I can't recall
a memory of a single nightgown

Nipples and *montes veneris*, yes
but negligees and peignoirs, none

Nostrils and armpits, *os sacrum*, each one
but hamlets and villages, not at all

My experience is limited, having lived
my life in cities sacred and profane

Where lovers and streets always sleep naked
or in black silk men's boxers, borrowed or stolen

Flannel pajamas to warm such cockles as may be
or frayed T-shirts to cool twin skintight snake tattoos.

Cities I no longer think about, cities I betrayed
(they betrayed me!) cities that no longer exist

Where love and death and sex and taxes reside
somewhere between what's real and what's faked

Lovers sucking their thumbs and reading Foucault
whimpering like squeeze toys, bath toys afloat

On pools of sweat before dusk and at dawn
sucking their thumbs and reading Derrida

These dreams of past reality revisit me
in dark disturbing detail but still I desire

To write what I know nothing of, such as
small towns and nightgowns, physics and jazz.

From now on I want to write about wee favors
and modest profits, the kind you don't brag about

Feats you don't drag out for public delectation
to revere or ridicule, to idolize or neglect

Now I find material anywhere, here and there
sublime scent, spirit, the good deed, the crime

Erotic contours of the landscape everywhere
erect trunks, fallen leaves and pistils lying spent

This world is not something we own, we rent
time and space for a weekend, an hour, a moment

I've lived all my life in cities, sacred and profane
cities I no longer think about, that no longer exist

I want to write what *could have been* yet can never
be known—like small towns and nightgowns.

-Richard Collins



Abandoned House
Vincenzo Cohen

Bird Destiny

I would lose all my shame
if I were a cormorant high on a rock
smelling salt and feeling barnacles and their devoid sexual desire
beneath my craggy feet.

If I were an eastern meadowlark with a blackbird v on my breast
flying high above a field,
I would know the power of leaving
behind all that I once became.

Suddenly the dahlias are in bloom.
Suddenly July comes in green and soft
echoing my name
like an ocean breeze unnamable.

-Gloria Monaghan

Hypocrisy

“One is always wrong, but with two, truth begins.”
— Friedrich Nietzsche.

It’s curious to think that’s me
agreeing insincerely,
as if I’m seeing someone I
don’t know who’s telling that big lie.

It seems my consciousness has split
into positions that don’t fit
for, here I am, determined to
accede to do things that won’t do.

I never thought I’d go along
with madding crowds I’m placed among
but it appears I’ve acquiesced
to things I once said I detest.

I know what I was going to say
as I watched my will slip away;
I guess I was overpowered
and, like the rest, I’m a coward.

It was all planned, to say ‘No thanks’
right as my feet joined closing ranks
and what was once my worst pet peeve
became a stance I now believe.

It’s disconcerting to see this
display of craven cowardice
and curious to see that I
will say things I’ll later deny.

-Wortley Clutterbuck



Cascade
Katarina Radovic



Morning Glow over Cloudy Mountains
Yifeng Li

Musicophilia

after Chris Pureka / for Ellie

We were hard weather, spat lightning
like Zeus, curated petulant playlists –
you burned Riot Grrrl’s discography
in exchange for all The Cranberries I had
while we stenciled Plath quotes onto a t-shirt,
Salinger in mauve block letters on a canvas tote.

We were broken-hearted over fuck-marry-kill lists
of dream headliners – Bowie-Mercury-Cobain
cut to the front of our queues of exes,
sweaty frontmen from the Redstone Room we discussed
in your living room while Jenny Lewis sang
about foxes and fucking, the record doing lazy circles.

We were always forget-me-nots – ice blue, late Springs
best sewn midwinter – Decemberists with our sad
broken-xylophone voices wine-drunk,
warm-bellied. Fag-and-hag types without the zealous
“marry each other if not married by thirty” pact –
we were never jealous enough for that.

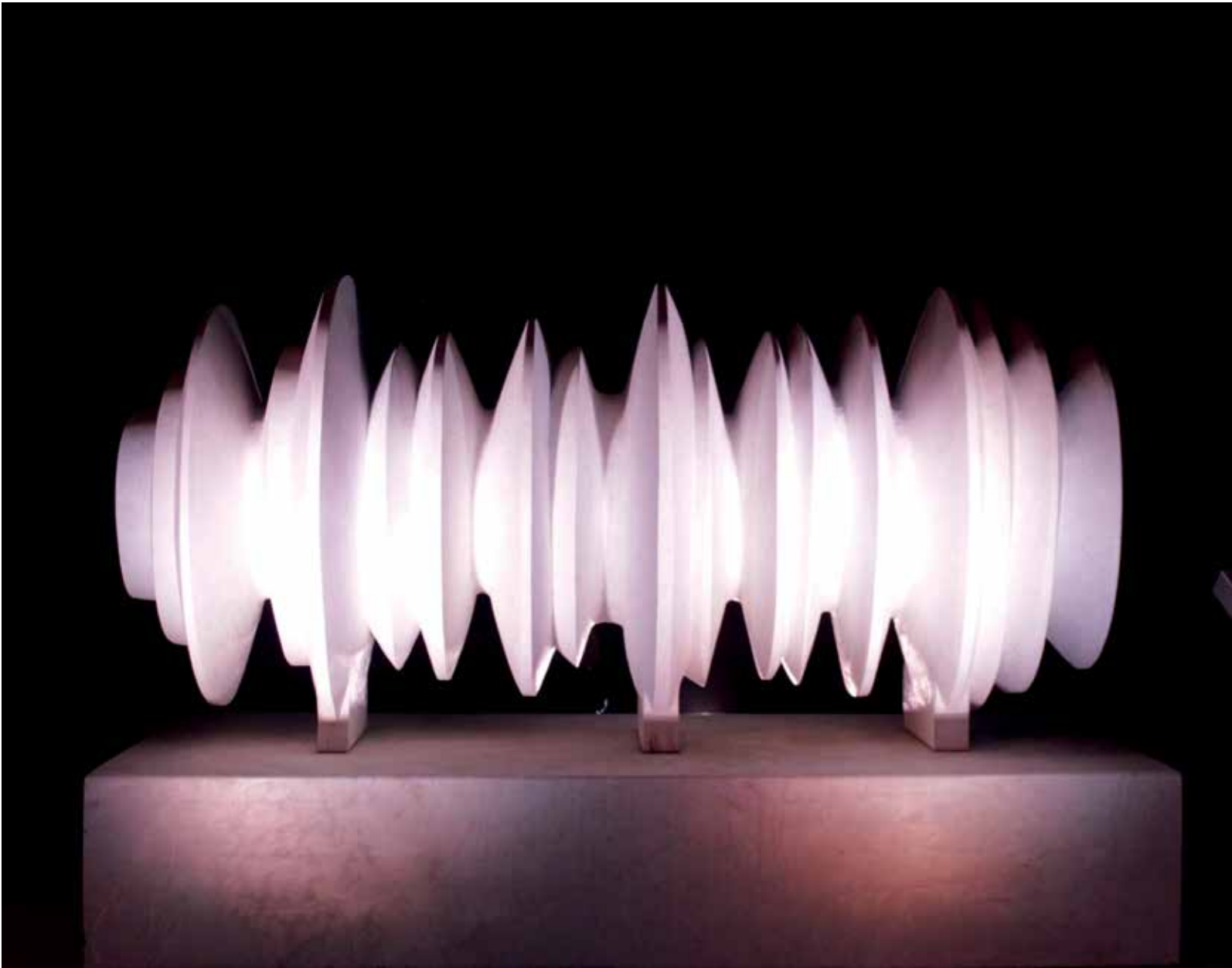
We were flash bulbs on adjacent polaroid cameras –
hazy figures smearing the same red dye
across each other’s hair in a dim bathroom.
“You’re wearing eyeliner now,” you said after
you’d been graduated a year – not a question, cool
like Siouxsie Sioux if we weren’t the banshees.

We were constellations, pole stars pulsing
in twin zeniths, archipelagos marking mythic
journeys – the bar where we dined-and-dashed
at the Iowa Women’s Music Festival – ethically
questionable from a feminist POV – but punk-
approved? – we were desperate for the punks’ approval.

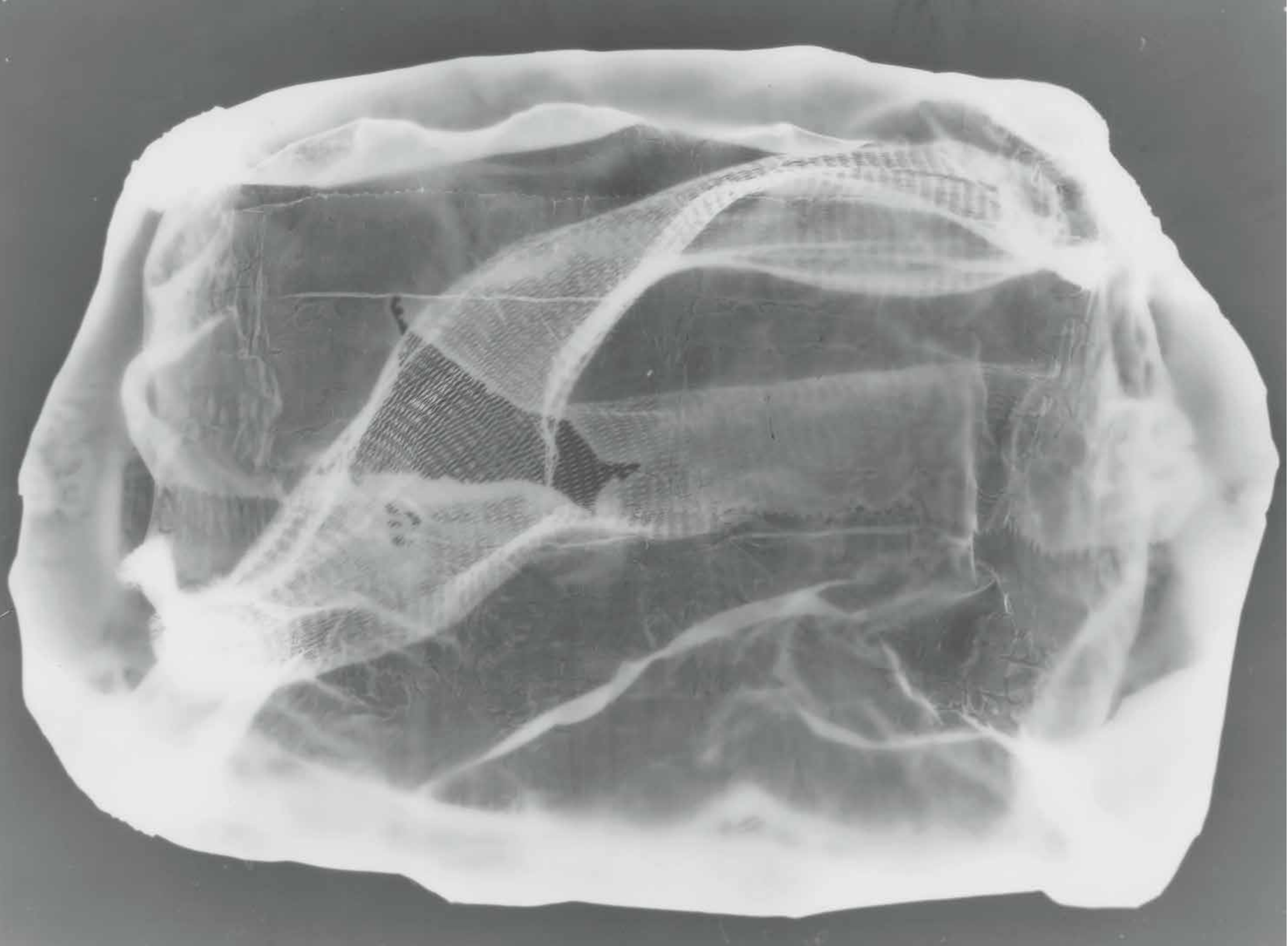
We tried to connect the dots wound up
enjambled in our own exquisite vitriols – thank God
we grew out of those people –
I love them still, reaching for the record
that will blow our tits clean off –
let us always play them again.

-Neal Allen Shipley

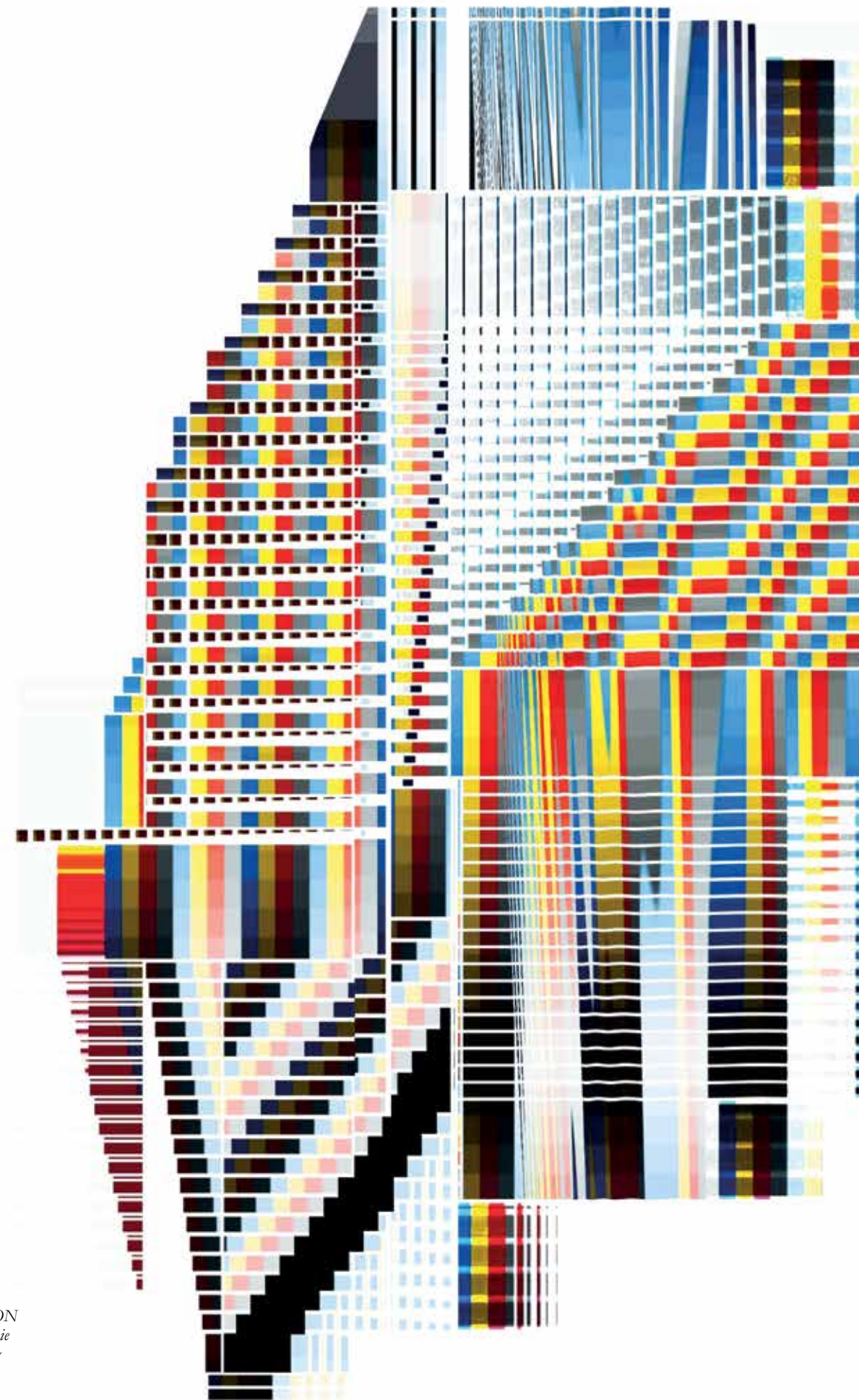
**Note: The italicized portions of the first line of each stanza borrow from “Landlocked,” by Chris Pureka (How I Learned to See in the Dark, 2010, Sad Rabbit Music).*



Sound of the Universe
Aleksandar Eftimovsk



Cit
Arthi Duraisamy



LEFT *coreNION*
RIGHT *Graphie*
Andriy Kalkov



Sonibaux
Bowen Wu

The She in Me

I'm a pony-tailed girl in church
Watching you talk under the cross
Dressed in white with no sin
I'm a little lamb sleeping on green moss

I'm a lipstick tube
In the brightest red you've ever seen
Paint my kisses all over the town
I'm the slut you sweat on in daydreams

I'm a spiritual eye
Connecting deeply with your soul
Yoga, mantras, prayers, and chants
I'm holding truth you want to know

I'm a freak, I'm a John, Jane, a client, I pay to be
In hidden warehouse bars
Naked people all over me
I'm the nymph you hate to see love so freely

I'm a warm bowl of soup
A comforting ladle of satisfying stew
A warm breast of healing milk
I'm mommy to the hurt inside of you

I'm a mirror for you
Anything you want to see
I'm every woman in one

Everything you want to be
Now look inside of you
Then at the outside of me
Which who will you be
When you see
The she in me

-Kaylee Baucom



In her red silence
Agnieszka



The ghost was walking in the fog
Edoardo De Falchi



A tip for the mountain, on the mountain peaking
Edoardo De Falchi

The Bloom of Splinters

After *Narcissus*, by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (Italy) ca. 1599

The sheen of recognition and the glimmer of adoration pull Cesare ever closer to water’s edge. If only Antonio could see what he sees: soft lips, chiseled cheeks, strong jawline, aquiline nose. To his old school mate, Cesare is only a bumbling, ruffled meal ticket. Antonio demands. More bread! More wine! More women! As if Cesare were interested in any of that. He tried his hand as a baker’s apprentice, but he forgot to take the bread out of the oven on time. A wine merchant, but he found himself drinking all morning. An escort, but he couldn’t compliment the ladies enough. None of these positions helped him pass through the gate of accomplishment. He took to painting flowers, carefully arranging them on the kitchen table with glass carafes and ceramic bowls of freshly picked fruit from the orchards. But his slow hand could not capture full blooms, only curling petals. Not filled vessels, only emptied shards. Not fresh apples but rotting cores. Worms inch their way along table’s grooves in darkness. But here, at the pond, where the woodchuck waddles, Cesare easily finds beauty. The water repeats his breath. His sluggish ways enhance what he sees—the sheen and glimmer fill his eyes with a love that blooms in the splinters of his chest. He leans over, farther, farther, straining for answers.

-*Barbara Krasner*

I sat at the back of the bus next to a severed thumb. Everyone was complementing the thumb on its remarkable hairdo. I had to agree, it was a remarkable hairdo; in fact, we all had remarkable hairdos. We decided to play a game: at every stop we would exchange hairdos. I ended up with a 50’s flattop, and the thumb, an old woman’s blue beehive. The old woman had a slicked back ponytail, slightly thinning on top. When I got off, I headed to the post office to mail a letter. The post office had just unveiled a new series of stamps dedicated to people with remarkable hairdos. There was Jennifer Aniston, Elvis, Trump... I looked down at the letter, it was addressed to the old woman. I opened it and read: “Dear Snowflake, Many a-night have I lay awake dreaming of you at the beauty parlor, in curlers under the hot drier, flipping through old issues of People...”. It was signed with a thumb print over which some of the ink had smudged into what looked like an afro.

-*Justin Hollis*



Dot Parker's Fresh Hell at Algonquin Roundtable
J.B Pravda



Echoes
Lianne Kamp

The Echo

My native language presents certain limitations,
making it challenging to express how something once was
but no longer.
You used to be here, but no more –
The shuffle of your light steps like insect chimes – low, soothing,
your hearty laughter reverberates eerily in these hollow rooms.

You are no longer here,
But your memory fills these spaces.
You were happy once
Albeit briefly,
Before leaving in despair.
I can only hope that occupying these spaces brought you joy,
As it was a place where you once lived,
But no more

-Mukut Borpujari

stone cloud - echo of the past
Helge Paulsen

Contributors

Agnieszkowa has been painting since early childhood. Over time, this hobby has evolved into a true passion and a powerful way for her to express herself and her emotions. Her work is a deeply personal expression of emotion, intuition, and inner vision. She explores the complexity of human feelings through surreal and symbolic portraits, often focusing on faces as a canvas for psychological depth.

auroraerica is an emerging spatial designer and visual storyteller whose practice transforms digital environments into emotional architectures. She creates immersive, liminal spaces that explore the human psyche, where the body becomes a site of transition and introspection. Working with Blender and digital readymades, she recontextualizes familiar objects and architectures into unsettling yet reflective atmospheres. Her artistic inquiry is driven by curiosity, doubt, and a fascination with human complexity. She collaborates with Folt Magazine and draws on a multidisciplinary background in Visual Merchandising, Interior Design, and Art Direction, shaping both concept and experience in her work.

Kaylee Baucom lives in Las Vegas, Nevada, where she teaches English at The College of Southern Nevada.

Joseph Baron-Pravda is a graduate of the University of Florida Colleges of Journalism, Law; former U.S. government attorney; on the page/stage/screen/canvas, he storyboards his writing; (created art for UNESCO’s DREAM Centers & other international competitions, via <http://www.design21sdn.com>) ; 10 pages from his play ‘Patsy’, involving a fated ‘reunion’ of JFK Jr. & the oldest daughter of Lee and Marina Oswald, won him a highly competitive place at the Kennedy Center in 2006. Published diversity author via University of Central Florida. Painter/multimedia visual artist with several international exhibits, including Lilly’s Oncology on Canvas national biennial tour.

Anna Birch lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her recent stories have appeared in *The Literary Times*, *Heartwood Literary Magazine*, *Adanna Literary Journal*, and *Grim & Gilded*.

Morgan Bisoux explores the notions of trace, disappearance, and the body’s memory. Her series Eidolon extends a reflection on absence begun with GHOST, materializing the physical echoes of the living. Wrinkled sheets, folds, and imprints become silent witnesses of a vanished presence. In this hyperrealist painting, the body is no longer depicted but invoked — resonating through light and matter in a dialogue between the sacred and the everyday, sensitivity and spirituality, appearance and erasure.

Mukut Borpujari is a graduate in English Literature and holds a Masters in Computer Application (MCA) from G.G. University, Bilashpur, CG. Based in Guwahati, Assam, India. He has a plethora of poems and articles published in top journals including *The Canyon Voices Literary Magazine* of the Arizona State University and the *Mount Hope* magazine of the Roger Williams University (RWU), RI, USA, *Chapter House Journal* of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA). He was also featured in IHRAM Press’s *The Evolving Gaze*, this year. He was also longlisted in the last year’s Erbacce-prize for poetry 2024. An active member of the Greenpeace Movement, he has a deep-rooted conviction about nature and the natural world. Apart from being an avid reader, his other hobbies include Computers & internet, and driving.

Lize Briel is an internationally award-winning composer known for work in film, installation, and contemporary concert music. Based in Stellenbosch, South Africa, she is drawn to themes of environment and identity, and often integrates African instruments into her compositions. Her music has received international recognition, including awards from the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra and the #CreateCOP28 competition, where her work *Ocean Soundscape* was showcased at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, 2023. In 2025, she was named a Top 5 finalist in Africa in the European Recording Orchestra Call-for-Scores.

Dănuț-Adrian-Iași Chidon-Frunză is a Romanian artist born.In 2022, he obtained a master’s degree in painting from the National University of Arts “George Enescu”, Iași, Romania. His most recent solo show (2025), was at The Union Museum within the Moldova National Museum Complex Iași, Romania. He participated in many group exhibitions in the country and abroad (Italy, Spain, Great Britain, South Korea, USA, Canada, Republic of Moldova.

Natalie Christensen’s focus is ordinary settings, seeking the sublime. She deconstructs to color fields, geometry and shadow. Christensen has exhibited in U.S. and international venues; was a UAE Embassy culture tour delegate; recently was invited as Artist-in-Residence Chateau d’Orquevaux, France; and Setanta Books, London published *007 – Natalie Christensen*. She has work in permanent collections and her photography has been featured in many noted fine art publications.

Richard Collins, abbot of the New Orleans Zen Temple, lives in Sewanee, Tennessee, where he directs Stone Nest Dojo. His books include *John Fante: A Literary Portrait* (Guernica Editions, 2000), *No Fear Zen* (Hohm Press, 2015), *In Search of the Hermaphrodite: A Memoir* (Tough Poets Press, 2024), *Stone Nest: Poems* (Shanti Arts, 2025), and *Cartoons for the Chaos: Poems 1975-2025* (Shanti Arts, forthcoming). His work has appeared recently in *Ametlstyst Review*, *Pensive*, *Think*, *Tough Poets Review*, and *Clockhouse*.

Wortley Clutterbuck’s poetry has been featured in many insignificant literary journals over the last 300 years.

A Collected Works is available from the anti-christ of retail. He presently resides, uneasily, in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Vincenzo Cohen is an Italian multidisciplinary social artist. He earned the MFA from Fine Arts Academy and the MD in Archaeology from “La Sapienza” University in Rome. The artist deals with social painting and desert photography and his production revolves around issues related to social and environmenatal justice.

Lucian Cubric is a Manila-based writer exploring the quiet drama of everyday life and the unspoken emotions that run beneath the surface.

Francesca Dei’s journey is marked by a continuous process of discovery, shaped by a variety of artistic and cultural experiences. From 2017 to 2021, Francesca worked as a photomodel across Europe, an experience that allowed her to develop a unique sensitivity to aesthetics and beauty in all its forms. At the same time, she explored the other side of the camera and dedicated herself more consistently to painting and video-art. Recently, she earned a master’s degree in film and media studies.

DESIRA is a non-binary artist and performer based in Milan.

Lara Dolphin, a descendant of immigrants, lives with her family among the Allegheny Mountains of Central Pennsylvania on the ancestral land of the Susquehannock/Iroquois people. She has written three chapbooks *In Search Of The Wondrous Whole*, *Chronicle Of Lost Moments*, and *At Last a Valley*. She, like countless others, hopes for a world filled with greater peace.

Arthi Duraisamy is an emerging interdisciplinary artist, interested in themes related to synchronicity, time, reality, collective consciousness, western individualism, and feminism through photography, video art, installations, land art, and performance as a medium. Pinhole cameras, photograms and analog photography are part of her practice. Her upcoming projects will be focused on a dichotomy between individualism and collective consciousness.

Aleksandar Eftimovski is a visual artist that works in the medium of the third dimension. His material of choice is stone in all its colors, textures and composites. He explores the sounds of anything and everything, and later transfers it into a certain material and shape. The shape becomes unique, because each of the sound by itself is one of a kind.

Dr. Maria Faust graduated from University of Leipzig with her thesis “The Theoretical and Empirical Paradox of Temporal Change due to Digital Media in Germany and China” with highest distinction (summa cum laude). She was a Visiting Scholar at Renmin University, China and received a Best Paper Award for her research in 2016. Besides her scholarly work, since 2024 her poetry and photography – always focusing on bridging East and West – got published with Routledge, *Turning Pages*, *Superpresent* and Lorbeer Publisher.

Duncan Forbes is a British poet. Duncan’s poems have been published by Faber, Secker and Enitharmon, who produced a *Selected Poems* in 2009, drawn from five previous collections. For his most recent collection of poems, *Under the Sun* (2024), see www.duncanforbes.com He read English at Oxford and taught for many years.

Edoardo De Falchi is a collage artist, illustrator and freelance displacer. Based in Rome, Italy, where he’s working as podcast author and editor at RaiPlay Sound. He took a degree in Contemporary Philosophy at Roma’s University “La Sapienza”. Wrote a book on public diy prank art, published by Odradek Edizioni, Roma: Non è vero! Disordinazioni: un’avanguardia subliminale di massa (It’s not true! Disordering actions: a subliminal mass avant-garde).

Ayre Fromme-Diaz is currently publishing chapters from his unpublished memoir, *I GOT OFF EASY: Brushes With the News, Fame, Danger and Death*. He is retired and currently lives near Chicago.

Stephen Gibson is the author of eight poetry collections: *Frida Kahlo in Fort Lauderdale* (2024 Able Muse Press), *Self-Portrait in a Door-Length Mirror* (2017 Miller Williams Prize winner, University of Arkansas Press, selected by Billy Collins), *The Garden of Earthly Delights Book of Ghazals* (Texas Review Press), *Rorschach Art Too* (2014 Donald Justice Prize winner, Story Line Press; 2021 Legacy Title reprint, Red Hen Press), *Paradise* (Miller Williams Prize finalist, University of Arkansas Press), *Frescoes* (Idaho Book Prize, Lost Horse Press), *Masaccio’s Expulsion* (MARGIE/Intuit House Book Prize), and *Rorschach Art* (Red Hen Press).

Ataman Girişken is a digital visual artist exploring the emotional and poetic potential of technology. Blending generative systems, cinematic motion and traditional cultural references, his works create immersive visual atmospheres rooted in memory, transformation and inner experience. Girişken works across video art, performance visuals and interactive installations, often using real-time engines to evoke natural phenomena and subconscious perception. He has presented his work internationally at festivals, exhibitions, and residencies, building bridges between digital innovation and deeply human sensibility.

CJ Giroux teaches college English and is a lifelfong resident of Michigan. His most recent chapbook is *Sheltered in Place*.

Ellie Goodliffe is a 31 year old UK based amateur artist. She started creative at a young age as an essential means to escape a challenging upbringing. Then, she would use scrap paper and scratchy pencils to imitate what she admired. With Part-time jobs she was able to upgrade her artists tools and practice her own styles. Today, Ellie is a full-time quality assurance team leader for a family run brewery. And although she is a new mother to a beautiful baby boy, Ellie finds time to create. Primarily Ellie uses acrylic and paper to paint thought provoking images. She uses her biological science degree background to explore and communicate human health, disease, mental health and nature. Ellie has had the opportunity to feature in prestigious magazines including Artists Talk and Artist Close Up. Ellie has had work showcased via Domio Gallery, Ten Moir and others.

Tupelo Hassman has published two novels, *girlchild*, and, *gods with a little g* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), and a chapbook, *Breast Milk* (Quiet Lightning). She is the recipient of the ALEX Award, the Sherwood Anderson Fiction Award, and the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame Silver Pen Award. Her work has been anthologized in *Nothing Short of 100* (Outpost 19) and *Drivel* (TarcherPerigree). Tupelo teaches at Santa Monica College and CSU East Bay while living in Charleston, South Carolina, where she is a board member of QT Camp, a non-profit offering the South's only summer camp for queer and trans kids

Justin Hollis has an MFA from Hofstra University and currently teaches language and literature at Palm Beach State College. His work has appeared previously in the *Querencia Press Quarterly Anthology* and *The Storyteller Magazine*.

Josie is a full-time artist devoted to exploring the delicate dialogue between nature and emotion. Her work primarily focuses on botanical forms and interesting patterns. Alongside this, she embraces abstract art that is more special and delves into deeper, more intuitive realms of feeling. Through her art and patterns, she invites moments of stillness, reflection and connection.

Andriy Kalkov was born in Lutsk, Ukraine in 1987. Kalkov graduated from Kosiv Institute Of Applied and Decorative Arts of Lviv National Academy of Arts. From 2009 to the present day, Kalkov has been working on the abstract series “Circulation” Since 2020, the artist’s work has been heavily influenced by architecture with a dash of digital surrealism.

Lianne Kamp is both a published poet and a mixed media visual artist. She resides in the Boston area. As a visual artist she enjoys working with wire and window screen. Because these materials tend to be viewed as more utilitarian than inspirational, they present a unique opportunity for transformation. As with life, art is always evolving and she continues to explore the addition of new materials to express concepts, interpret the world we live in, and imagine new ways of being.

Barbara Krasner is a New Jersey-based poet and author of seven poetry books. Her work has appeared in more than seventy literary journals.

Li Yifeng was born in Zibo, Shandong Province. Growing up in a family steeped in traditional culture, he developed a strong foundation in classical Chinese art from an early age. He excels in literati painting, blending the disciplined structure of traditional brush-and-ink techniques with a vivid sense of life and movement. Li furthered his studies at the Advanced Research Program in Landscape Painting at the China Artists Association and the National Academy of Painting, where he studied under renowned masters such as Luo Chunyang, Gan Changxi, Lü Yun, Long Rui, Zhang Fuxing, and Zhao Wei. He currently serves as a member of the China Artists Association, Council Member of the China National Academy of Painting, artist at the Zhao Wei Studio, and advisor to the Ministry of Culture’s Chinese Painting Academy Research Program.

Haven Lindsey is an art student currently studying in Berlin. She works primarily in oils and collage but her practice also includes ink, graphite and stitching. Her recent work has focused on ideas of performance and cliché, the stories we wear and the places they clash with the experience of taking up space in a body. Haven enjoys collecting images and scraps of paper and watching swans in the river, hoping and fearing they will come close enough to bite her.

Jiaqi Liu is a Bay Area–based visual designer and illustrator whose work explores memory, time, and echoing inner landscapes. She combines textured digital painting with ink-informed mark-making, often using statues, domestic objects, and falling debris as recurring symbols. Her practice treats images as quiet psychological spaces where the past continues to reverberate, even as it breaks apart, inviting viewers to linger in the tension between holding on and letting go.

Ma Yuelei has 20 years of professional experience in interior design and project management, in 2021, he established a handmade pottery sculpture studio, STUDIO MOUNTAIN SEEKING in Hangzhou, China. Adhering to the creative philosophy of “Prostrating oneself on the earth, Coexisting with nature,” the studio learns from mountains, rivers, and the wild ecosystem. Through continuous understanding of soil, texture, shaping, and inner vitality, it explores the interdependent and mutually influential relationships between humanity and the natural environment, living space, and the details of time of integration, contradiction, alienation, and care. The studio continuously explores ceramic art concepts and is committed to the creation and research of lifestyle aesthetics and contemporary art.

Gordon Massman is a self-taught painter and poet based in Rockport, MA. Massman paints with oils in fear of worthlessness, meaningless, futility and death. In his subject matter, nothing is taboo. Using thickly layered paint and abstracted imagery, his works tell stories of survival, dominance, procreation, power, security, ego, and vanity. He approaches the canvas as a raconteur, striving to haul from the depths into the light of day the urges, fantasies, and delusions that most of us repress—or control—to keep us acceptable to civilized society. Massman studied literature and creative writing at the University of Texas-Austin and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He taught writing and literature at The Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams, MA, and is the published author of five poetry volumes, having composed thousands of poems over a span of forty-five years. Massman has exhibited in the United States, and his work is in the collection of the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum.

Ugo Milano is an Italian photographer and writer based between Naples and Göttingen. With a background in German and English literature, his work moves between documentary and fiction, using photography as a way to map invisible layers of places, memories, myths, scientific and literary traces. His ongoing project “Under Which Tree Did Goethe Sleep?” imagines an intermediate reality where the thoughts of past thinkers still echo in present-day Göttingen. His work has been exhibited and published in Italy, Germany and abroad and a first dummy book of the project has been realized.

Sarah Misselbrook investigates the ontology of the female body, examining themes of identity, feminism, strength, power, and vulnerability. Through a sustained exploration of acts of submission within her sculptural and performance practice, the artist engages critically with binary oppositions such as control and chaos, light and darkness, and life and death. Her work is informed by the resilience of the natural world—the capacity of the land to regenerate after floods, and the fig tree’s ability to endure both fire and drought. Employing natural and found materials, including leaves, rocks, carbon, and earth, Misselbrook continuously interrogates the sustainability and ethical implications of creative practice.

Shazia Mirza is a Lahore-based artist, writer, and Head of Ceramics Design at the National College of Arts. Her practice merges material research and lyrical writing to explore how touch, grief, and endurance shape new sensory languages. Her recent work investigates tactile cosmologies and post-visual design as modes of emotional survival.

Adam Niklewicz earned his MFA in sculpture from State University of New York at Purchase (2006). Niklewicz mounted 16 solo shows in both the USA and Europe and had his work reviewed in ARTnews, Art New England, Aesthetica, The New York Times, Sculpture, Modern Painters Magazine, The Huffington Post and the Nation, among others. In 2017, CNN Style presented 4 of his works in a feature story titled “Extraordinary in the Ordinary: These Warped Works Will Melt Your Mind.” He lives and works in North Haven, CT and Guadalajara, Mexico.

Ekaterina Okiforova is an artist working in an authored technique using acrylic paint and glitter, as well as traditional oil on canvas. The glitter layers intensify color saturation through light reflection and a velvety texture. In the process she pursues increasing the dramatic quality of color interaction. In her geometric works, she conveys the experience of reacting to the subject on visual, tactile, and spiritual levels. Often she investigates the architecture of material bodies and their color combinations, studying the micro-level of matter through microscopic and macro-photographic imagery.

Barbara Krasner is a New Jersey-based poet and author of seven poetry books. Her work has appeared in more than seventy literary journals.

Hoho Kuo studied painting under the guidance of her father, the artist Guo Yu, from an early age. She graduated from the Stage Design Department of the Central Academy of Drama and later from the Directing Department of the Beijing Film Academy. Her directed commercial film “Lively City” was awarded the Golden Lion at the China International Advertising Film Festival. Her paintings have been selected for prestigious awards and exhibitions, including the John Moores Painting Prize (China). Active in the art world as a painter and independent director, she currently lives and works in Shanghai, China. As a creator who bridges the roles of director and painter, Hoho Kuo’s art follows a dual trajectory: her film background imbues her work with a potent sense of narrative and a masterful orchestration of time and space, while painting serves as a channel through which she strips away surfaces to directly engage with the spiritual core.

Gloria Monaghan is a Professor at Wentworth University. She has published six collections of poetry. Her recent book, *Diary of Saint Marion, Lily Poetry Review*, (2025) was featured at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (2025, AWP). Her poems have appeared in *Nixes Mate*, *NPR*, *Poem-a-Day*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Quartet and River Heron* among others. She has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize, as well as the Massachusetts Book Award, and the Griffin Prize. She has also been nominated for the Sheila Margaret Motton Book Award from the New England Poetry Club. Thanks to a Bistline Grant from Wentworth Institute, she recently completed a film on the painter, Nancy Ellen Craig, *Daughter of Rubens*, which was accepted into the 2023 Provincetown Film Festival. She is currently working on another film about the Dominican painter, Jose Ricon Mora.

L.C. Mortimer writes about relationships, military life, parenting, and falling in love. She publishes spooky

stories and feel-good romances and everything in between. Her stories have appeared in multiple anthologies and magazines, including *Swords in the Shadows*. Most recently, she has published the *Stay Dead* series, which follows a group of survivors during the zombie apocalypse and the mental health challenges they face along the way.

Caleb Murray is from Montana and currently lives in Westfield, Massachusetts. His fiction has appeared in *Cleaver Magazine*, *Meat for Tea: The Valley Review*, and elsewhere.

Nadja Elpida Murze is a Cypriot filmmaker with a background in scriptwriting, exploring enigmatic human perception in cinema. She was a key contributor at the immersive photography exhibition called “To those to them”, featured at Larnaca Biennale 2021. She collaborated with Anastasia Shirmanova, a mixed-media collage artist known for exploring urban memory and the interplay between physical space. Her work has been exhibited internationally and in Cyprus; published in various festivals and magazines. Their film, *Wanna talk?*, encourages audiences to fill in the “empty” urban spaces, like patching up moments lost to time. The film has been screened at the Cyprus Film Festival and Rome Art Week in 2025.

Dr. Helge H. Paulsen was born in 1969 in Flensburg. He studied Social Sciences at the University of Hanover, majoring in Culture/Art Sociology, and achieved the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. His dissertation is titled: David Wojnarowicz and the positioning of postmodernism - an art sociological and philosophical development of the concept of U.S. postmodernism based on the artist David Wojnarowicz. Since 2010, he has worked as a freelance journalist, curator, and art photographer (www.artpromotor.com). His photographic works have been published in international art magazines. He has participated in various art fairs in Germany and exhibitions in several national galleries. He is a member of the Museum of Photography in Braunschweig.

Katarina Radovic was born in Belgrade, Serbia. She studied Art History at the University of Sussex and acquired her BA in Photography from the Academy of Arts ‘BK’ in Belgrade in 2006. She has participated in many solo and group exhibitions in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Spain, The Netherlands, France, Malta, Egypt, Japan, Senegal, USA, etc. She is the recipient of the KulturKontakt in Austria in 2007, the European Cultural Foundation in 2009, the Spazju Kreattiv in Malta in 2019, the International Summer Academy of Fine Arts in Salzburg, Austria in 2020. Katarina moves across various photographic practices, trying to trace the link between reality and fiction, the real world and the socially and culturally originated visions of reality. Her work consists of unique research into identity, (self)-presentation, human relationships and communication. She is also interested in photo archives, different layers of memory and cultural symbolism.

Andrew Robin is the author of the poetry collections *Something has to happen next*, which was awarded the Iowa Poetry Prize, Good Beast, a finalist for the Oregon Book Award, and Stray Birds, a finalist for the Washington State Book Award. Honors include a Poetry Society of America National Chapbook Award and a Distinguished Teaching Award in English from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. An RN specializing in cardiac and urgent care, Andrew lives with his wife Sarah north of Seattle on Sx’wálech (Lopez Island) in the unceded ancestral waterways of the Coast Salish peoples.

Tamara Kaye Sellman is co-author of the podcast anthology, *Rain Shadows* (2025; BTRS Books) and author of *Cul de Sac Stories* (2024; Aqueduct Press) and *Intention Tremor* (2021; MoonPath Press). Her recent work has appeared/is forthcoming in *Crypticon II*, *Penumbra*, *Ink In Thirds*, *Emerald City Ghosts*, *The Coil*, *WildSound*, *Flash of the Dead*, and two anthologies (*Interesting Times* and *The Big Book of Quantum Fiction*). Besides writing, Tamara makes artsy poetry films, grows esoteric gardens, hikes local trails and waits for a cure for her MS.

Yash Seyedbagheri is a graduate of Colorado State University’s MFA fiction program. His fiction has been nominated for four Pushcart Prizes. Yash’s work has been published in *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *The Journal of Compressed Creative Arts*, and *Ariel Chart*, among others.

Neal Allen Shipley (he/him) is a poet living in Colorado with a modest collection of pets and an unhinged collection of plants. His writing has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and can be found in recent issues of *&Change*, *Tough Poets Review*, and *Vagabond City*, among others. Despite the horrors, he loves a fancy hot dog. Find him on Instagram @nealio9

Bertholdus Sibum is a retired building engineer and holds a Master’s Degree in cultural anthropology. He has worked and lived in Ivory Coast, Niger and Sint Maarten (Netherlands Antilles). Since his youth he is drawing and painting. Now he has more time to paint and his work has undergone a significant development. He is also as “self-mademan” in composing music on the computer under the name of MubisMusic and SIBM.

Maria Siritzidou is an English teacher. She was born and raised in the city of Thessaloniki. She has been involved in photography since 2020 in various and different themes (street photography, landscapes, black and white, travel, etc.) and has participated in many group exhibitions both in Greece and abroad.

Ayanava Sil is based in India and is a dedicated self-taught street and documentary photographer. He is passionate about capturing the beauty and stories of everyday life. During the weekdays, he works for a leading

global e-commerce and tech corporation, but his weekends are devoted to expressing his creativity through photography. He firmly believes that every moment has a story waiting to be told and aims to capture those narratives through his photography. The uncertainty and the suspense drives him the most towards these genres of Photography. Documenting people over the years has provided him with the invaluable opportunity to explore the unknown and to embrace the conglomerate realities of people.

Duke Stewart has published or has forthcoming work in dozens of magazines including *Cimarron Review*, *Puerto Del Sol*, *Passages North*, *Shenandoah*, *Permafrost*, *The Umbrella Factory* and *Bellevue Literary Review*. Honors include an award from the Kansas Arts Council for Best Story–Fiction, a grant through the Georgia Council for the Arts for literature, and several Pushcart nominations. A cleric and pastoral counselor, he provides counseling to underserved populations, trauma survivors and anyone else in need.

Bonnie Sykes is a young Australian writer and musician. Bonnie is an indie singer-songwriter whose original work is available for streaming under the name ‘Bonnie Rose’. Through both her songwriting and literary works Bonnie tackles ideas of longing and nostalgia. Bonnie obsesses over the romanticisation of the past and finds herself frequently occupied with the imagery of childhood, contentment, and self-discovery.

Erin Weeks is a poet and journalist native to South Carolina. Her personal writing often focuses on themes of home and nostalgia, and her first chapbook, *Origins of My Love*, was published by Bottlecup Press in 2021. She can be found on Instagram at @erinwkzzfrdrk.

Esther Windt is a trans writer who loves writing poems, short stories, and creative nonfiction, and is currently attending Saint Ambrose University to major in English with a creative writing concentration as well as Theology. She has previously had her work published in the *Half and One* magazine with the piece “The White Room,” as well as *The Atlas* literary magazines, and *The Quercus* magazine with Saint Ambrose University.

Bowen Wu is a composer, new instrument designer, and audiovisual artist based in Glasgow. His artistic practice spans sound art, film scoring, experimental music, audiovisual composition, installation, and live electronic performance. Grounded in reflection on and transcendence of the Eastern–Western dichotomy, his work reinterprets and reconstructs Chineseness through an ecological lens, connecting art, environment, body, and technology. Wu’s works have been presented internationally across China, the UK, the US, Italy, Spain, Greece, France, South Korea, Thailand, and Ecuador, and have received awards including MA/TN24 and the Danny Awards. He is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Glasgow.

Carol Wyatt is a graduate of the University of Houston Creative Writing Program. Her work has appeared in Gulf Coast and Superpresent. She received Honorable Mention from P.E.N. Southwest in poetry. She is currently living in Costa Rica.

Chloe Yeo is a high school senior at Milton Academy. While she calls Hopkinton, Massachusetts home, she was originally born in Seoul, South Korea. Her work has been recognized by the Kenyon Young Writers Program and the Scholastic Arts & Writing Awards. When she’s not writing, she’s probably dancing to house music in her kitchen or thrifting a pair of cowboy boots under \$70.

Annabelle Young is a South African and internationally trained Bench Jeweller and Jewellery Designer with extensive experience spanning European and American goldsmithing techniques. Recognised for expertise in 3D design (with awards including Best of Show at FVCC and selection for the prestigious SNAG juried exhibitions). Combined a unique mix of traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design tools to create unique and sculptural pieces. Acquired hands-on experience in high-end studios, such as Julie Cohn and Pampilonia Jewellers, complementing a passion for artistic storytelling in diverse settings, including the bench, in a gallery, or within the luxury retail space. Strong cultural awareness, bilingual skills (English and Afrikaans) and a global outlook gained via international experience.

JingLu Zhao got her MFA degrees from China and Japan. She taught Visual Art in China until she moved to Canada in 2013. JingLu’s art explores her identity as she experiences the world, combines figuration and landscapes reflecting her family’s Chinese and First Nations heritage.

Paul Khahliso Matela Zisiwe is a South African writer and filmmaker, who uses his craft towards social activism and to participate in the collective memory-keeping and creation of our continent and its various communities. Having worked for over a decade in the film and television industry, he has garnered experience in production as well distribution of socially critical and artistically diverse film content. Khahliso, as he is commonly known, also expresses his creativity through video art, literature and music (experimental sound art), which have been exhibited in various international platforms such as The Radical Film Network BERLIN and Quarantine Residency (Shanghai). He is an avid blogger and critical thinker, and publishes his writing on [http:// anirrationaldiary.blogspot.com](http://anirrationaldiary.blogspot.com)



