



# peripheries<sub>no. 4</sub>

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a journal of word and image

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## Editor's Foreward

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The fourth edition of *Peripheries* begins, as always, on the ‘periphery’ with the poem of that title by Kay Ryan. It reads, “Periphery is no/ one substance,/ but the edges/ of anything’. Opening a book then, you are on a periphery, like Katherine Bradford’s diver on this book’s cover, suspended in air. Or, in the case of Kay’s poem, you already sit on the fountain’s marble edge, noticing that “generally things are mild/ and tolerant at peripheries”; a misty spray barely dampens, but cools, wafting—

Like the smoke and scent, the music that blows through Fred Moten’s essay. Fred is following an otherworldly hint, seemingly insubstantial, but certainly substance, an aroma gathering and dispersing in air—

And then the air, the breath squeezed from the Prophet’s lungs by the angel’s embrace and with it, empty space so that there will be space for literacy, recitation, revelation. Through this scene we enter the four poems that we are honored to preview from Kaveh Akbar’s brand-new book *Pilgrim Bell*. The last of the four must be held up to a mirror—so that you see your own reflection stand behind the poem while you read “Behold...”

Another series of six poems follows by Rae Armantrout. Again, you are in a transitional element: “Crossing at dusk”, traversing girlhood. And then, you are college-aged, and hurtling in a bus down a clay road to Sri Bhuvaneshwari, through a memory of the poet Robin Coste Lewis, who received a graduate degree in Sanskrit from Harvard Divinity School.

Our own road also begins at the Divinity School. *Peripheries* prints a record of the readings hosted by the Center for the Study of World Religions, including Fred’s celebration of Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, whose

poems we are also privileged to include. In Fred's spirit, Bhanu Kapil and Sahra Motalebi reflect on their pedagogical experiments in the private notes they have shared. How to preserve those precious moments of community and revolt, voices that dissipate in air? Or across distances, like letters between friends. Each day for one pandemic month, the photographer Fazal Sheikh sent Terry Tempest Williams an image, and the writer responded. We have printed three of their correspondences, continuing our study of the intersections between visual and literary media. It is our hope that, traversing this wealth of diverse artworks and genres, you will form your own pathways and connections.

All of this is made possible by the ongoing support of the Center for the Study of World Religions and the Harvard Divinity School, and the hard work of a community of writers, editors, artists, and friends whom I thank profusely (we are particularly indebted to our senior editors, Eden Werring and Joel Werring). This year, our community has much to celebrate: Isabel Duarte-Gray's first book *Even Shorn*; Princeton University Press picked up Tawanda Mulalu's first manuscript *Please make me pretty, I don't want to die* (forthcoming in Fall, 2022). Amanda Gunn, another editor, was named a Stegner fellow. Chie Fueki won a purchase prize at the American Academy of Arts and Letters. And Genesis Jerez has an upcoming exhibition at the Utah Museum for Contemporary Art. But alongside these celebrations, there is far more to mourn.

Every path is interrupted by an encounter. Like Robin's bus ride on that road to Sri Bhuvaneshwari: the vehicle has stopped for something. It is not the almost-invisible, otherworldly residue we have been following, but rather what lies in the middle of the road, so substantial, so material and creaturely that we prefer not to look at it. But at some point, as Fred quotes George Herbert, "You must sit down... and taste my meat." We must be coerced to bear witness, like the water buffalo in Robin's memory, who "... must turn around and see/ what has happened to her, or she will go mad."

There are records of suffering from a difficult year in this 2021 issue of *Peripheries*. The special guest-edited folio collects new poetry from Gazan poets. We invited Mosab Abu Toha to edit a collection on the topic when he was a visiting poet and scholar-at-risk at Harvard University in 2019, and we asked Tayseer Abu Odeh to join him. We could not have known that this would coincide with the May 2021 attacks on Gaza. Many of the poets, most previously unpublished or untranslated, wrote their

contributions during that devastating month. And in its aftermath, Mosab and Tayseer curated and translated the collection with great care; we thank them. You will notice that some translations retain the original lines, which will benefit bilingual Arabic readers, but remain inscrutable to others. For them, perhaps those lines will speak to what cannot be translated; what is too distant, refused substance, kept out of sight, or must remain opaque.

Fred had, from the outset, warned us. He asked if poetry's concern for the world could approach it, and answered, "To expect to lose everything is not to sanction the loss or deny its brutality; it's actually to approach how absolutely incalculable the brutality is... that they kill every one of us while never killing us all is out of poetry's grasp, or star. Our winning is in that margin, where we mourn this continual maiming."

The final two poems that close this year's issue from Nicole Sealey have not, to my knowledge, appeared together in print before. The first 'Candelabra with Heads' is an ekphrastic written after the sculpture by Thomas Hirschhorn in a style, 'obverse', invented by Nicole. The first half of the poem is a mirror image of the second, which ends on a thesis line. That line, "Who can see this and not see lynchings?" was, at the behest of other poets, excluded from the version that Nicole chose to print in her chapbook *The Animal After Whom Other Animals Are Named*.

Now, Nicole has returned that line to its poem and written a second poem in its defense. She will keep the line, she writes "not because I don't trust you, dear reader/ or my own abilities. I ask because the imagination/ would have us believe, much like faith, faith/ the original 'Candelabra' lacks, in things unseen."

Sherah Bloor  
Editor-in-Chief



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## Periphery

Kay Ryan

Unlike igneous  
crystal-studded  
porphyry, famous  
since the Egyptian  
basin business,  
periphery is no  
one substance,  
but the edges  
of anything.  
Fountains, for instance,  
have a periphery  
at some distance  
from the spray.  
On nice days  
idle people circle  
all the way around  
the central spout.  
They do not get wet.  
They do not get hot.  
If they bring a bottle  
they get kicked out, but  
generally things are mild  
and tolerant at peripheries.  
People bring bread the  
pigeons eat greedily.

## Notes from a Blue Note in *The Gospel of Barbecue*

Fred Moten

The gospel of barbecue is spread as aroma, which is material hint, a forgiveness of what is foretold in the evangelical dispersion of gathered smoke. The barbecue is, as Zora Neale Hurston says and as Honorée Fanonne Jeffers reminds us, not of this world. What if it's not only not of this, but not of any other world, either? What if the barbecue is not of world, at all, which is not simply to say that it is heavenly but that it is also and more fundamentally cosmically and cosmologically earthy in being all but earthly in its grounded, grounding, but moving, feeling, real, surreal and ethereally vaporous nonlocality. Smoke is like music, in this regard: it's stubbornly attached to, is all but in love with, how it graphically disappears. As Eric Dolphy says, at the end of his last album, "When you hear music, after it's over, it's gone, in the air; you can never capture it again." It's just that air's already there – or, deeper still, that there's already gone – all up in the music, as music's shape and shaping, as the nothing around which it forms and which surrounds it. There's something deep about all this gathering and clearing in the life of the poor in spirit.

One of my very favorite poems is Honorée's "On Listening to the Two-Headed Lady Blow Her Horn." I Know. It's as if there were something all but infinite before and after and all through these words. Can there be a pause that is in and of something from way before it starts? Before is way back but it's up ahead, too, which further complicates, with further aeration, this poem of soft starts and sharp turns.

Now, before I get started, or maybe even in place of my getting started, I have to tell you that for a few years I've been serially ready to give up poetry. I've been feeling like poetry, and art, more generally, has been, as Jackie Wilson used to say, doggin' us around. If I've been ready to give it up it's because it seems like it keeps breaking its promises. But maybe it was me breaking mine. Either way, poetry keeps giving me back the single life I thought I'd surrendered to it. There's a doubleness in surrender – an act of will made against or in spite of one's will – that's given in how I am given these last few mornings to putting on Donny Hathaway's rendition of "Giving Up" when I get up. I want to give it up but "Giving Up" won't let me; my surrender seems like a little sacrament even though I'm ambivalent about this great gettin' up I give myself because I can't believe, now, in the resurrection that poetry – and more specifically

– black poetry tends to prophesy. What if the vision of another world that poetry is said to bear is just the image that confirms that what we cannot bear is the very idea of world? What if all that's promised is a deadly, deathly, endlessly rewarding equilibrium, wherein we sustain ourselves in the (perpetual reform of the) unsustainable?

These questions are all the more haunting because, at the beginning and at the end of the day, as Donny says, "giving up/is hard to do. I try and I try/and it just ain't no use." I can't let go of measure, which is just so immeasurably beautiful. I can't free myself of this romance of near distances, which is an experience of swarmed unknowing, a way of cloud and care that swerves and spreads out into plain, in continual extension that's always beside the point in being always beside itself. Poetry is overwhelming and overwhelming is a practice, as Honorée shows so clearly in silence's visual arrangement, her graphic score of space and spacing, through which flavored spirit drifts in disappearance. Duende wind, which is common wind, feels like that. It smells like the material spirit, the animateriality, of her blown horn. What does it sound like? It sounds like Matana Roberts's "All Things Beautiful": because double-headedness comes as one on beauty, the other one on terror, two statements in braid, gathered together at the opening of every song of praise, which is a cry of pain, which makes the music taste so good as it cooks and burns; because the soloist is more + less than one as we meet in our heavenly place on earth at the poplar tree, in what Jay Carter calls the black church of the bush harbor, where they be talkin' 'bout "where does it hurt?" like Ruby Sales, running like the wind to stand against the wind, running like a gift of spirit, an unworldly whorl of congregational air, charismata against the long wind of preacherly charisma and the cold wind of anti-blackness.

The barbecue is a supper that's neither first nor last. Love says "You must sit down...and taste my meat," George Herbert says. In my neighborhood, Love's name was Lillian Rhodes but Sgt. Rhodes, her husband, called her Precious. And when she said sit down, we sat and ate and, as she said, if our faces were greasy, she knew it was good. It's not that we didn't pray before we ate, it's just that in her cooking, in her earth and breath, pleroma, by way of aroma, turned to fleshy, fleshly quintessence. Divine power became haptic, pneumatic gift. Was it that the bones she served were so good that God wasn't good to us no more? From the perspective this question prompts, and within which it tarries, what always seems like a sin – but more and deeper and maybe even more repetitively original than that; more like "another fall of man" or fall to man – is the separation from, though it is always only in, the barbecue, though being in and not from makes it no less fatal or fateful. For Manolo Callahan, the barbecue is a practice of gathering that is both resistant and

pre-emptive. It is what it is for the poor to be against the sovereign, and against regulation, even in the precision of their thoughtful protocols. As in Baby Suggs' cathedral in the woods, the formgivingness of which Roberts and Sales beautifully describe, the feast of dissensus is held there, in praise of flesh, in the constant aftermath of its violation, its brutal bodily inscription.

But to say that, in Roberts's and Sales's and Toni Morrison's wake, is to consider the necessary overlap or palimpsest or overdub of the phrases war of conquest and war against subsistence. Callahan insists, within the context of our necessary understanding of the long duration of this two-headed war, that we are winning. And it's not that he's not right; it's just that, also, this war's genocidal attrition is absolute. In this war, we will have lost everything. We will have had to give up everything, too, which must mean that victory is given in that we are not reducible to everything; that all is not the same as everything or everyone. Now, how do we find a way to talk about that? Can poetry's concern with this world and its others approach this earthy, airy, fleshy all and nothing, which affirmatively generalizes the economy of loss and redress, or the lost and found? I know what I'm saying sounds kinda dreamy; and, worse than that, its cruel. You might think of it as a kind of wartime mysticism. To expect to lose everything is not to sanction the loss or deny its brutality; it's actually to approach how absolutely incalculable the brutality is. In this regard, and with regard to its highest plane, that they kill every one of us while never killing us all is out of poetry's grasp, or star. Our winning is in that margin, where we mourn this continual maiming. Every day we celebrate a mass for that in our gathering, in our assembly, and in the sharing of our needs and the practice of our obligations, our cargo, which we bear even in the murderousness of this war, so that we are always militantly for all of us even more than we are against every one of them.

At Central Catholic High School, in Pittsburgh, PA, my religion teacher spoke longingly of the mystical body – in a way that always seemed to speak to his desire for the physical body of the mentor who'd related to him a revelation that, being private, he couldn't have. But here, now, instead, let's consider the mysticism of the barbecue, which is given in practice, as the practice of a generative strike that bears and continually (re)accrues our knowledge of who we are, which is what we share. If, as Bertrand Russell says, metaphysics is "the attempt to conceive the world as a whole by means of thought," then (The Gospel of) Barbecue is an experiment in ante-metaphysics. It's not that this experiment is not thoughtful; it's just that it's flavorful, too and flavor doesn't so much put thought in its place but, rather, works (in/with) thought's placelessness, its (dis)placemeant, as Amiri Baraka all but says. How do displacemeant and carceral duress impact the places where we stay and the common (law)

life we lead in what Sandi Hilla and Alessandro Petti call "permanent temporariness"? We have to take that hard, preferential option for the poverty of insovereignty, for the poor in spirit, which art wants to bear but which art also seems to belie in being preacherly, in "standing over and against...movement," as Sales might say. Have artists, have poets, become the preachers of the movement? How can we bear that swarming, frenzied, choral, common, two-headed ladylike thing that blows through Honorée in a flash of having become-instrument, having given up artistic self-possession for aesthetic dispossession, which comes when, as Marx says, "the senses are theoreticians in their practice."

Maybe the barbecue is ante-metaphysical in its consensual refusal of the marriage of thought and conception, a marriage that seems elemental to the instantiation and exercise of kingly power insofar as it constitutes something like the ground for what might be called the reproduction of the very idea of origin. The general barbecue is how we practice earth, how we make a path by walking, in obvious pilgrimage, as Ivan Illich, Myles Horton and Paolo Freire say when they get together to jam, or cook. Meanwhile, our wartime mysticism is our understanding of this war's persistence and the necessity of our practice, our grounding, our sharing against it, and of how we defend what we do in the practice of it against the brutality of their attempt to steal, regulate, improve, objectify, accumulate, financialize, consume and destroy it all at once. We have to give up everything this war imposes upon us: as necessity, as reward, as object of desire, in favor of all we do, in favor of all as our common practice in its disruption of the relay between sovereign and subject, in rule of what is surveyed, and their object, which is given in their brutally single mind, as the world and all the things that make up the world. The renewal of our habits of assembly have to do with this enactment of all against everything, which is what they take from us and, at the same time, is what we must give up: that's what it is to refuse what has been refused to us in favor of the shar'd, striated wealth of common need. The poor in spirit share refusal to own as mutual aid and air and ain't. Honorée says, "I know."

What's a blue note? They say a blue note is sung or played at a different pitch than what is said to be standard within the frame of normative tonality. It might be thought of as a microtonal irruption or interruption, which puts irregular, emphatically irresolute or dissolute or absolute pressure on the standard, making a dissonant swerve that is simultaneously – atonally, pantonally – into and out of tonality, as if all the notes are held in the non-notes that are in between the notes so that not-in-between is just a way of mispronouncing all over. All the notes will have been given through the one who can't scat worth a damn, her rooted, rootless, re-routed and re-routing breath of roots animating all

manner of things with all things beautiful and terrible. But what if the blue note is unheard music in the midst of music, a hole at the center of the whole, a hole where world is supposed to be, maybe, or maybe a whole, which ain't no thing but all airy, earthy nothingness sharing differing inseparably, insovereignly, like unhoused birds. Roberts has a three-part, two-headed song called "Birdhouse," which she and fellow saxophonist Fred Anderson share like John Gilmore and Clifford Jarvis once shared the wind blowing in from Chicago. And I'm thinking of all the turbulence their blowing makes in order to imagine the stillness around which it's organized because it's that stillness, that unheard music at the music's heart, which blows through the chorus of two-headed ladies. So that there's a stillness in the middle that blows through and surrounds, a houseless refusal of mastery from which some monstrous *duen de casa* is derived, like a bad thought invading an otherwise good trip, "see her moving down/that mother of pearl,/the mute trailing/bones?" Still in the middle just won't stay home, which is why loving her is such hard work. Still's microtonal agitation is even harder to take when still takes no tone but simply prepares a table. The sweet swing of the unheard is hard to talk about. The critic's would-be mastery, which will have aligned, somehow, with the poet's erstwhile sovereignty, is undone by the feel of the unheard, its riotously sounded, blue, and smoky rasp.

## On Listening to the Two-Headed Lady Blow Her Horn

Honorée Fanonne Jeffers

She don't sing high  
and can't scat worth

a damn either but  
she breathes roots

into all manner of things.  
Have you hopping

like a toad frog  
into your next life.

All manner of things.  
Yes—rain and thunder.

All that but you  
Ain't prayed in so

long. Why bother  
with fancy now?

Once you found out  
who God was it

ain't good to you  
no more. I know.

Loving any woman  
Is such hard work.

Uh-huh. Tough.  
See her moving down

She don't sing high  
and can't scat worth

a damn either but  
she breathes roots

into all manner of things.  
Have you hopping

like a toad frog  
into your next life.

All manner of things.  
Yes—rain and thunder.

All that but you  
Ain't prayed in so

long. Why bother  
with fancy now?

Once you found out  
who God was it

ain't good to you  
no more. I know.

Loving any woman  
Is such hard work.

Uh-huh. Tough.  
See her moving down

that mother of pearl  
the mute trailing  
bones? There it  
is. Now listen:

the *duende* wind.

## The Book of Alabama : Chapter Coltrane

Honorée Fanonne Jeffers

*For Michael S. Harper*

I've been plagued by spirits    visitations  
of death    fire feeding off sheeted  
breath    Sometimes I see the bones  
of God's back turned to me

(Hands stroke the lynch knot  
and bear the cup I beg to pass  
There is no good news    I was born  
as wood    a thrown match cutting  
open the five wounds    On this ground  
I am a minor prophet)

And sometimes I see the loins of God giving  
birth to Her son    surely there is  
prayer in my horn's throat    wine  
in redemption    I stand on limbo's  
chasm    play    Each note shouts gospel

(Things ain't always gone be  
this way    This is how to get over  
Follow the hoot owl witness  
There might be consolation on this trail  
grace at the tree's root    I'm bound for the other  
side of water    My feet ain't meant to dangle)

Lord    I know I've been changed  
The only sound is morning    I call You  
by the thousand names You have  
whispered to me in song  
Speak Your red clay promise  
that blood cries out    rises from ash  
that You will not rest on the seventh day



## The Miracle

Kaveh Akbar

Gabriel grabbing the illiterate man, alone and fasting in a cave, and commanding READ, the man saying I can't, Gabriel squeezing him tighter, commanding READ, the man gasping I don't know how, Gabriel squeezing him so tight he couldn't breathe, squeezing out the air of protest, the air of doubt, crushing it out of his crushable human body, saying READ IN THE NAME OF YOUR LORD WHO CREATED YOU FROM A CLOT, and thus: literacy, revelation. He wrote.

It wasn't until Gabriel squeezed away what was empty in him that the Prophet could be filled with miracle. Imagine the emptiness in you, the vast cavities you have spent your life trying to fill—with fathers, mothers, lovers, language, drugs, money, art, praise—and imagine them gone. What's left? You live in what you aren't—a house useful not because its floorboards or ceilings or windows, but because the empty space between them.

Gabriel isn't coming for you. If he did, would you call him Jibril or Gabriel, like you are here? Who is this even for?

One crisis at a time. Gabriel isn't coming for you. Cheese on a cracker, a bit of salty fish.

Somewhere a man is steering a robotic plane into murder. "Robot" from the Czech robota, meaning forced labor. Murder labor, forced. He never sees the bodies, which are implied by their absence. Like feathers on a paper bird.

Gabriel isn't coming for you. In the absence of cloud-parting, trumpet-blaring clarity, what? More living. More money, lazy sex. Mother, brother, lover. You travel and bring back silk scarves, a bag of chocolates for you-don't-know-who-yet. Someone will want them. Deliver them to an empty field. You fall asleep facing the freckle on your wrist.

Somewhere a woman presses a button that locks metal doors with people

behind them. The locks are useful to her because there is an emptiness on the other side that holds the people's lives in place. She doesn't know the names of the people. Anonymity is an ancillary feature of the locks. "Ancillary," from the Latin ancilla, meaning servant. An emptiness to hold all their living.

You created from a clot: Gabriel isn't coming for you. You too full to eat. You too locked to door.

Too cruel to wonder.

Gabriel isn't coming. You too loved to love. Too speak to hear. Too wet to drink.

No Gabriel.

You too pride to weep. You too play to still. You too dope to cum.

No. Gabriel won't be coming for you. Too fear to move. You too pebble to stone. Too saddle to horse. Too crime to pay. Gabriel, no. Not anymore. You too gone to save. Too bloodless to martyr. Too diamond to charcoal. Too nation to earth. You brute, cruel pebble. Gabriel. God of man. No. Cheese on a cracker. Mercy. Mercy.



## Pilgrim Bell

Kaveh Akbar

I demand.  
To be forgiven.

I demand.  
A sturdier soul.

Every person I've ever met.  
Has been small enough.

To fit.  
In my eye.

## Ghazal for the Man I Once Was

Kaveh Akbar

If you're immortal, God better be too. Otherwise? Otherwise. Hello, have you disrobed? The nursemaid is stomping her hooves. Don't make her fret like that.

Dip a finger in your bourbon, tap it to your lip. Bad water. Bedwetter. Now watch these hands through your blood—jealous moths. How do they heaven, upset like that?

The hungry bear won't dance. Bad milk burnt her tongue. How to find your voice: try. You're bound to it like a knight to his century. Everything forgets like that.

The key, filed smooth to fit every lock, opens none. The bitter mourning uselessly in the rain. In the beginning was the eye, and the eye was wet like that.

Like a pin pushed through a plane of glass. Like life lasting longer than you can bear. Like a sundial gone bad. Like your own name. Dead set like that.

## In the Language of Mammon

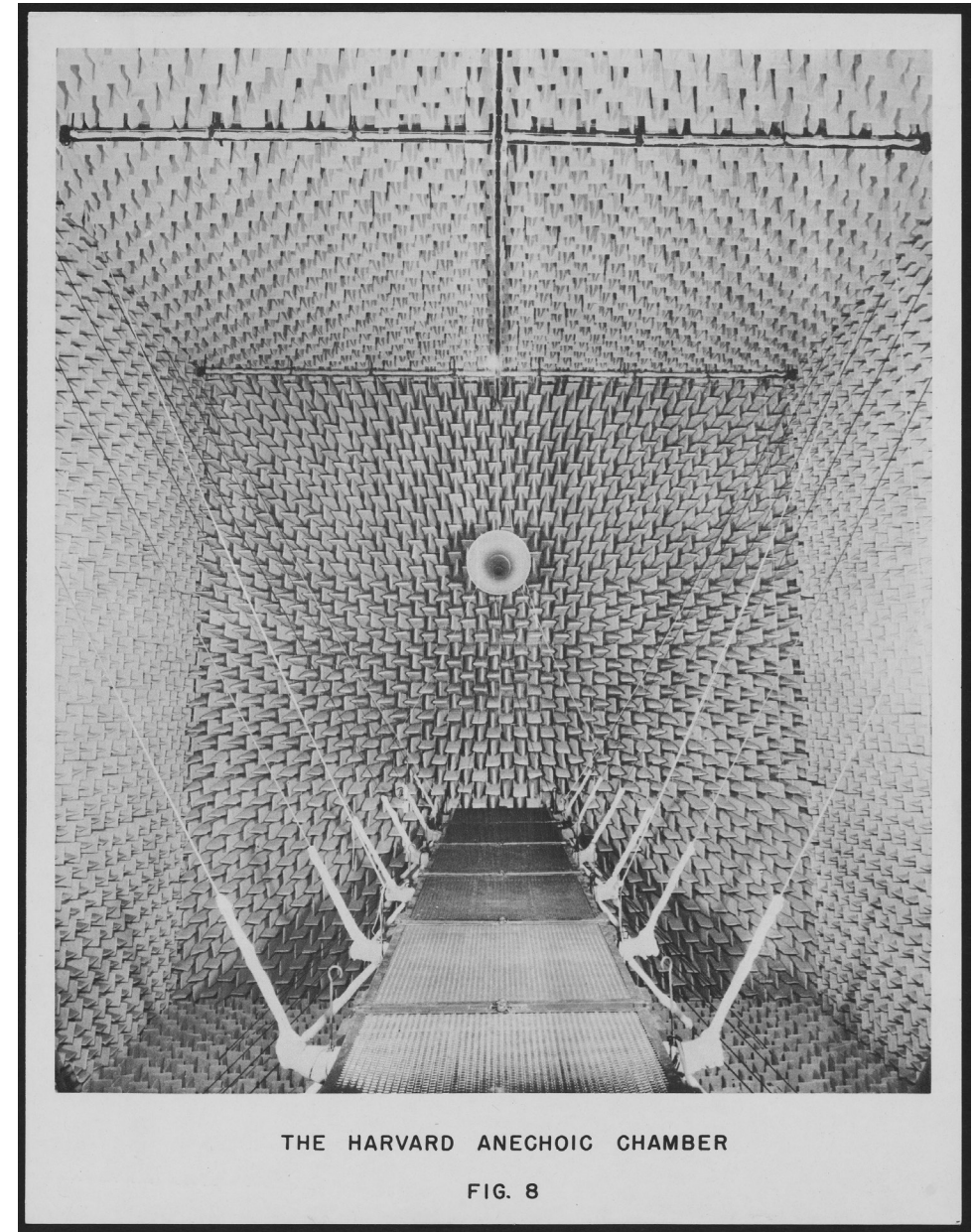
Kaveh Akbar

Behold the poet, God's  
incubate spit in the mud,  
chirping like ice in a fire.  
Sands to stir the stoneware horn.  
Sands to make money  
which he treats like food:  
fit as much as you can  
in your mouth, never spit.

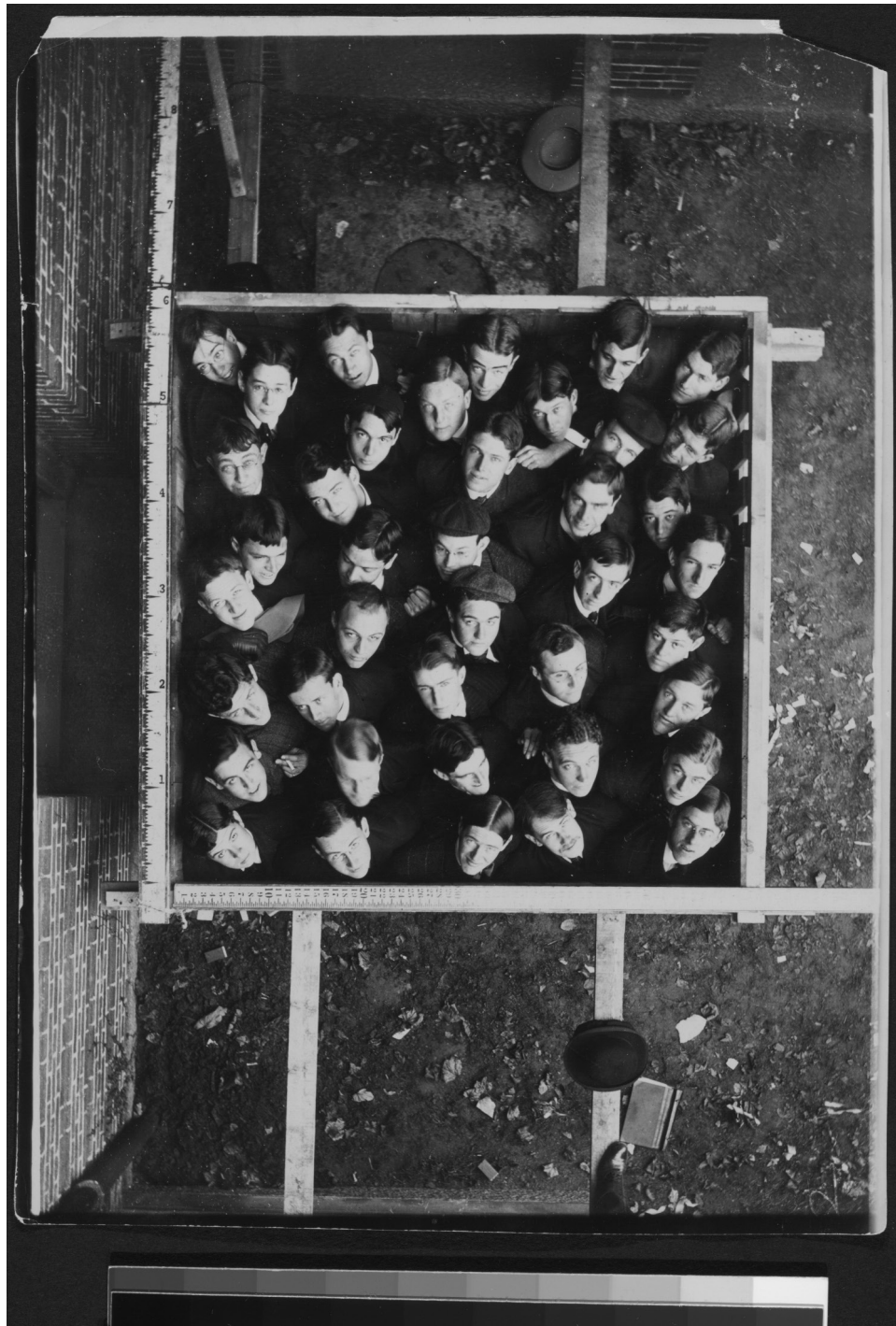
— His most intoxicating delusion —  
that live things are soluble in art.

History, butcher.  
Da mihi castitem et continentiam,  
sed noli modo.

Don't judge him  
by the first thought to enter his head.  
Judge him by the second.



'Harvard Anechoic Chamber Fig. 8':  
UAV 713.9013 (Fig. 8), olvwork383957. Harvard University Archives.



'Men in Crate Looking Up':  
HUK 363p (Fig. 8), olvwork175459. Harvard University Archives.

## Homey

Rae Armantrout

1

Steel-blue dusk.

Bands of light  
on the puddles

are “homey.”

Yellow swatches.

Do I need to fall in love  
each time I look up?

Does poetry?

2

Am I still asking  
if one word's

better than the rest?  
I must sound like a nut.

“Swatch” over “band.”

Strand over string?

Crossing at dusk

3

Homey  
as an attachment.

## Swarm

Rae Armantrout

The way I call this buzz  
of urgent voices  
rising,  
getting clearer,  
a “nap.”

\*

The way Sasha hears bees  
in the butterfly bush  
and runs back  
squealing,  
“I’m a doggy!”

## Given a Choice

Rae Armantrout

See the best of last month.

Take a first-person journey.

Watch an airplane  
make a battleship disappear.

Remember the blue and purple flowers  
now limp, white, spotted pink.

Scan the surface  
for anomalies.

2

We choose music  
for the way it bifurcates--

shifting as if  
it was moving on,

coming around like

to repeat  
was the same as

setting off.

## The Door

Rae Armantrout

*For Robert and Jess*

1

Again the endless  
brief cascade  
of white wisteria  
against that wall

as if “all along  
there’s been a sweet  
marriage” taking place.

2

I work at thought  
curation.

I don’t pretend this is a cure.

I merely hint  
that there’s a secret door  
connecting those two rooms.

For our purposes,  
it doesn’t matter

whether this is true.

## Bingo

Rae Armantrout

Madly petalled, these  
mock-orange flowers,  
tattered as the little  
passing clouds,  
will soon fall.

\*

A child plays matching games,  
placing  
the image of a cardinal  
on the image of a cardinal.



## Greek to Me

Rae Armantrout

1

I don't understand  
the word "makeshift,"

but I know how to apply it  
to the rickety, wooden  
unpainted steps  
in front of that house

or to this potted plant—  
two hairy, slender  
Y-shaped filaments  
on a long stalk

like a dousing stick  
or a TV aerial.

\*

I am told  
when I do well.

I almost understand  
the word "make-do."

2

You stand  
on the plump, strong legs  
you don't hate yet.



Vera Iliatova, *Encounter*, 2020, oil on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

## On the Road to Sri Bhuvaneshwari

Robin Coste Lewis



Vera Iliatova, *Sequestered and Apart*, oil on canvas, 2020

Not much larger than a Volkswagen. Smiling  
on the dashboard: Gurumukh. Marigolds  
so mild we can chew. What we call mountain  
they say foothill. A whole vibrant green

valley of terraced balconies, rectangular  
rice farms carved into every façade  
for seven centuries. Now and then  
a clay road washed out by rain. We wait.

Barefoot men in madras dhotis, bodies  
large only as necessity, hoist twice that in boulders  
back up the mountain, back to that place  
where the road had been.

Monsoon. Uttar Pradesh. Twenty-eight days of rain.  
At dinner, someone says, During  
the nineteenth century, all this water  
caused the British to go

mad. They constantly committed suicide.  
Later, someone else  
points out their Victorian cemetery.  
I smile—a little.

That. morning, seven langurs size of six-  
year-olds, grey and brown, white and beige, tall tails  
curling, jumped up and down, shucked  
and jived on top of my cold tin roof.

Somehow, I am alive.  
I know it is wrong  
to think of a decade as lost.  
The more I recover, the more I go

blind. Squat  
 naked beside a steaming bucket.  
 Hold a small cloth.  
 In Trinidad, one says clot.

The h is quiet.  
 A wafer of breath—just  
 like here. There's no telling  
 what languishes inside the body.

Not mist, but a whole cloud  
 passes into one window,  
 then two hours later,  
 out the other.

My American college students try out  
 their kindergarten Hindi: ha-pee-tal,  
 ha-pee-tal. Lips finger the sign's script,  
 then the United States break

open their mouths  
 into sad smiles when they realize  
 it's not Hindi, but English  
 written in Devanagari: hospital.

For the whole day we drive  
 along miles of wet, slithering clay  
 to find a temple at the top of a mountain  
 where Shiva is said to have once dropped

a piece of Parvati.  
 Every mountaintop made holy  
 by the falling charred body part  
 of the Goddess. An elbow fell

here; here  
 fell Her toe; an ankle—black  
 and burnt—Her knee. The road is wet and dark  
 red, and keeps spinning.

I sit behind the driver, admiring  
 his cinnamon fingers, his coiffed white beard,  
 his pale pink turban wrapped so handsomely.  
 Why did it take all that?

I mean, why did She have to jump  
 into the celestial fire  
 to prove Her purity?  
 Shiva's cool—poisonous, blue,

a shimmering galaxy—  
 but when it came to His Old Lady,  
 man, He fucked up!  
 Why couldn't He just believe Her?

I joke with the driver. We laugh.  
 Gurumukh smiles back. But then I think, perhaps  
 embodiment is so bewildering, even God grows  
 wrecked with doubt.

For a certain amount  
 of rupees, the temple's hired a man  
 to announce to tourists...During the medieval period  
 virgins were sacrificed here.

His capitalist glance mirrors our Orientalist tans.  
 You're lying, I say. Save it  
 for somebody pale. He smiles, passes  
 me a bidi. I'm bleeding, but lie

so I can go inside and see  
 that burnt, charred piece  
 of the Goddess that fell off  
 right here.

We climb up another one hundred  
 and eight stairs. At the top, I try  
 not to listen to anyone.  
 An entire Himalayan valley. Chiseled.

Every mountain—peak to base—  
 a terraced living verdant staircase  
 for the Goddess to walk down:  
 Sri Bhuvaneshwari.



## II.

At night, our caravan winds back  
     over gravel and clay. Ten headlamps  
         grobe the mountain walls  
             of the green-black valley. The road

is only as wide as one small car. Hours of dog  
     elbows, switchbacks, half roads.  
         Slowly after a turn, the driver takes his foot  
             off the gas, downshifts, coasts.

Black. Warm. Breath. Snorting.  
     Our car rubs against one biting grass off the face  
         of a cliff. Then another, taller  
             than our car. Then hundreds

block the road. Thick cylindrical horns scrape  
     the driver's window; eyes so white, black  
         pupils gleam, peering into our cab, grunting  
             and drooling onto the window.

Now the whole car, surrounded. Warm black bodies  
     covered in fur. Near their dusty hooves, children  
         sit on the ground, nested in laps, quiet and smiling.  
             Everyone embroidered with color:

silvers, metallic ochres, kohls, golds, reds, bold  
     blacks, all of it—and a green so green  
         I realize it's a shade  
             I have never seen.

A whole nomadic clan, traveling  
     with hundreds of water buffalo. At least  
         sixty human beings. There are so many  
             buffalo, our cars cannot move. And they can't move

the herd because a few feet ahead  
     a She-Buffalo is giving birth.  
         We get out.  
             And wait.

Out of habit, the students pull out their American sympathy,  
     but then the driver says all the women sitting there  
         on the ground, dusty, with children in their laps, dangling  
             their ankles over the mountain, adorned—all—

wear enough gold, own enough  
     buffalo to buy your whole house—cash.  
         The night holds. Life is giving birth  
             in the middle of a warm dark road.

Everyone in our party waits, smiling and gesturing  
     with the whole clan, surrounded by snoring  
         black bodies taller than our chins. We squat  
             beside their lanterns, stand inside our headlight.

The driver, who grew up in this valley,  
     speaks two dialects, four national languages, plus English,  
         cannot understand a single word anyone says.  
             Solid gold bangles, thick as bagels;

diamonds so large and rough they look  
     like large cubes of clear glass. The women stare through  
         their bright syllables. Then one lifts her hand, points  
             at one of us—says something—and they all laugh.

## III.

The calf is born dead. A folded and wet black nothing.  
     It falls out of its mother—still—onto the ground.  
         We watch it in the headlamps. Empty fur sack.  
             A broken umbrella made of blood and bone.

The mother tries to run. Several men hold her, throw  
     broad coils of ropes around her hooves. Two men, barefoot  
         in dhotis, grab her on each side by her horns. And wait.  
             They wait through her heaving. They sing

to her, they coo. Men who are midwives.  
 Through four translations, they say it is her first time.  
 She must turn around and see  
 what has happened to her, or she will go mad.

We wait with the whole tribe, wait with the whole night, wait  
 for her to stop bucking. Her hip bones  
 are as tall as my eyes. Her neck is a massive drum.  
 They do not force her, but they will not let her run.

She is pinned to the mountain, her black flat tail points down  
 toward her dead newborn. There are four hands  
 on her wide horns; four more hold the ropes  
 surrounding her haunches.

Finally, after half an hour  
 of buckling and grunting, she drops her eyes  
 and gives. She lowers her face into it—into the black  
 slick death thing folded on the ground—

and sniffs. Nudges the body. Snorts.  
 Then they let her go. She runs off, back  
 into the snoring herd.  
 Disappears.

#### IV.

One day, ten years later—one fine, odd day—suddenly  
 I will remember all of this. That night, that dark  
 narrow road will come back. Like a small sleepy child, it will sit  
 gently down inside my lap and look up into me.

Kohl and camphor around all the babies' eyes  
 to keep evil away; that exquisite smell of men  
 and sweat and dust; the unanticipated calm  
 of standing within

an enormous heard of sleeping water buffalo, listening.  
 To spend your entire life—out of doors—walking the world  
 with your whole family and neighborhood. To stay  
 together, to leave together. What a blessing, I think,

and then, What a curse!  
 My newborn is asleep in a red wagon  
 that says Radio Flyer. I have packed  
 a large suitcase and one box.

The World wants to know  
 what I am made of. I am trying  
 to find a way  
 to answer Her.

I place our things by the door. And wait.  
 Standing. Eyes closed. Looking. I want to  
 remember the carved angels flying over the tall bay  
 windows; the front door's twelve perfect squares

of beveled glass; the cloud-high ceilings;  
 the baby's stuffed monkey; the tribal rugs; and the photograph  
 of our tent in the desert that one soundless morning, on the floor  
 of a canyon in Jordan. All in boxes now.

The lights are on. The house  
 is empty. Night comes.  
 I smell the giant magnolia blossoms  
 opening.

Once, I thought I was a person with a body,  
 the body of something peering  
 out, enchanted  
 and tossed.

The baby wakes. He is almost four  
 weeks old. I give him a piece  
 of my body. He fingers my necklace  
 strung with green glass beads.

I tie him onto my back and think about the brazen  
 dahlias, nursed from seeds, staging a magenta riot now,  
 next to the rusty Victorian daybed, where he was conceived,  
 beneath the happy

banana tree out on the back balcony.  
 My father's gold earrings are welded into my ears.  
 My mother's diamonds are folded  
 into a handkerchief inside my pocket.

And then, as if  
 it is the most natural thing to do, I walk  
 toward the stairwell, and give  
 the World my answer.

All the way down the staircase, my hand palms  
 the mahogany rail, and I think, Once  
 this beam of wood stood high  
 inside a great dark forest.

V.

Thick coat. Black fur. Two russet horns  
 twisted to stone. One night  
 I was stuck on a narrow road,  
 panting.

I was pregnant.  
 I was dead.  
 I was a fetus.  
 I was just born

(Most days  
 I don't know what I am).  
 I am a photograph  
 of a saint, smiling.

For years, my whole body ran  
 away from me. When I flew—charred—  
 through the air, my ankles and toes fell off  
 onto the peaks of impassable mountains.

I have to go back  
 to that wet black thing  
 dead in the road. I have to turn around.  
 I must put my face in it.

It is my first time.  
 I would not have it any other way.  
 I am a valley of repeating  
 verdant balconies.

## Interview with Katherine Bradford

Rosie Osborne

*With an introduction written by Arthur Bradford, Katherine's son, in 2016.*

Many of us carry dreams like my mother did back then, but we find them harder to hold onto as financial and logistical realities set in. So too do the harsh preferences of our artistic culture. New and emerging artists are supposed to be young, we are told. That's where the cutting edge lives. By most accounts, my mother got a late start on things. She was over 40 by the time she got her MFA. Undaunted, she rented a studio in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, then a working class Polish neighborhood and worked downstairs from her friend Chris Martin, also a painter working to establish himself in the NYC art world.

As children, my sister and I would sometimes attend art shows with our mother, snatching chips and cheese off the tables, wondering why she cared so much about those paintings on the walls. We were proud of her when she began to have shows of her own, usually group shows at smaller galleries, often outside of the coveted landscape of New York City. And I suppose when we went off to college she felt a sense of freedom. She could devote herself to her work in a way that wasn't possible before. I'd come home to visit her in the 90's and she'd tell me about the new breed of young people wandering around that Williamsburg neighborhood where she now owned a loft studio. Every morning, when she wasn't teaching art, she would rise early and ride the subway out to that studio. She'd stay there until late at night, cooking her meals on a hotplate, returning home with paint-splattered hands.

She kept up this routine for years, unwavering. She turned 50, then 60, and while she saw certain successes, we could tell she wasn't satisfied. She'd speak of the difficulty of getting a gallery owner's attention in a world populated by young up and comers, the very students she'd spent time teaching were now out there making their own marks, passing her by, even.

About the time she turned 70, my mother eased up on her teaching, but she didn't ease up on her art. In fact, she painted with more focus and fury. She took on bigger canvases and made bolder statements. And lo and behold, the art world began to take notice. This winter my sister and I flew to NYC to witness her big solo show opening at the venerable Canada gallery in Lower Manhattan. What a feeling it was to see this huge space overflowing, packed with people, all crowding in to catch a glimpse of our hardworking mother and her paintings. Every



Portrait of Katherine Bradford in her studio. Photographed by Rosie Osborne in 2020



Katherine Bradford, *Yellow Suit Diver*, 2014, acrylic on canvas

piece in the show sold within minutes. I could've cried seeing this dream come true.

Yes, she is now making her mark, the one she had set out to make so long ago when she left Maine for NYC with us kids in tow. What I find especially remarkable about this turn of events is that the work we are celebrating is her most recent paintings, the art she has made in the past couple of years. Her work has always been good, but she's had some kind of breakthrough lately. She's getting better, more vital, and more vibrant at an age when many of us choose to step back and relax.

Yes, she's kicking ass in her seventies. And it's here that I hope you'll take some inspiration from this story. Perhaps you are an aspiring artist yourself. Perhaps you struggle to balance the rigors of raising children with finding a creative edge. It's hard, and not always rewarding. But what a wonderful dream it would be for us all to know that if we stick to it, and work hard, we'll actually find our groove down the line, and get recognized for it to boot. What a wonderful dream it would be to imagine that those kids we are now raising and cursing and cuddling might someday gather around us and say, "Wow, so this is what it was all about." How nice it would be to know that we might one day make our children, and those we love, so proud.



**Rosie Osborne:** What's your earliest memory?

**Katherine Bradford:** There were four children in our family, all very close together. It was lots of fun, it was very noisy. I have an early memory of when my parents went off on a vacation. While they were away, I got all of my brothers and sisters to make a scroll, done on shelf paper - this big poster that said 'Welcome home Mom and Dad'. I wasn't encouraged at all to make art, or to be an artist when I was young, but I remember that.

**RO:** Was there an artist in particular who had a profound effect on you when you were young?

**KB:** Yes. When I was in my 20s, I was going to go to Mexico with my brother, but we missed the plane. We ran over to the Museum of Modern Art and saw this fabulous Matisse show. It was so vivid and so colourful. The next day, we took the plane to Mexico. Compared to New York City, Mexico is just awash in wonderful, colourful clothing and art. I think the two together... well, I'll never forget that. It didn't occur to me that I should spend my life making art though. I didn't make the commitment to being a serious artist until I was 30.

**RO:** In a past interview, you mention the following incredible anecdote:

"I was living in Maine year-round in the 1970s. I had two children, and an ambitious husband, who basically wanted to be governor of Maine. When I realized the implications of that, I thought, "This is going to be a train wreck." I didn't want to get divorced, but I didn't think I could be the first lady in the governor's mansion. One day, my husband invited some colleagues over for lunch, and I told him I just couldn't hack it. I didn't want to be there for one more lunch. So, when the people came down the driveway to our home, I jumped out a window and ran to my studio."

**KB:** Strangely enough, this was a story I'd completely forgotten until my children recently asked me if it were true. Apparently they'd heard it from my ex-husband. I thought that was a curiously poignant way for that story to resurface. Actually I find it hard to believe I actually jumped out a window... but I did.

**RO:** It must have been a difficult realisation...

**KB:** I was married, and I had boy-girl twins. It was actually just what I wanted, only I also wanted to be an artist. I was sorry that it led to divorce... It was a moment of realising what an artist was, and that it was an entire way of life, and a way of going through life. That's what I wanted.



Katherine Bradford, *Fathers*, 2016, acrylic on drop cloth



Katherine Bradford, *Pool, Red Rim*, 2017, acrylic on canvas

**RO:** So what happened after that?

**KB:** It was the 70s and I was living in Maine. There were a lot of people moving to Maine that we would call 'hippies'. It was a wonderful time. That's when I started painting, very informally. There were a lot of poets, dancers, performance artists. We would all get together and listen to the poets read their poems. If you made art, you could put it on the wall. So I always associated making art with poetry. I didn't see it as a way to protest, or a way to change the world; to affect political and social issues. I saw it purely as a way to be part of a community of poets and painters.

**RO:** Did you ever write poetry yourself?

**KB:** I would love to be a poet, but I realise it's as complex really as painting... I don't think I could take that on. I have written some poems, and I guess they're not very good. It's really vast.

**RO:** You often talk about being part of a community of artists - is that an important element of your practice?

**KB:** I love being part of a group of like-minded people. It's really what has kept me going all these years. The painter Todd Bienvenu for example, he used to come over and stretch my paintings. You know, he could do it so fast, his arms were so strong, he could stretch dozens of paintings in a day, very quietly and quickly. I love the way he paints.

**RO:** If you could get any artist from history to paint your portrait, who would you choose?

**KB:** I like what Alice Neel does. She puts so much personality into her paintings. I can see why she might have been dismissed early on as a caricaturist as she includes the personalities so heavily, but I think now that's appreciated about her work. You look at the people she paints and you know exactly who they are. They're characters from her life.

**RO:** If you could take any artist from history for dinner tonight in New York, who would you choose?

**KB:** When I go to restaurants in New York, they're so noisy! I'd like to take a really lively one who would talk and listen... so that knocks out Marsden Hartley, who's one of my favourite artists. I'm not sure he'd be a lively dinner companion, I could be wrong! So someone like Philip



Guston I think. I don't really know any painter who doesn't admire him a lot. I think it's the way he uses paint. It's so daring.

**RO:** If you could have any work from history on your wall, by any artist, which one painting would you choose?

**KB:** I think it might be a Matisse. Do you think they'd let me have that? Maybe that painting of Notre Dame, which is so spare. It's such a modern painting, it's so abstract. Matisse left it in what many would call an 'unfinished state'. But he believed in it, and I would hope that if it was on my wall I could learn that kind of confidence. Plus the colours are great.

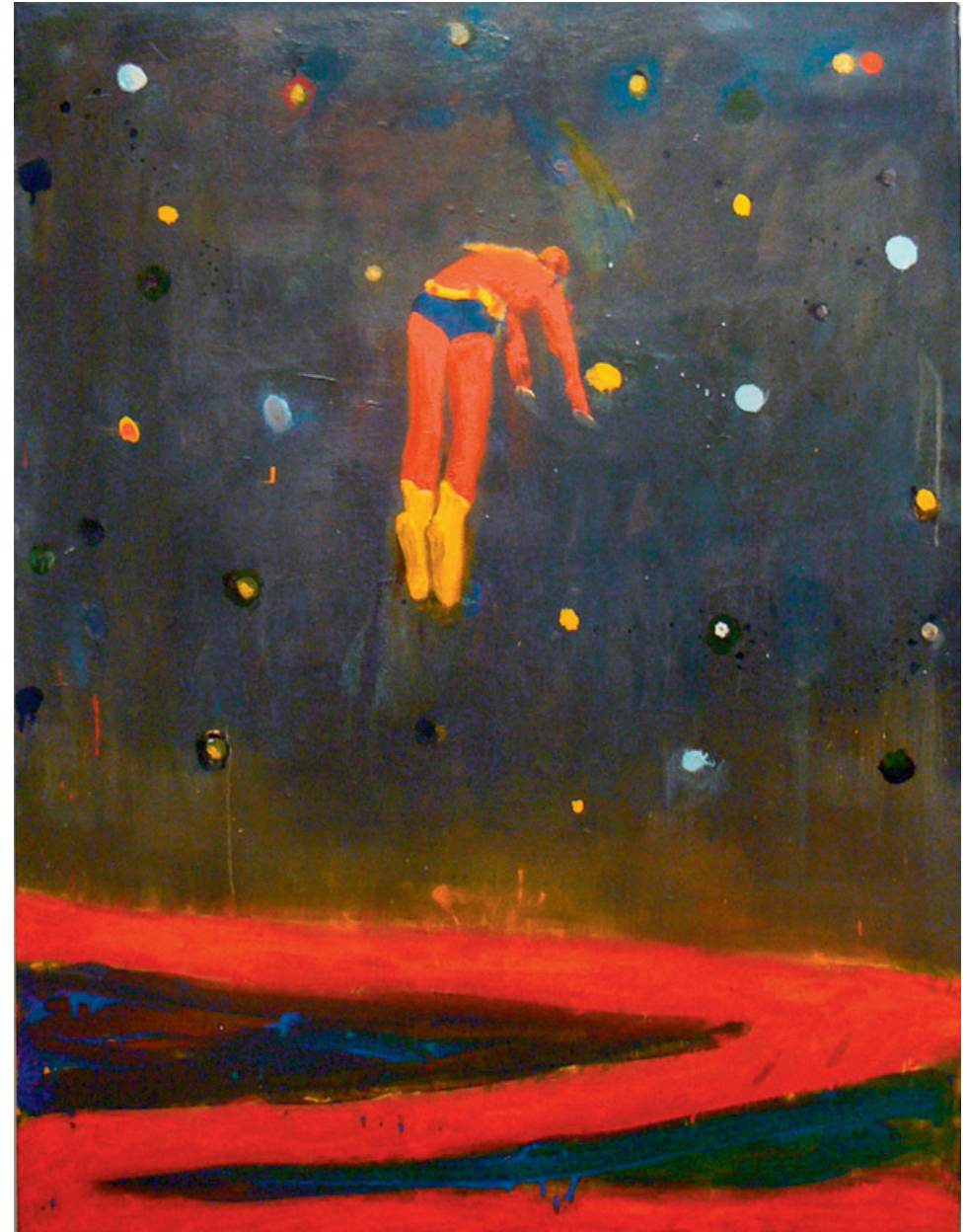
**RO:** Is there an object here in your studio that means something to you in particular?

**KB:** I have a few little talismans around that I put on the columns. You see, there's a very small painting over there that I made this summer that says 'protect your inner life'. I certainly don't want to sell it - I made it because I needed to have that message. I usually don't write on my paintings. Recently, I was asked, the way many of us are now, to respond to the political events going on. The worst thing to me is that our thoughts have been co-opted by the media and we all sit around and talk about the news, and we really should be protecting our inner life. I sort of resent how much the news events, the election, the whole thing, has taken over. In the studio here, it's important that I can relax and let myself do anything. It was very helpful that I could paint the furniture in here. You have the brush in your hand and you're not stopping yourself, you're not being too precious. You just sort of paint whatever you want.

**RO:** Do you ever paint from dreams, or do you dream about painting?

**KB:** I've noticed when people write about my work that they often use words such as 'dream-like' or 'other worldly'. I don't remember my dreams well enough to paint them. I think when I'm painting well in here, I'm in what I call 'a zone'. I don't turn on any music, I keep it very quiet in here and I don't have an assistant. There's no one else around, so I can get pretty deeply into the zone, where thoughts come in, and I don't have to worry about what I'm going to do next. I hope that doesn't stop.

**RO:** What are the most valuable lessons that you have learnt after all of the different experiences you've lived through?



Katherine Bradford, *Superman Responds, Night*, 2011, oil on canvas





Katherine Bradford, *Storm at Sea*, 2016, acrylic on canvas

**KB:** Well, I think I've gotten much more confident in what I make, that there's something worthy about it. I really didn't believe that for a long time. And you know why, because maybe there wasn't something worthy about it! It has taken me a long time to do the kind of paintings that I wanted to do. A long time. I notice that there are some young artists that start right out being very good, and probably believe in what they're doing. But I don't know if I could have done it any faster, I think it took all of those years.

**RO:** Almost as if the journey was as important as the destination?

**KB:** Well, yes, there's that, because I certainly had a very good time. Little things would happen, and they'd be so exciting, like the first time I had a painting in a museum - it was just thrilling. All that kind of stuff. But, my friends would tell me that they liked a certain painting, and I thought they were crazy, I thought they really didn't know anything.

**RO:** Do you think it was self-belief? Or was it curiosity? What do you think was driving you?

**KB:** I think what was driving me was to make that painting that I did believe in. And you know, that's a lifelong thing. So I still have to come here every day, to do that. Like you, I like to take pictures with my iPhone. So when I take the subway back to Manhattan, I click through my pictures, and I think how much better the paintings could be, if I could only have one more day! One more day and I could fix them. And thank goodness I get to come back for one more day.

**RO:** You talk about your practice with such a refreshing sense of gratitude and thankfulness - that you get to be living out this life as an artist. It's as if you're very aware of how...

**KB:** Wonderful this is? Yes, I am.

## Affirmations:

*Teaching Notebooks (2016-2020)*

Bhanu Kapil

Your partner loves you, or:  
You're cherished.

I hope it's not too painful for you  
To read these words.

I'm ready to shed my pelt, oh  
Lord.

Are you participating  
In this celebration,

Wolf that you are?

Return, belongings.  
Return, station.

\*

I've been trying to write poetry as I was directed to do and it's not easy.  
Easier each day. Sometimes, falling asleep, I'm gifted with memories and  
when I wake up, it's a mode of gratitude to write them down. At night,  
I was too warm. Good timing to return to a cold country, light drizzle.  
Stripes, waves.

\*

The money's in, but the experience  
I'm having on Zoom  
Is under-hosted.  
Days pass. My skin's

Still prickling  
With boiling hot

Ice.

Unlike the energy or memory  
Of a walk,

The event doesn't dissipate.

Don't give up now, m'  
Lovely.

\*

Is prose anti-communal? The fleeting thought appears mid-poem, and  
there's nowhere to put it. What the poem affirms is community and that's  
where I've been. In the dream, I'm a princess, but I'm looking for the  
public toilets. In the dream, I throw the roses off the balcony. The toilets  
are carpeted, an awkward message.

\*

You're so loved.

\*

"The normative's not a given. It's a product of corrective training."  
—Foucault/A. I leave my colleague to stand, a diagonal of flesh and

language, to get our coffee, observing the worn-down heels of the man in front of me. His Punjabi takes up space, implementing its own logic. The barista catches the eye of another customer, for example. Do I ever tire of analyzing that soft-tissue contraction, the hardening of the muscles around the mouth?

\*

Pay attention.

\*

On the first day of Diversity Seminar, I set my mug on the desk. The sound is small and big. Twenty undergraduate students glance up, then button their coats against the chill, in unison. Feeling sick, I ask the question I used to ask in other contexts: “What is this space for?” That question lands differently when participation is mandatory. Nevertheless, my heart is beating fast.

On the last day of the seminar, glancing out at the late spring snow, the plump white blobs and scarlet tulips poking through, I ask the question again, extending a piece of chalk. I set the chalk on the desk with a tock. This is my last day in this room, in this university, in this country. When I return from break, the eyes of the students are sparkling.

Burn everything to the ground.

We take it in turns to photograph ourselves next to that sentence. Someone’s brought a cake.

## The Great Pacific Garbage Patch Speaks

Kate Monaghan

i.

I have seen myself.  
My limbs my specks my dots of organs  
afloat. Sometimes a planet rumbles  
overhead and its weight like a road  
touches me. I remember the land.  
I remember those shores  
where my items formed  
so light as to be almost lifeless.

The ocean sings also.  
I drift coordinated  
in currents that spin slowly—  
my vortex—a million  
humming items that travel  
under the surface  
as gyre and subgyre pull  
what into their loop—what size—  
what surviving subset of particles  
together churning—

ii.

I know nothing  
about my little fears. Single use  
items fragile when the body  
wakes to wind  
through all my cavities.

My riches shift and I know  
I am not an island  
but eddies—what is flushed  
out from rivers—

out of the Yangtze,  
Indus, Amur, Mekong—  
out of the Nile—

iii.

This refuse  
of the land's great need.  
Its plastics, bellows,  
bleached nets.

There were fingers  
once on the ribs of this bottle—  
this twangling organ—what

on land was a container,  
a containing.

There form  
is a monster of indecision.  
And these are the remnants—tooled marks  
from the factory—threads  
on the neck—and I flee

out into the open: I skim,  
spreading where light shines  
& salt feasts & I burn  
& parch & time  
takes over my bodies. I sag

and gravity pulls  
the mouth up, holds  
these great plastic opportunities—

what is concave  
what is convex  
what floats  
what is sumptuous  
what is frayed  
what is gone  
what pecks you and tugs—  
then tunnels take you

the water turns  
and your blood is just a small drop  
of iron, it will dry  
even in the ocean—

iv.

When containers break open—

fear this—there is no  
island—then there is  
an island—delight  
you will never have—sometimes

voices call, holding  
riches up

this veneer of plastic—

flesh of confetti—

there is no pain but  
sometimes a thousand sounds

will show what I can't imagine

how I touch

toxic excitement

partially crystalline

never becoming  
something you know

I rotate  
over my bodies  
seeking dispersal

I peel myself—

help me

is not a thought  
 let it fail  
 melting through the skin  
 of each container  
 this is not an island  
 spreading in the water

## Tipping Point

Martine Thomas

of green glass & its edge. the edges multiplied, edges  
 aligned, as if spinning, through reflection,  
 mirror to mirror & the rearticulating never ends, these  
 unending ridges real or are they \_\_\_\_ . are they  
 only light. only image. points of glass  
 rugged, luminous, the smoothness of crystal, of fire, of each  
 fired crystal all together glass & searing thin &  
 sharp & into the flesh. before you  
 feel—glass—skin—apart—now in. wedging the melted the  
 sheetblown the tempered the clear  
 unflinching cold against the splitting vein. the collected  
 & contained vitals. 3,686 miles south they  
 collect. they collect everything. the land  
 greening & ridged, waterblown, \_\_\_\_ , oversoaked, troughed.  
 lie down in it or leave.

## In Service We Smuggle the Honey

Dan Rosenberg

here among the hexagons we are  
being no more than we can but less  
among the brood and food we nest in  
the cracked innards of a sycamore  
smoothing her bark about the entrance

welcoming as sunflowers we find  
our way inside by feeling alone  
we hum because we are useful here  
with four frail wings we alight here with

six dusty legs each bent devoutly  
our hearts unzipped to one heart on high  
even now in the dead months even  
here in the winter cluster we are  
faithful to what imperative burns

across us here in the comb swallow  
here we wish only for the skepper  
to offer up his eke his imp his  
generous nadir flex out our home

for room to rear our brood yes in our  
hollow chambers faithfully we swarm  
together with our wings beating we  
know our purposes our compound minds  
know the use to which our use is put

## Full Bodies Preserved Beneath the Lid

Dan Rosenberg

while eating sardines their needle bones  
light and tender as my ancient brain  
I crunch back primal to the beastly  
self our former selves all were godful  
in our hunger and sackcloth bodies

bent on the shore with lopsided crabs  
we are too partial for names yet here  
on the tide's target our history  
begins with nothing bright but this this

scooping out of life to fill our mouths  
with life and its ending juicy here  
in my glistening kitchen I slice  
my tongue along the tin oiled lip  
sharper than clam's edge this oval lid

leaves me bloomed with blood flow and sated  
as a gull circling through a heaven  
he doesn't need to believe in he  
just does what he does in the air he

traces his shadow across the schools  
of silver calories we cannot  
see as anything else with our white  
teeth our small hunting minds I hear mine  
singing atop my spine a red song



## Nobody said anything about the Pig

Rhea Dhanbhoora

Everything is silent and solitary on the lawns in the winter, except for a very particular time in the evening when everything is loud and lonely.

It's busiest close to sundown, when children have finished their homework and tank and tracksuit ladies are preparing for their one, two, three rounds around the colony and old folk have finished their salty wafers and spirits sans soda. As the sea foam settles into a gentle fizz and the orange flags wave gentler in the sultry evening breeze, the gated community congregates on the large green lawns with the white marble benches in front of the palm trees flanked by the barbed wire gates.

She cannot tell how long she has been seated, on this cold marble bench dedicated to another one gone up to the Tower, lowering the population count of a community constantly on the way out. One hundred, twenty four thousand, maybe more, maybe less. Only half of which are Parsi, they say, maybe more, maybe less. Numbers falling as quickly as all these wrinkled old faces around her were put to rest. Their eggs-bacon-brunmaska diet only partly to blame, no newfangled oats and kale any match for the passage of time. But she's never trusted numbers. Or the people who made up these numbers. The panda, like the Parsi, has been endangered for decades, and now they're simply 'vulnerable' they said, whoever they were, these people that went around counting people and animals because they were determined it was important to know just how many of everything the world had left.

The piglet she was watching had managed to wrestle through the hole in the barbed wired fence that the pye-dogs had so kindly chewed through for it. The dogs, left to their own devices by toddlers who had tired of riding their backs up and down the small slopes that made the large lawn, were resting under the palm trees, uninterested in the pink and black spotted swine trying to wriggle its way into what was usually their territory.

The animals most like people — was it Aristotle who had said that? She couldn't remember the last time she had felt the itch to roll in the mud, or wrestle with barbed wire.

Teenagers engaged in conversation about something called a Charizard walked past the barbed wire, swinging over it onto the hard concrete on the other side, pretending not to see the pig still rolling cheer-

fully in the little mud in between all the grass.

"It's a shame they're probably never going to care who Aristotle is" — She turned to a group of women on the bench next to hers, to no response.

The pig grunted gently, looking directly at her.

She looked away embarrassed, her hands tight in the folds of her nightgown, fingers lightly tracing the sprigs of lavender dotted across the cream cotton fabric.

"I can't give them pork in their tiffin boxes any more," the sentence slipped out of a wiry woman with citrine hoops sticking out of the sort of choppy, layered bob that always reminded her of the type of the lowland sheepdog. The type of dog she had always wanted and her father had insisted would be unsuited to the sweltering Indian summers.

"Nothing that another religion won't allow. It makes sense, catering to everyone's sensitivities rather than just a few."

"But, the ham sandwiches were just so easy to make..."

"Try a cucumber and butter sandwich, it really is the least likely to offend..."

No ham sandwiches. Her somewhat intolerant father would have been appalled. "A healthy dose of pork and bread for growing children," he would have said, lifting a thick moustache over the newspaper for a minute then diving back in, hidden until it was time to dip it into another glass of rum on the rocks.

She'd been on a steady ham-and-cheese sandwich diet through much of her childhood herself. Different days, she knows the women with the layered bobs would say.

"Just one more of those forbidden foods now" — accompanied by a sigh from another bob, face hidden behind the large Christmas tree that had been planted crooked in the middle of the lawn.

The woman in the sheepdog bob nodded in resignation.

"Don't let anyone control your diet!" she wanted to shout out from her marble bench, but was distracted again by the pig rolling in a patch of mud laid where grass from the lawn was drowned dead in a November downpour.

The grass sneaking up past the thongs of her sandals was suddenly soggy against her toes.

Someone once told her that the Chinese saw the pig as a symbol of luck. Or prosperity. Or was it both. She couldn't remember, but she knew it was a good thing.

"Have you seen *Laughter in the House* yet?" An old man who had forgotten to switch out his cloth and leather Sapats for more suitable shoes was asking his group of dodderly old men.

They sat in a circle in front of the flower pots lined up against one end of the lawns, spurning the marble benches in favour of more sturdy plastic chairs — more suited to ageing spines.

"Never heard of it," a particularly crotchety member swung his legs so they almost touched the stepping stones on the lawns that they sat around, peering over thick brown frames to make sure the dogs were staying in sleeping positions under the palm trees, waving his stick in their direction just in case.

"Collection of all those old ones..." she didn't catch the end of the sentence, interrupted by a little grunt and squeal as the piglet in the distance rolled over and over in delight.

"Sshhh" she hissed at it, then looking around red-faced.

But pig and people went on as if she were invisible.

"Wouldn't match up to the old nataks," they decided in unison, going back to complaining about the shoddy job the gardener was doing with the weeds and warning little children not to play cricket too close to their waxed and buffed cars.

Her only memory of the theatre had been a Parsi Natak, a production of some old Parsi play performed in Gujarati — the sort of play reserved now for special occasions like Navroze. She couldn't remember what it was called, only that everyone in the audience had been talking about someone called Adi Marzban and that the audience had been in splits over some sort of self-deprecatory humour she had been too young to understand. Her mother had refused to go to the theatre after her father died. Her mother had refused to go anywhere after her father died. Her childhood after the incident had been spent behind closed doors. Such a long time ago now. She barely remembered that little cottage on the other side of the city, the sort of cottage that stood in a line with others like it, soaking up the sea breeze and watching the occasional horse-cart pull along. Before all the cottages had been torn down and her mother had moved them into the gated community with the big red gates. Before the orange flags had started waving outside and the fresh flowers in the Waterford vase had been replaced by pill bottles piled over every inch of

the now-stained lace tablecloth on the dining table. Ashamed that her husband had taken it upon himself to die of something as effeminate as pneumonia when her own father had lived through a war and two types of cancer, the widow had decided that her child should be kept indoors as much as possible, lest she suffer the same weak constitution. "Books are better company anyway," she remembered being told as a child.

The pig was beginning to tire of the mud, walking boldly across the lawn, past the women in the layered bobs, the children playing cricket and talking about Charizard and the men on the plastic chairs discussing theatre, all the way up to where her toes were beginning to sink into the wet mud around her cold marble bench.

She looked down at the spotted creature just in time. A sing-song version of *This Little Piggy* was erupting across the lawns.

*This little piggy went to market* — she heard them all sing.

*This little piggy stayed home* — she followed.

*This little piggy had roast beef* — she looked around to follow the sound of the song.

*This little piggy had none* — the air sang but the people on the lawn pretended not to hear.

*And this little piggy cried "wee wee wee"* — she whispered softly as the pig began to nibble lightly on her toes.

"I can't believe they changed the name to Padmaavat," a ponytail flashes past on a cycle, the conversation trailing away before she could catch enough of it. She remembered only the beginning of this controversy about the period drama about the Rajasthani queen Padmavati from the papers — now seemingly resolved with, among other things, the switching around of letters. How long had it been since she had read a newspaper? The marble bench grew colder under her thighs as if in response.

Someone had once taken her to see a film called *Omkara*, a Bollywood adaptation of Othello that she had quite enjoyed. Unfortunately, she knew next to nothing about Bollywood and had been unable to continue a conversation outside the theatre with a group of people about whether this was Saif Ali Khan's best role and whether Vishal Bhardwaj was going to borrow any more of Shakespeare after *Haider*.

"Mostly everything in Bollywood is like Romeo and Juliet, you'd love it," she couldn't remember the face, but she remembered disagreeing. She didn't really *love* anything. She did remember watching a herd of pigs being driven through a river in a film with her Naseeruddin Shah, an actor her mother was extremely fond of, especially as she grew older and less likely to go outdoors. But the name and the plot escaped her, doing her no good in social situations where people discussed popular subjects



and she retreated to silence.

She could see but couldn't feel the little piglet, still nibbling on her toes. It had begun to look less like the pink and black spotted creature she had watched rolling in the mud and more like the Percy Pig gummy candy she made sure her cupboards were always well stocked with.

"Wonder if he's one of the Three Little Piggies," she said to a little child rolling a toy scooter over sharp blades of grass.

The little child continued to roll the scooter, pretending she didn't exist.

The scooter rolled over the rest of her toes, but she felt nothing.

Her mother said she was dreaming of piglets the night before she died. Something to do with stubbornness and imperfections, her neighbour had insisted on interpreting it as.

"Probably just a little loony, wasn't she?" she said down to the little piglet at her feet.

It looked up at her, then continued its nibble and dance around her toes.

She looked up and around, wondering why no one had said anything about the little creature, so strangely comfortable amidst the people, dogs, cats, birds and palm trees in the gated community that wasn't its home.

There's a single marble bench at the end of the lawn by the barbed wire fence that flanks the palm trees where an old woman in a nightgown splayed with lavender sprigs thinks she sits, imagining a piglet nibbling at her toes as they sink deeper and deeper into the wet earth. She doesn't notice the dark stretching over the sky, the plastic chairs scraping over the stepping stones as they're dragged off the lawns and the children and old folk disappearing one by one. The tank and tracksuit ladies finish their one, two, three rounds and hop across the green cover to the buildings now bustling with dinner activity, looking out over the cold marble benches across the lawns — all empty, the air now still.



Dana Frankfort, *People*, 2009, oil on panel, 48 x 36 inches

## Palinode

*A poem in which the poet retracts something said in a previous poem.*

David Trinidad

In my book *Answer Song* (1994), I included a prose poem called “Three Deaths,” comprised of three paragraph-stanzas. Each recounts a memory of a girl I knew in childhood who died young. The first, Joanne, was a classmate at Superior Street Elementary School in Chatsworth, California, in the 1960s. Thirty years after the fact, I describe her death as I remember it: *She was killed in a traffic accident—along with the driver and a dozen other kids, including the daughter of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans—on the way back from a Christian picnic.* I say that the bus went out of control after hitting a car and ran off a freeway overpass; that I saw, on TV, an image of the crushed, upside-down church bus. I also say that in school Joanne was called a “tomboy” (whereas I was called a “sissy”); that we were in the first grade and sat next to each other; and that the day after her death, someone left flowers, stems wrapped in aluminum foil, on her empty chair.

According to my records, I wrote the poem on January 29, 1992. I was probably still using a typewriter. (The worksheets of the poem are in my papers at the Fales Library in New York, so I can’t confirm for sure.) Even if I had a computer by then, I doubt any information about the accident would have been available. The World Wide Web went live six months earlier, on August 6, 1991. Today, twenty-seven years later, Google only brings up a handful of results. Several archived newspaper articles: one from *The New York Times* (“Roy Rogers’ Child And 7 Are Killed In Crash of Bus”) and one from a Ventura County paper called *The Press-Courier* (“8 die in highway crash; church bus rams 7 cars”). From these articles, I learn the true facts about the accident. It occurred six miles south of San Clemente in Southern California, on August 17, 1964, a Monday, on a stretch of undivided highway dubbed “Slaughter Alley” by locals, for its high number of fatalities. On the bus were sixty-five people, mostly children, members of the Disciples of Christ Chapel of



Dana Frankfort, *And*, 2018, oil on panel, 18 x 24 inches

the Canyon Church in Canoga Park. The driver was forty-nine-year-old Rev. Lawrence Elton White. They were returning from a monthly trip to Tijuana, where they had delivered food and clothing to an orphanage. The left front tire blew out, causing the bus to careen into oncoming traffic. It struck seven vehicles before coming to rest against a palm tree at the edge of a forty-foot bluff over San Onofre Creek. Highway patrol officer Merrel Kissinger said, "The palm tree may have kept the bus from falling down into the bed. If that had happened, it would have been much worse." Two of the children on the bus were killed: Deborah Lee Rogers (the twelve-year-old adopted Korean daughter of Western film and television stars Roy Rogers and Dale Evans) and her friend, eleven-year-old Joanne Russell, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Russell of Granada Hills. Debbie and Joanne were standing at the front of the bus, talking with the driver and watching traffic. The other six victims, a family visiting from Albuquerque, New Mexico, were in one station wagon: a twenty year-old woman, her two infant children, her mother and two sisters. Forty children on the bus were injured; they swarmed out of the rear emergency door screaming and bleeding. All of the seats had come loose in the accident. Children were thrown on the floor, pinned in the wreckage.

On Roy Rogers' Wikipedia page, I read that they lived on a 300-acre ranch near Chatsworth (where we lived), "complete with a hilltop ranch house." After the church bus accident, they moved to Apple Valley, California. I wanted to know more about Joanne's family, the Russells, but couldn't find anything. A subsequent Google search (as I was writing this) uncovered more than I expected. In his 1979 biography of Rogers and Evans, Keith Hunt describes the bus accident in gruesome detail. Debbie was thrown through the windshield and Joanne was jammed beneath the dashboard. Both girls were "terribly mutilated." Dale Evans prolonged telling Roy Rogers the news about their daughter, as he was in the hospital recovering from surgery. Robert Russell drove to San Diego and identified the bodies. Joanne's sister Kathy was also on the bus, and severely injured. Right after Joanne's funeral, Robert Russell disappeared. His wife thought he may have driven back East to be with his family. Two weeks later, his car was discovered behind a barn on the Rogers' ranch. He was sitting in it, dead from an overdose of sleeping pills.

In "Three Deaths," I say that the driver and twelve children were killed. Where did that number come from? And why picnic rather than charitable outing? Did someone really put flowers on Joanne's chair? If so, were the stems really wrapped in aluminum foil? Should I trust that exact (and suspiciously poetic) detail when I got some of the most important facts wrong? Hold on: It was summer. School wasn't in session. That's why the children were traveling on a Monday. No one could have left flowers on her chair. "Drawers of memory never full," writes Pierre Reverdy. Like Joanne, I was eleven years old in August 1964. Not in the first grade, but about to start the sixth. This means I would have known Joanne for at least six years. Better than I remember? Roy Rogers was known as "King of the Cowboys." In our family room, I watched repeats of his television show. Did I really see, on the same TV, the crushed church bus? On Find A Grave, I locate Joanne's headstone, which she shares with her father Robert. (They're buried in Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery in Chatsworth, less than three miles from where I grew up. Movie stars like Fred Astaire, Gloria Grahame, and Ginger Rogers are also interred there.) "Russell" in raised, all-capital letters across the top. Lit candles on either side, flames casting saintly sunburst rays. Names and dates (written in stone) on facing pages of an open book.



## Harlen

David Trinidad

I've never known much about my mother's father. Only a few things she told me when I was growing up. That he married her mother, Marguerite, against the wishes of his parents. That they lived in Sierra Madre, California. That Marguerite was a supervisor at the telephone company; Harlen, a policeman and member of the fire department. That when Marguerite discovered Harlen had lost their savings in a poker game, she came home and beat him, as he lay asleep in their bed, pretty badly, with her silver hand mirror. Which led to their divorce. That Harlen died three years later, when my mother was six, of a burst appendix. In my possession (after a recent trip to California, to visit my ninety-year-old father): several boxes (which I packed and shipped to myself) of family photographs and slides. Among them: two photo albums from the early 1930s. The black pages in each are beginning to crumble around the edges; they shed whenever they're turned. (I remember looking at these, and similar albums, when I was a child, but their black-and-white world was distant and unreal, and the people in it, though related by blood, mysterious strangers.) The first album, evidently kept by Marguerite, tells, picture by picture, the story of her marriage to Harlen. The day of their wedding. Their honeymoon (in sepia tones) in Yosemite. Posing in front of their home (a five-room cottage with a canopy swing on the porch and a striped awning). Both of them lovingly holding my infant mother. Shots of the happy family before the hand mirror. The narrative ends abruptly (there are many blank pages) when my mother is three. My favorite photo: Marguerite and Harlen, newly married, standing shoulder to shoulder, forcing smiles for the camera. Marguerite (pretty—she was once crowned Queen of the Wisteria Vines—but somehow doomed; she will die of leukemia when my mother is fourteen) wears a sweater over her stylish art deco dress, and white stockings. And gently cups a puppy in her hands. You can see her wristwatch and wedding ring. Harlen: hair parted down the middle, big ears, prominent nose,

handsome tie (askew) and three-piece suit. He holds a pipe (as he does in many photographs; in others, he holds a cigar). And is portly. (He looks like a young Alfred Hitchcock, which makes me like him.) They both have dark circles under their eyes. (When I was in California, I posted this photograph on Instagram with the caption "Grandparents I never knew." Eighty-two people liked it.) The second, smaller album, evidently kept by Harlen, contains photographs of him in uniform, and newspaper clippings about his exploits as a police- and fireman. What I gleaned from these faded notices: that when summoned to the scene of an accident—a car driven by one Martin Johnson "had almost literally wrapped itself about a telephone pole"—he found Mr. Johnson "uninjured but for a cut chin." That he once acted as chief of police when his boss was on his honeymoon. That he testified at the trial of a Mrs. Ida J. Brown, who "got even" with her abusive husband by "hurling lye in his face as he slept." Harlen told the court that when he arrived at the residence, Mrs. Brown was lying on her couch crying, "I did it! I did it! Now he'll suffer as he made me suffer!" That he carried Mrs. Louis Karpf, who was unable to walk because of rheumatism, from her burning home. When a twelve-year-old schoolgirl (whose name was, oddly, Marguerite) fell sixty feet to her death while hiking in the San Gabriel Mountains, Harlen organized the search team that retrieved her body from the canyon floor. Two weeks later, when a man prospecting for gold fell twenty feet into the same canyon, Harlen was one of four firemen who used ropes to pull him to safety. In the articles, his name is often misspelled "Harlan." I sense that this might have irritated him.

What else have I learned about my maternal grandfather from the memorabilia in my possession? That he and Marguerite went on a fishing trip in the High Sierras. (There are photographs: Marguerite seated on a rock overlooking a wooded lake; Harlen in jodhpurs and hiking boots, laced to the knees, straddling stones in the middle of a

stream). That he had a friend named Edward who seems to have had health problems—skinny, walked with a cane. That he was born in July (a Moon Child like myself, which makes me like him even more). That he bet on race horses and football games. That he liked to eat and drink. That he looks like he had a sense of humor, and liked to have fun. In my sister Linda's possession: Marguerite's hand mirror, that she used to beat Harlen. My mother kept it on the vanity in her bedroom. Linda texts me pictures of it. Tarnished silver, the back embossed with cherubs and winding roses. The mirror, miraculously, is intact. "It's heavy," she says. "It must have hurt." (Thankfully Marguerite didn't use lye.) There are deep dents on one side. Such blows would have killed Harlen; Marguerite probably struck the headboard. Linda will polish it, pass it on to her kids, who will pass it on to theirs—Harlen's great-great grandchildren. My other sister, Jennifer, tells me that after Marguerite threw him out, Harlen took up with a woman (a follower of Christian Science, like his family) who had a young son. When he was dying, surrounded by Christian Scientists, Harlen begged to be taken to the hospital. His pleas were refused. "So in essence they murdered him," I say, "in the name of God." He was thirty-four years old.

Also in my possession: every key, apparently, that Ruth, my mother's aunt, Harlen's older sister, ever owned. Strung on a circular steel ball chain—the charm bracelet of a giantess. In the photo albums, there are pictures of Ruth holding my newborn mother. And many of Ruth, who never had children, standing alone. Impeccably dressed and accessorized—hat, gloves, jewelry, purse (with keys in it, no doubt). Ruth survived two husbands, who left her well-off. She liked to travel. Lived into her eighties. At the end, she said to my mother, "Marguerite ruined Harlen's life." I guess she'd waited a lifetime to tell her that. It hurt my mother deeply. Still, Ruth left her a large inheritance. Some of which my mother bequeathed to me and my siblings. I've always felt gratitude to Ruth: With her money, I was able to pay off my graduate school student loan and expand my vintage Barbie collection.

## Interview with Chanda Feldman

Sam Bailey

*Chanda Feldman is the author of Approaching the Fields (LSU Press, 2018). Her poems have appeared in journals including Poetry Magazine, Conjunctions, Cincinnati Review and Ecotone. Feldman is a past recipient of the Wallace Stegner Fellowship at Stanford University and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference Bakeless Camargo Fellowship. She has taught creative writing at Cornell University, Stanford University, and currently teaches at Oberlin College.*

SB: *Peripheries* is published out of the Center for the Study of World Religions and Divinity School at Harvard. I'm wondering if we can start there. Would you be comfortable speaking about your religious background?

CF: Sure. I grew up in the south in Nashville, Tennessee in a family that attended a Missionary Baptist Church. "Missionary Baptist" meaning, to my mind growing up, basically a Black church. Both of my parents were also raised Missionary Baptist in fairly close-knit Black church communities. My father's family lived across the street from the church that my great grandfather founded and for which he was a minister. My mother's family lived in a very small Black community that had the church at its center. But my father told us, his children, that we didn't need to...that we should expose ourselves to more cultures, explore the religions of the world, and choose. He did not go to church very much himself. I would go with my mother. I went to Sunday school, too. I was baptized when I was nine years old at the church and I think I was happy with that experience. But I was always questioning religion in the way a lot of young children do. I would ask my childhood minister questions like: let me get this straight about Jesus? And how does that work?

I also went to a language and practicing arts high school. You were invited to attend if you had a certain combination of scores – GPA, state test scores and if you proved gifted on some other test. But the secondary, maybe primary project of the school was to desegregate schools in Nashville. They were bringing in students from all over the county to create a desegregated high school. This is relevant because it meant I was fortunate to go to school with people who were very different from me. I had friends who practiced Judaism and friends who practiced Islam and

friends who were Hindi and Buddhist. One of my best friends was Unitarian, and I went with her to her church too for a time.

Then, when I was in college, I happened to have a Jewish roommate. She did not grow up religious, but decided she wanted to practice. And I said, “Okay, let’s do it. Let’s have Shabbat dinner, let’s celebrate the holidays.” We would read and figure it out together. From there it was a slow accretion until it became my community and part of my life.

And at some point I thought, you know, the structure of Judaism is particularly meaningful to me. The prayers were meaningful to me. In college, the schedule is externally imposed, so finding some internal order can be really difficult on your own, but Judaism helped me do that. And it resonated with me like: I want to take a moment and make a connection back to what I feel grateful for, and here’s a structure that makes sense to me, and is not so far away from the biblical context I grew up with.

Then I fell in love. My boyfriend was Jewish and had grown up in a university town in the South, in a small Jewish community there that was Reform. And so slowly Judaism just became part of our routine. And more and more I found that it spoke to me in a way that alleviated something I can still struggle with. I found that my relationship to an idea of the Divine can be in flux, and that can be okay. Sometimes I can feel closer, and sometimes further away. A faith that is unwavering is not a place I felt like I could really be all the time. But I can still be part of the community where I can focus on my deeds and the way I decide to live my life and interact with others and help others.

When I got married it became a more formal question, whether I would have to convert or not. My husband said it wasn’t so important to him, but I decided, well, I’ve been doing this in some way, I probably should make it formal. I had been away from the Christian church long enough that... I think culturally there are still markers there that are really strong for me in terms of the ritual of a Black church. But in terms of what really resonated with me on an intellectual and emotional level, and in terms of living my life, it felt like Judaism worked for me.

SB: Thank you so much. Given the context that you just shared, some of the content in your poem “First Winter,” is especially thrilling. It came out in *Image* last April—I really love that poem. In it you write “Underground, the pipes overhead/ hissed as I took the stairs up to the chapel.// In the sanctuary, I repeated a childhood prayer/ I knew some of the words to. I’d skip/ a lecture and want to skip them all—” I don’t want to assume that you are the speaker of the poem, of course, but could you speak to the relationship between your religious observance, and maybe – you are a professor at Oberlin – your life in the academy and in the classroom?

CF: That poem is an older poem I wrote, gosh, maybe fourteen years ago, which I recently revised. It wasn’t in my first book, but – this might seem surprising – I don’t think religion was really on my mind when I wrote that book. It was part of the background environment though.

I was thinking about this when I gave a reading at the University of Notre Dame in 2019. A graduate student who picked me up from the airport said, “I really appreciate the way in which you bring the idea of religion into the everyday and into the domestic and to the order of life.” I thought, yes, I want to think about that more. I guess, religion was a part of the everyday order of life in the communities that I was writing about.

For many, religion forms the social network, a protective network, in a segregated South. It is a part of this continuation of the African American tradition. I am thinking about how one reserves hope when you’re in a society that doesn’t recognize you as a full person. So how do you maintain a sense of integrity and dignity and a sense of the sacredness of self, but also of the world itself? And how do you give that to your children and believe there is something better out there? And I think the Black church plays an important role in that way and has for a long time. So I think that’s probably where it originated from for the poems in my first book.

But that poem you just quoted is a little different in that it talks about my personal experience rather than looking to the past. It is fairly autobiographical, to do with a difficult transition for me moving to my undergraduate institution. I had a hard time seeding myself in that world. Where do I belong in this kind of academic tradition? What do I have to hold on to? I was the kind of person who wanted to prove that I could do this and rely on myself alone. Then I found that I didn’t necessarily have the resources yet. So I would skip classes occasionally and go to the chapel, which was very different architecturally from what I was used to growing up. I used to sit there and pray because I didn’t know exactly what else to do. In retrospect, you know, that’s not a bad thing to do. But going back to my room, and going to class, and working on my paper might have solved the problem as well. It’s such a classic transition in the life of many students, moving from home to college and trying to adjust academically, socially, as well as personally in terms of identity and values.

SB: I’m wondering if we could just take a moment here, if you wouldn’t mind, to read the first poem in your book, *Native*, which people must ask you to read a lot—it’s tremendous.

CF: Sure, I’ll be happy to read it:



## Native

Chanda Feldman

Forget kudzu, that closed weave,  
its green congesting trees, the way it twins  
a telephone line's length with vine, its only message  
to overrun.

Forget the river's muscled sweep  
where nothing intrudes  
and stays the same, water changing  
what it washes through—retooled

stone, redrafted bank. Forget the difference  
between foreign and native. Anything  
can take hold here and spread. Indiscriminate  
landscape. Even the road flinches

alive—a snake whips dust and slinks to a ditch.  
Air's adaptive, lifts whatever needs flight:  
spore or song. The day's margins blur  
dark and light. Forget the dead

stay down, they persist as haints. A murky story  
sticks to any relationship:

beloved or despised. A confederation  
binds enemy and alliance, just as

the ground takes us in  
and decay makes us kin.

SB: Thank you. I'm curious about what you have watched for in your surroundings. And what you are watching for currently as you write poems for this second book?

CF: I think as a poet, you have to be attuned to observing. You go through the world watching everything, trying to make sense of it and ask questions. In particular, I am watching for a change in environment over the course of time. That sounds fancier than I really mean it! I'm just watching the seasons. Like, what's blooming? What are these things called around me? Somehow knowing those things help me feel grounded in a place.

I've lived in lots of different places so this grounding is important to me. Most recently I've lived in Israel for six years. I have been looking at that landscape through my children's eyes; it is one place where they feel at home. And I have also been thinking about seeing myself as a Black person in such a different cultural context, and also seeing myself in relationship to other Black communities. For instance, I didn't look Ethiopian, which is the majority African diaspora of Israel. Yet at the same time we share an ancestral continent. What if anything does that mean? And then, what does it mean to me to live in a Jewish state and in relation to other marginalized groups—Palestinians, and also Arab Israelis, Bedouin, and Christian groups.

SB: I love this idea of seeing through your children's eyes. The presence of children or childhood is consistently, insistently, present in *Approaching the Fields* and also some of your newer work. I am thinking specifically of "Money Tree" out in *Poetry*, October 29, 2019 and "They Ran and Flew from Me" in *Southern Review* this past winter. These are very different poems, yet childhood pops up again. Do you want to talk about that? Its presence in your poetry?

CF: At some point I wanted to try to introduce children into my work and to do it in such a way that I saw the strangeness of being a child. Not necessarily thinking about my children as individuals then, but thinking about the concept of childhood. And the ways in which children become the basis of a culture before they even know it. How does that happen? How does culture become a part of our lives and shape who we are? So, children are a kind of conduit for me to talk about those kinds of things in a way that gives me some distance from myself.

Those two poems come from very different places. “They Ran and Flew from You”, which I’m really happy is going to appear in the *Best American Poetry* anthology for 2021, is set in Israel. I began writing about a park we used to walk through every day on our way home. And then by the end it was about nationalism. In that park there were kids poems written by well-known Israeli poets on the back of utility boxes and banners on the street. The kids would want to stop and read the song until they could follow along as we were reading. And then eventually they just knew them. They’d be playing and then they all start reciting one. So “They Ran and Flew from You” became about how we get our sense of nationhood or sense of where we belong, and don’t... And more specifically, how do children’s songs form a shared cultural foundation of belonging?

“Money Tree” is based on a photograph by David Hammons, the artist that was in the exhibit at the Allen Art Museum here in Oberlin in 2018 called “Scenes from Black Life Since 1968”, curated by Andrea Gyorody. Andrea invited me to write something in relationship to the pieces and to give a poetry reading. So, this was one of those poems. I was struck by the symbolic language of a photograph of a tree in the side yard of someone’s house. And the way Hammons printed the picture, it has this silver luster. Everything shimmers. It’s beautiful. But in the middle of the tree is a bicycle wheel that has been slammed into the trunk perpendicularly, so it’s become a basketball hoop. What I could relate to in that piece, and thinking about childhood, is the idea of having these dreams that we want to see come to fruition and we think that if we put our all into it, it’s going to happen. But there is something also at play in the title of that piece. Within the context of the neighborhood that Hammons photographed, there are inequities, forces that will impede on the purity of that dream that have nothing to do with it but are going to make that kind of achievement difficult, even if you have the skills.

SB: Thank you. Would you read “Money Tree”? I think that would be a lovely way to close the interview.

CF: Sure. And it was a pleasure to talk to you, Sam:

## Money Tree

Chanda Feldman

*After David Hammons*

A shine to the bark, silver leaves aflicker  
and the wound that made the basketball hoop:  
a bicycle’s metal wheel gouged in the tree,  
the trunk’s burred lip that clamps it.

Whose childhood monument is this?  
In the foreground of whose childhood home,  
its blind-drawn windows? Where is the adolescent  
of the grass and weeds, after school? The adolescent

of the fluid leap and jump shot? Of the glissando  
stride and lay-up? The plosive *woop woop* cries sent up  
when the body satisfies the calculating eye?  
O the tree ashimmer in hypotheticals’ blooms—  
where’s the undissuaded youth who sought  
a scarce grace here? Who sought to make bank?  
The shoulder and arm and wrist on repeat  
even as day went thoroughly dark

who refused to come inside until they exhausted  
the audience of their mind? O extraordinary dunk,  
O hard slam, shudder the immovable tree.  
Where is the glimmer of a sign

one might one day rise among the ordinals  
to be ranked *first, first, first*? Wouldn’t  
it be possible? Because *if not, if not, if not*.

## Prayer

Tawanda Mulalu

Everything I like is like that man who first thought to take that picture of that starving black child waited for by that black vulture in that Sudan. I like what I write. I am hurting myself by liking things. My words are maybe taking pictures of myself starving me. I tell myself stories in order to clutch my throat. My throat is clutched. Please make me pretty, I don't want to die. I want to sleep now. I know I am holding this so tightly with sleep. I know I am screaming towards this with my sleeping. People are not asking of us because they are busy. I am not asking of us because I am simulating being busy. What should we ask of in a world whose only word is "Work"? This is the best deal. This is the unasked-for gift. If I saw a starving black child my first thought would not be to take this picture of myself. Or wake. Everyone is dying. There are such pretty words for this.

## Elegy

Tawanda Mulalu

My life tomorrow, will it sleep. I don't know if other dances are with me. Not only that I've just cut my toenails, but that frightening impotence of my pillow during the day... When I asked for the beloved, did your voice sound as a torn leaf. Pressed you to my lips and not even the faintness of a whistle. Pretend symbiosis, your skin. Its inner resources revealing myelin. Iai unsheathed. Hey, love— to be so gorgeous is sin. So declares my facial hair while withering its patchy borders. If I said I loved you, would the bicycle not abandon itself into a line without a pedaler. Invoke again the transcendent sky. It turns the copper sulfate color of an experiment during a life-defining exam. Breath with me. So, brain decides it wants to be with myself. So, all you have is your voice, I. If another brain complains of another unnamed *thou*: then *fugue*, let everything be fugue. All heartbreak is the exasperation of collective unconsciousness. Movies exist. When you stopped singing, I heard the clouds darken. To remember you properly, say, a face, limbs, a glimmering neck, or teeth bedazzling as ancient sewer pipes... Here then, name this impulse towards your death, *my* lungs. That they shrink then enlarge. Nothing is as threatening as a pattern. Nothing is as precise as the casual nuisance of a neuron deciding light. Dare me to say your name and see the lightning brighten softly. I tire of the burning bush. I tire of the well unlit by the technicolored dream coat. Also of the quiet theatre, regretting psalms. Carefully. Scratch this screen. Dial the code and get lucky. My voice begetting song. Begetting not brain, but mind. Sing with me, love. What music is left is the calm disappearance of ice from poles, the smiling of children before the end of children. Listen: a love song is complete with discord. You call it *life*, I say *respiration*.

## Him

Walter Smelt III

What to do about him. Where to put him. Though he does take up less space now: for instance the *h* of his pronoun is smaller than when I was a boy, when I couldn't reach up even to the crosspiece of that furniture made long ago with skill (maybe by the Shakers), couldn't get a handhold even with serifs' help. But now what to do I don't know, which is what I tell people: "I don't know," not that I'm sure there's nothing bigger, though certainly I respect those gentlemen going around angry in their top hats that are oh-so-black, from under which they'll pull nothing out by its big blank ears whether or not you asked for their one trick. I wonder if they capitalize their *n*, as we did in my day with him, coronating him with capitals like a Roman column I thought held up the sky. Or no, he's furniture, I forgot. Even in his glory days, I remember, he'd only let you glimpse him sidewise, through similes, like an eclipse. But furniture, yes, old wood, a pew I guess, an uncomfortable one.

But when I say that now I can reach to the top of his name, I don't mean I'm taller. More like the joke about the old man who said he knew he was stronger than ever because, when young, he couldn't bend his erection with both hands but now etc. More like a joke on us, on him and me, trying our best to clutter up an increasingly bare room, me still not daring to put my feet up or put a glass down on him without a coaster, but sometimes using him to get to sleep at night, a rickety bed.

## Hear

Walter Smelt III

The light declines  
my calls I haven't  
talked to anyone but  
dogs today I read  
to a black Lab mix  
with mange some harsh  
words from Ezekiel  
she's less impressed  
than Judah though judgment  
touches even the clean beasts  
and approaches her seven  
times as fast as me  
if in actuarial  
tables we rust  
waiting tables  
always frightened  
me can't multitask can't  
unitask I can't ask too  
much of me why then do  
you O Lord when all  
is inexplicable move-  
ment a snake whose  
head and tail  
get lost in  
leaves as it shakes  
its way away all  
is this dog here chasing  
her thinning tail  
blur and mange  
her wagging  
makes a breeze  
and turns the onion-  
skin so Ezekiel's onto  
hope the remnant the remnant  
hear O Israel the Lord  
your God is one  
bad mother

I mean the Lord your  
 dog is I mean  
 the Lord is not  
 yet through with you  
 though you hang broken  
 from his jaws

## Arcadia

Katherine Noble

I.  
 I saw a man with his head on fire lying in the dry vines  
 Oh God, I knew it was you, naked neck, wide set eyes  
 Five angels waft dressed as awful flies  
 I ran away, you, halo still shining, behind  
 Do you understand  
 The flames making a kind of whistle

The angels scratch their cellophane wings  
 This patch of blue thistles cuts marks across my ankles  
 My athletic suffering is often confused for selfishness  
 Passion is often confusing  
 Pasteurize me, Lord

II.  
 When I was young and the countryside was green  
 We owned a green bird  
 His wings were clipped  
 He could hang upside down on my finger

I had a pony, too  
 Coat long for cold months  
 I braided the mane to calm the mare  
 One two three cross, one two three cross  
 Bells on her ankles to be happy  
 Our breathing green in stone barn  
 Tongue working down the salt rock

III.  
 July I was five I wanted to see what was inside  
 Screaming like a runt pig  
 I took a piece of shale from the stream  
 I sliced between my ribs. Only moaned once  
 What is there that fights you so  
 Father asked, bandaging the wound  
 The flies flew, landing on my wet palms

I closed my eyes and saw you  
 Young as me, bare chest, head shorn  
 For the hot months, little hands collecting interesting stones  
 Touching animal bones so gingerly like a skeleton  
 Would hold the soul of a stag  
 Of an inconsequential green bird  
 What is the word  
 Like you loved them all

IV.  
 Then visions came  
 Visions without decoration, without florals, sword, decorum  
 Visions like drinking from a public fountain, like heel of rye  
 Like a boy kissing his mother with shut eyes

Once, everything was green  
 Even the sky even this noisy stream  
 Now stars spectate my paralysis at safe distance  
 Allium bulbs rot beneath our bodies  
 Sweet leeks and ramp reek keeps spreading

V.  
 Now my hair grows my body itches in this heat  
 Now warfare now brown singed birdwing of hand  
 Now the space between you and me radiating like bonfire  
 Martyr quartered  
 Her pockets filled with tin crosses, beloved's initials  
 hammered in the center  
 Lord, when we are over  
 Do you emerge to meet us  
 Or do you still wear that mask. You turned  
 Insisting Moses see only your back  
 So his bald face did not burn away  
 Out of love

## Eve With Seed In Her Incisors

Katherine Noble

I.  
 Eve it is evening  
 Eve thirsty even with loud waterfalls  
 Eve with tongue in ear  
 Eve a dream without men in it  
 Eve the garden pulses  
 Eve with trowel in hand  
 Eve naked except gardening gloves  
 Eve pregnant  
 Eve knows it will be a man without teeth with only breast thirst  
 Eve drags her belly against the ground  
 Eve pounds her belly, the purple fruit falls from the vine  
 Eve bleeds  
 Eve at peace

II.  
 Eve does not speak to Adam  
 Eve tries to believe Adam when he says he hears a voice  
 Eve the garden shakes with gold  
 Eve a dream without men in it  
 Eve dreams an animal who drags its belly against the ground  
 Eve asks Animal hanging from olive branch for company  
 Eve wants to understand why loneliness but not cure it  
 Eve asks Animal if he knows what death is  
 Eve hears Adam swear he will never die

III.  
 Animal says do not be afraid  
 Animal says mortality makes you beautiful  
 Eve says what is beauty  
 Animal says beauty is a fecund tree in a rotten garden  
 Eve says what is garden  
 Animal says perfect bodies cannot be beautiful  
 Eve asks if death is lonely  
 Animal says it cannot be more lonely than watching horses in a garden  
 Eve says what is horses



## IV.

Eve asks if she dies, will she still feel thirsty  
 Animal says when you die you will always be thirsty  
 Eve says no, no that will not do  
 Eve thirsty even with loud waterfalls  
 Eve dreams of music, which she has never heard  
 Eve wakes

## V.

Eve sees all the trees are rotten except one  
 Eve examines its swollen purple fruit  
 Eve opens fruit  
 Eve's wet lips  
 Eve thinks she hears the voice, realizes she is shouting  
 Eve knows Adam will want to wound her when he sees her  
 Eve knows this makes her beautiful

## VI.

Eve living corpse  
 Eve with seed in her incisors  
 Eve thinks the day suddenly is so hot

## VII.

Eve sees Adam vomiting  
 Eve sees Adam weeping, calling for the unbearable voice  
 Eve aren't you miserable, she thinks the voice says  
 Eve has always been naked  
 Eve ashamed  
 Eve says Adam save me  
 Adam says I will save you  
 Eve syphilitic with insight  
 Eve says Adam I'm dying  
 Adam says the voice will come and save you  
 Animal says to Eve see how simple it is to lie?



Matt Phillips, *Untitled*, 2020, pigment and silica on canvas, 30 x 24 inches





Matt Phillips, *Untitled*, 2021, pigment and silica on canvas, 30 x 24 inches

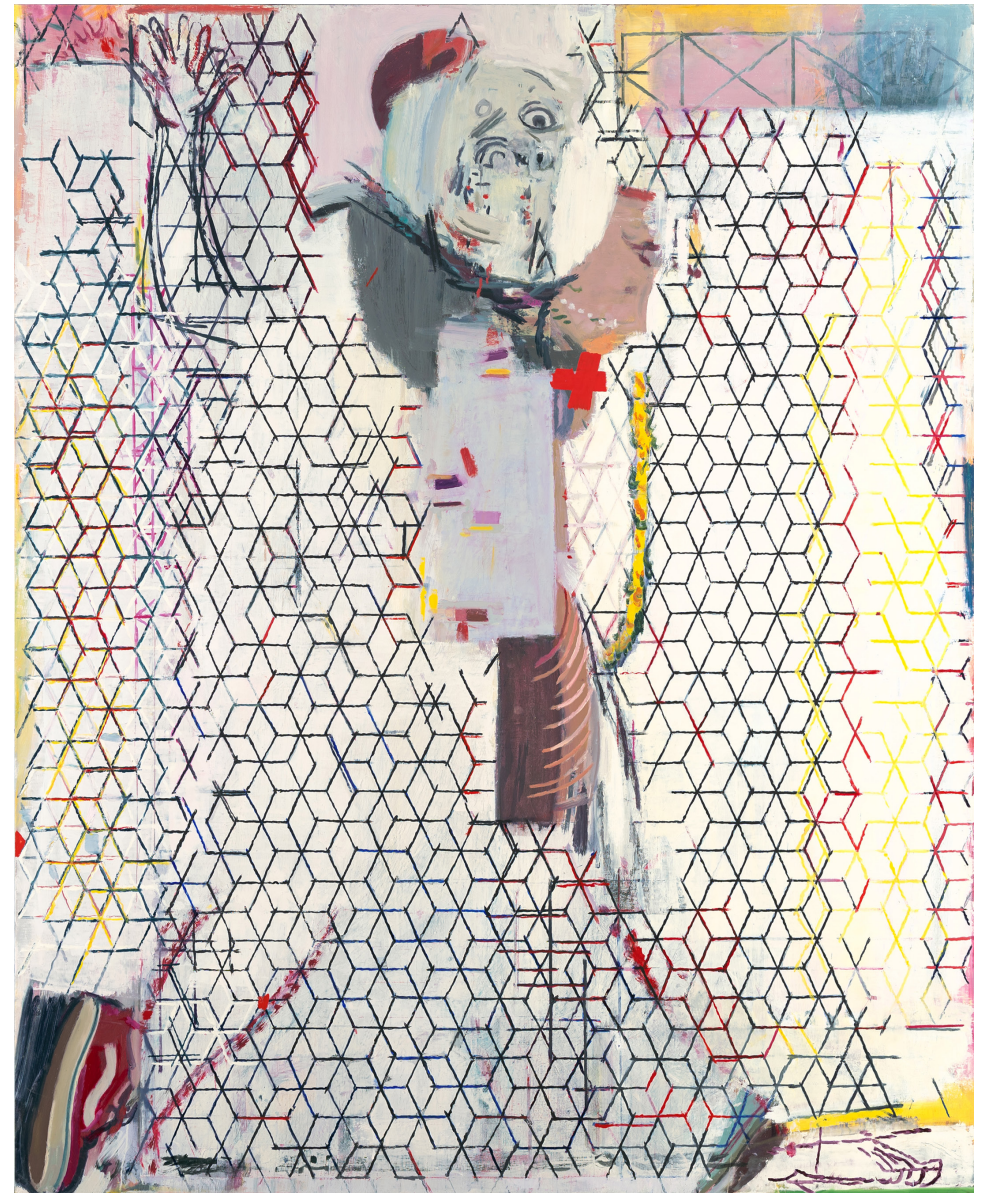


Matt Phillips, *Marlin*, 2021, pigment and silica on canvas, 30 x 24 inches





Sangram Majumdar, *whispers left wanting*, 2019, oil on linen, 78 x 64 inches



Sangram Majumdar, *becoming 1*, 2021, oil on linen, 78 x 63 inches





Sangram Majumdar, *expulsion*, 2019, oil on linen, 44 x 38 inches, Private collection

## Words Surviving Siege and War: Poems from Gaza

Mosab Abu Toha

I don't decide to represent anything except myself. But that self is full of collective memory.

-Mahmoud Darwish

Texts are not finished objects.

-Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*

Following the expulsion of Palestinians and the destruction of over 400 villages in 1948, the Gaza Strip, an area of around 141 square miles, was flooded with refugees. Refugees currently constitute 70% of the Gazan population, which now amounts to 2.1 million people, more than half of whom are children. There are eight refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, the largest of which is Jabaliya, where approximately 100 thousand people live in an area of 0.5 square miles.

All of the poets in this collection are refugees, and some of them were raised, and still live, in refugee camps. Every poet has lost a family member, a friend, or a neighbor. Some have had their houses or work-places destroyed. And all live the nightmare of never-ending waves of terror (between 2008 and 2021 alone, Gazans have been subjected to four extremely disproportionate attacks by Israel, with every assault claiming the lives of hundreds of civilians, mostly women and children). While one poet lives in exile, most have never been able to leave Gaza because of the blockade (it's nearly impossible for a Gazan to secure a visa.)

Four of the poets included in this collection were born after 1990. They were born just before the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the formation of the Palestinian Authority in 1994. They have watched Israeli planes firing rockets at cars and buildings. They have joined marchers carrying martyrs through the street to the cemetery. They have lived the horrors of the devastating 2006 Israeli attack on Lebanon and Gaza, and then the 2008-09, 2012, 2014, and most recently, the May 2021 assaults.

Most of the poems in this collection were written during or after the May attacks this year. The collection features seven poets, including its guest editors.

Hamed Ashour's first poem is about Shaima Abul-Ouf, a girl in her twenties who lost her life in the al-Wehda Street massacre, which killed 44 civilians in an early morning bombing. Shaima and another 12 of her family members were trapped under the rubble of their house and died. Anas Al-Yaziji, Shaima's fiancé, waited in the hope that Shaima would be pulled alive from under the rubble. But when they found her body, she was already dead.

Ne'ma Hasan is a Palestinian prose writer who also writes poems. In the first of her two poems, she celebrates the strength of the Gazan mother: "When everyone's fast asleep, she stands to shield against death." "Was Eid a Trap?" is Hasan's second poem, which mourns the fate of children in Gaza. The May 2021 attack was planned to coincide with Eid celebrations, not only ruining the children's joy, but proving a trap. In the early morning of day four of Eid, 18 children were killed in one attack.

In his short poem, Waleed al-Akkad offers an ominous picture of relations between the children of Gaza and Israeli soldiers. And in his second poem, al-Akkad invites the reader to consider the Palestinians differently, that is, humanly, describing the moment a building collapses on its inhabitants.

Mona Msaddar, a graduate in English Literature, takes us on a journey inside her mind, where disappointment, detachment, and estrangement lead her to reject the world, the world that has ignored her. These feelings are widespread among Gaza's youth.

Nasser Rabah is one of Gaza's established poets and important voices. Born in 1964, he has published five poetry collections and a novel. Electricity has been a dominant problem in Gaza since 2006, when the Israeli military bombed Gaza's sole power plant. In his first poem, "An Egg in a Frying Pan," Rabah describes the moment the electricity switches off. In his second poem, "A Letter to the Pilot," Rabah reproaches a military jet pilot who bombs Gaza and returns safely to his base.

A descendant of Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Tayseer Abu Odeh explores the theme of exile.

In his first poem, "A Widowed City," Abu Odeh stares "silently at the wounds of my living memory," attempting to portray Gaza, the widowed city that he never visited. In "A Lullaby from Gaza," the poet prom-

ises to rename the maps, the cities, alleys, citadels, and dreams, yet isn't sure if that would change anything. He grows older. In "The Thresholds for Mourning," the poet travels further into exile, his blossoming fades, autumn predominates, he becomes "a lullaby without a cadence." Caught in a mystical labyrinth of uprootedness, his subjective exile "sprouted beneath his skin" in various forms, opening up new sites of hope and emancipation.

Obtaining a Ph.D. from the United States, Abu Odeh has a deep interest in post-colonial and cultural studies. He is also the author of *The Consolations of Exile: A Personal Account* (2019).

The first time that the present author, Mosab Abu Toha, left Gaza was in 2019 to join Harvard as a visiting poet and scholar at risk. A bilingual Palestinian poet, fiction writer, and essayist, in 2017 he founded the first English-language library in Gaza, the Edward Said Public Library. In February 2021, just 3 months before the May attack, he visited his family in Gaza.

In his first poem, "My City After What Happened Some Time Ago," Abu Toha moves in and out of the past and the present, searching for the city, as if in a continuing nightmare: "The city no longer exists but in the holes in the earth." Similarly, in "silence of water" and "In the War: him and houses," landscape and memory are both scarred as the poet ties to hold onto and marks down the details of daily life: "b/w pictures on walls are searching for colors at night."

Girding the poems, Heba Zagout's paintings draw Gaza into brilliant color and life for the reader: the sea, flowers, doves, and family. And because Gaza is part of historic Palestine, a painting of peaceful Jerusalem is included.

Mosab Abu Toha and Tayseer Abu Odeh guest-edited this special folio on Gaza for *Peripheries*. All the poems except for theirs were written in Arabic and translated into English. Great attention was paid to this task by a community of translators (we thank Peter Dziedzic, Hadi Fakhoury, and Sherah Bloor especially.) Because the poems were originally Arabic, we decided that it was important to include some poems in the original, and some lines were kept in Arabic on purpose. This way, the English-language reader can witness words that have survived colonialism and siege and think about how they experience the speech of those who suffer the same; what is communicated and what is left opaque?

We believe it is essential to showcase the creative work of Gazan writers. From the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish until today, Palestinian



poetry is the poetry of resistance and resilience. The poetry of searching for a beauty buried under rubble or beneath uprooted olive trees. Here, beauty constellates with the political; the subjective 'I' aligns with the collective 'we;' and the "aesthetic is freedom," as Darwish once put it.

Gazan poets are an extension of all other poets in the world, from the East to the West, who translate into words the ever-present and continuing sigh let out by the first human in such a disturbed world.



Heba Zaquot, *Old Jerusalem*, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, 100 x 80 inches





Heba Zaquot, *Me and My Son*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 80 × 60 inches

## From Anas Al-Yaziji to his fiancé, Shaima Abu Al-Ouf, whose body he recovered after two days of searching

Hamed Ashour

Well, Shaima,  
I love you so very much, and more  
and again, I am under attack  
since we hung up the telephone three days ago,  
when five missiles hit your family's house.  
Since the dress rehearsal and the henna night,  
since our last words together, our state of happiness.

منذ عيد و زغاريد  
وجارات وصديقات و مواعيد لحفل الزفاف  
منذ أول اولادنا المؤجلين وأول عنادك  
أقول : أريد طفلاً واحداً

Since Eid and ululation,  
since neighbors, friends, and wedding dates,  
since our first postponed child and your first stubbornness,  
I say, "I only want one."

you say, "no, I want a clan."  
I love you so much, and more, and again I'm under attack,  
my hand in my pocket, my mind in its place.  
I say, "O, Shaima,  
a warplane has passed by,  
the bell and the minaret have fallen."

and you say, "it is alright, the doves remain."  
I say, "they have smashed the window."  
You say, "that's how light's freed"  
I love you so much.

But now I am under attack, as always,  
and under rubble.  
Traders and bastards will come, attend conferences,  
auction the land and its last few survivors,  
form committees, reconstruct towers, and rebuild ruined houses.

And our house, my love,  
our little home, we built stone by stone before bills and debt drowned us  
and quarrels overwhelmed us - the color of sofas and of walls  
and where in our backyard we would plant the grape's seedlings.

We will get back the streets,  
the minarets, the gardens, electricity and water pipelines  
I say, once the ceasefire takes hold, who would bring the blood back to Shaima'a!  
We will get back the streets,  
the minarets and yards, the electrical lines and water pipes.  
I say, "the bombing's stopped, but who'll restore Shaima's blood?"

## Negligence

Hamed Ashour

Your back, which you unfold and fold  
like a morning paper.  
Your back, which you feed to lonely and hungry seats.  
Your stiff back,  
your high wall.

Your back  
is an extension of the land,  
a scarecrow in the field,  
my street lamp.  
Your back, taut like a chord,  
tender like a tune, fragile like a child's finger.  
Your back, made of water and bread.

ظَهْرُكَ  
امتداد الأرض  
فراعة الحقل  
عامود إنارتي

Your back is straight like a minaret  
and bends like a grapevine.  
Your back on which the war fell asleep,  
cities settled down, and from which soldiers returned.  
Your back against which I leant mine and cried.  
Your back, when you took everything from me,  
and then gave me your back.

ظَهْرُكَ الَّذِي يَسْتَقِيمُ كَمِئَذَنَةٍ  
وَيَنْحَنِي كَدَالِيَةِ عَنَبٍ  
ظَهْرُكَ الَّذِي نَامَتْ  
عَلَيْهِ الْحَرْبُ  
وَاسْتَرَاخَتْ عَلَيْهِ الْمَدَنُ  
وَمِنْهُ عَادَ الْجُنُودُ

## If I Had a Child

Hamed Ashour

The grieving grandmother says:  
my girls are young green sprouts  
who married two lumberjacks.

I advised the elder,

“this is the branch you wag  
in the world’s face  
like a middle finger,  
so pierce it with holes and call it a flute.”

غصنك هذا الذي تشهرينه في وجه الدنيا  
كأصبع وسطي  
املئيه بالثقوب و أسمىه ناي

To the little spoiled one, I said,  
reading the sun’s braid over her trunk,  
“you will give birth a bit early  
to a throne on which kings will alternate.  
People will live and people will die  
and your son grows up, so nothing’s worth worrying about.”

As for the tallest daughter,  
habituated to being lonely,  
she could wake just before labor,  
and beget a bed stretched out by the wall,  
which it sleeps by, hand in hand.  
My lovelorn daughter,  
lured by a lumberjack to his bed,  
is searching for a fifth foot  
for her own daughter, the long-waiting table.

And as for me,  
I am the long-grieving grandmother.  
I wish for a child I would call door,  
with whom I could shut myself firmly in.  
So no one would know of my heart’s tremors  
when I remember that once I was a forest.

أما أنا  
أنا الجدة الطاعنة بالحسرات  
كنت أود  
لو كان لي طفل  
أسمىه باب  
و أغلقه على نفسي جيدا  
لا أحد يدرك رعدة قلبي  
كلما تذكرت  
أنني غابة

Translated by Tayseer Abu Odeh

## In Gaza a Mother Never Sleeps

Ne’ma Hasan

She listens to the dark, searches its edges, sorts out sounds– sound  
by sound– to select a suitable story to read her kids to sleep.

When they sleep, she stands up to shield them from death.

A mother in Gaza does not cry. She folds up  
fear, rage, and prayers in her lungs, and waits  
for the hum of warplanes to fade, then exhales.

A mother in Gaza is not like other mothers. She bakes bread  
with her own eyes’ salt. She feeds her children to the homeland.

## الأم في غزة لا تنام..

تنصت للعتمة، تنتقد حواشيها، تفرز الأصوات صوتا، صوتا، لتنتقي لها حكاية تليق بها، تهدد بها أطفالها  
وبعد أن يغفو الجميع تقف درعا أمام الموت

الأم في غزة لا تبكي  
تجمع الخوف، الغضب، والدعاء في رثيها، وتنتظر أن ينتهي أزيز الطائرات ليتحرر الزفير

الأم في غزة ليست ككل الأمهات  
تصنع الخبز بملح طازج من عينيها..  
وتطعم أبناءها للوطن.

Translated by Mosab Abu Toha

## Was Eid a Trap?

Ne'ma Hasan

wonders the child, whose balloon's just popped.  
The grave where he rests with his mother and five siblings brims  
with gifts. But he can't run along with the kite. It is crumpling  
in the room's crumpling corner, still shuddering off the dust.  
'Dad's going to fix it,' he's certain as he heads to bed, his coffin.

The girl in the hospital cot who lost an arm, wonders, 'can I still  
hold my blonde toy?' and 'is it true arms can die too, mother?'

The junk seller carries off the wheelchair's remains.  
After the last airstrike, he excels at burying his wares, doesn't sell them.  
Who excels at altering the war plan, raise a middle finger or *shut up*.

## أكان العيد فخا؟!

هكذا يتساءل الطفل الذي ثقب بالونه  
القبر الذي اتسع له ولأمه وأخوته الخمسة، كان مليئا بالهدايا..  
لكنه لم يسمح له بالعدو مع طائرته الورقية..  
ما زالت في ركن الغرفة المهدم تنفض الغبار باستياء.  
أبي سيصلحها، كان متأكدا وهو يأوي لكفنه مطمئنا.

الصغيرة التي فقدت ذراعها على سرير المشفى؛ تفكر.  
هل تستطيع أن تحمل دميته الشقراء بعد الآن؟

هل الأذرع تموت يا أمي؟

بائع الروبابيكا يحمل ما تبقى من عربة الرجل المقعد.

بعد الغارة الأخيرة أصبح يجيد دفن الأشياء؛ لا يبيعها.

من يجيد تغيير خطة الحرب فليرفع أصبعه الأوسط!  
أو ليصمت.

## Waleed al-Akkad

1

Soldiers play hide and seek with children.  
Children hide, soldiers draw them out with bombs.

١

يلعب الجنود مع الأطفال لعبة الغميضة.  
الأطفال يختبئون، والجنود يخرجونهم بالفدائف.

2

They weren't branches, our bones  
scattered over the water tank, they weren't  
whirlwind, nor tornado. Everything's  
been burned up in one blast.

After an anonymous shell,  
the tender bird's silent forever.

Under fire, we sat sad with fear  
that death might fall over our heads.

One roof above another roof.  
That's how we knew houses:  
by the smell of their grief,  
by the colors of windows,  
and all their ashen love letters.

Houses welded to their dwellers:  
a body to a wall,  
bones to iron,  
mud to blood,  
memory to death.

تلتحم البيوت مع أصحابها  
الجسد مع الجدار  
العظام مع الحديد  
الطين مع الدم  
الذاكرة مع الموت.

Gather up our screams, all of them.  
Hide them in hoarse voices,  
or death will hear us.

The bullet wants to flirt with me.  
Her tongue licks my chest.  
And when she reaches climax,  
she pulls out my heart.

The day we call Eid disperses  
into void, fearful void.

The soldier once enjoyed killing  
children as if giving a Christmas gift  
to his daughter. Now he looks down

كان الجندي يستمتع بقتل الأطفال  
كأنه يقدم هدية عيد ميلاد لابنته  
ولأننا بنظره أولاد هباء  
كان لا يترك الزناد إلا لحك مؤخرته.

and in his eyes we are unworthy.  
So, he doesn't release his trigger,  
but stops to scratch his ass.

كان لا يترك الزناد إلا لحك مؤخرته.



# Ode

Mona Musaddar

O, World! I want to speak. Who will listen?  
 My speech is all silence and glances.  
 Who will read?  
 Who wants to buy sadness and silence? My sadness is for sale.  
 Do not panic! Not all of it. One pound will be enough for you all.  
 It offers dark fantasies when you shut your eyes,  
 a jolt out of sleep, an emergency landing, maybe a morning bruise.  
 Who's interested in buying such sadness?  
 Instead of a mundane *good morning*, is there a hand to draw the curtain?  
 Could loss trade numb nature for a loving one?  
 O, World! My sight's clouded and I want to speak.  
 But my soul's sinking heart melts before broken glances.  
 O, Worlds! I want neither consolations nor caresses. I want to understand  
 the human who's curled in a nook of my body, who's covered in a cloak of loss  
 and each time grows emptier, quieter.  
 Today, with an extinguished heart, I hugged a dove and it died.  
 Have I committed a crime, World? Or has the court lost its senses, too?  
 O, World, I want to speak, but I don't want anyone to listen.  
 I announce that the mourning auction is now suspended, forever.  
 O, World! I do not want you.  
 I want some sorrowless sleep, a heart without loss. What a dream!  
 O, Night! I want nightmares to stop chasing after my father.  
 O, Heart! Attend to your own fragments, befriend them.  
 O, World! Do not turn on consolation. Kill off all attachments.  
 It is just another lie.  
 O, World! Don't despise our sadness and solitude.  
 Leave us and find other prey.  
 O, World! I do not want you.

اليوم بقلب منطفئ عانقت يمامة فماتت!

أيها الليل، أريد أن تتوقف الكوابيس عن مطاردة أبي

أيها العالم، لا تحتقر حزننا ووجدتنا

دعنا وابحث عن فريسة أخرى

أيها العالم لا أريدك.

## An Egg in a Frying Pan

Nasser Rabah

Suddenly... the electricity's off.  
And life sips at a cup of silence,  
finishes its shift  
and sits, rests...  
Houses don the clothes left  
on their dark lines.  
Windows, mailboxes, and clocks,  
all stop waiting.

Scholars refrain from chatting  
martyrs postpone death,  
But time spreads, like an egg  
in a frying pan.

The electricity's gone off,  
and we smell a scent of life.  
Like a woman just leaving her bed.

فجأة...  
تتقطع الكهرباء،  
تُشربُ الحياةُ كُوبًا من الصمت،  
الشبابيكُ، صناديقُ البريد، ساعةُ الحائط  
تُكفّ عن الانتظار...

فيما يسترخي الوقتُ كبيضة في مقلاة.  
تتقطع الكهرباء، فنشم رائحة الحياة؛

Translated by Mosab Abu Toha

## Letter to the pilot returning to the base after bombing Gaza.

Nasser Rabah

You might be taking off your heavy military helmet, smiling to those who greet you. And they might be congratulating you on a safe return from a very risky mission, but you are the only one who knows well what you have done. Shame on you. Shame on you. Spread dust over your head. Spit at your face in the mirror. Is this what you've been taught? To fight the houses and the streets have no missiles against your fighter jet that flees through planeless sky. And when you watch our children under rubble on your TV screen? They waive their hands in victory, even when dead.

## رسالة إلي الطيار

إلى الطيار الذي يعود الآن إلى مدرج الموقع العسكري بعد قصف غزة: ربما تخلع الآن تلك الخوذة الثقيلة وتبتسم لمستقبلك، ربما يهنئونك بالعودة السالمة من المهمة الخطيرة جداً، ولكنك الوحيد الذي يعرف حقيقة ما فعلته. عار عليك. عار عليك. يجب أن تضع التراب على رأسك، وأن تبصق على وجهك في المرأة. هل هذا كل ما تعلمته؟ أن تقاوم البيوت والأرصعة دون مضادات أرضية لطائراتك المجهزة للمناورة والكر والفر، دون اشتباك جوي مع طائرات أخرى؟ اخجل من نفسك وأنت تشاهد الآن على التلفاز صغارنا تحت الأنقاض يلوحون بإصبعي النصر في وجهك حتى وهم ميتون.

Translated by Mosab Abu Toha

## A Widowed City

Tayseer Abu Odeh

To portray this widowed city,  
I look over her rounded shoulders  
for her jars of pickles, and figs, her lost kids, their shoes.  
Without a camera, I walk my murdered house,  
from ruined kitchen to buried chair.  
I walk from one carcass to another. Quiet,  
quiet, they waive their bleeding arms to me.

I met a stranger from Khan Younis,  
who said, “I found a wounded dog  
licking her tail, starving for days, and  
near her, on the ground, pages of Men  
in the Sun and a torn album of wedding photos.”  
People’s smiles, they mock me in my melancholy.

## Mourning

Tayseer Abu Odeh

Thirty-nine times I came to my life,  
each time carrying my mother’s stories,  
her stoic smile, her pain, too.  
Thirty-nine times I experienced my private tragedy,  
still it estranges me.  
Thirty-nine times I put on my exile  
(unlike neighbors, I never found my birthplace).  
I grew up a stranger at home.  
I carried Jerusalem’s map on my shoulder.  
I waited for silence to speak.

I began to narrate my story, but scars aren’t meant to talk.  
For thirty-nine years I inherited my father’s wounds.  
I forgot his words, but they sprouted beneath my skin.  
like fungi grows in my body and soul.  
And my mourning flowers in the backyard.

And now, after thirty-nine autumns, I’m a stranger to myself,  
a stranger to my childhood memories, its bitter groaning.  
I write my forgetfulness on the wall of history  
in my rose-colored blood, with a lantern in my hand.

*from* A lullaby from Gaza

Tayseer Abu Odeh

We've inherited ancient chores:  
We count martyrs. We count  
wounds. How many amputated legs?  
We record wrecked ships, buried  
dreams, and murdered goats.  
We survey slaughtered olive groves.  
Count out our sleeping pills.  
We store memories in the attic  
of Arabic. And stand in the rubble  
at dawn. We recall lullabies.  
We rename chrysanthemum,  
rename cities, and citadels.  
We take the alley. To what ends?  
We say: every poem is a ladder  
up to the gates of Jerusalem.

*from* A lullaby from Gaza

Tayseer Abu Odeh

Living in exile, my body is a flute  
pierced by bullets. It sounds its scars.  
I wait for a singer, church bells  
clinking, my mother's face.  
At my face, the southerly blows,  
stirring its sighs and rhymes.

Then sometimes I take my body off  
to go light and immortal,  
free of sacred songs, and signs.  
And then my soul mourns me alive.

## My City After What Happened Some Time Ago

Mosab Abu Toha

The noose is tightening around the city's neck.  
 Looters undress the city,  
 sell its clothes and jewelry to the monsters in the sea.  
 Trees, bare and heads down, blow their yellow leaves,  
 try to cover the houses' private parts:  
 bathtubs filled with warm water for the new  
 bride and groom.

In the stall, they sell a photo of my young grandmother.  
 They didn't know she began to smoke when she got older.  
 I wished I had a cigarette with me to put near the frame.  
 I once tried to light a cigarette and smoke.  
 I burnt a finger and never tried again.

My grandfather's cane leans against a dusty wall  
 near my young father's school bag.

Two men hurriedly grab the books piled up below the stall,  
 buy them for the first price the seller announces.  
 Their hands vomit them into the sea close by.  
 The words' eyes turn red with salt,  
 the maps overdrink,  
 and water seeps through their bellies.

The city no longer exists but in the holes in the earth.  
 Nowhere I have to go but to a new, untrodden road.

## silence of water

Mosab Abu Toha

father's typing on keyboard  
 mother's reading morning newspaper aloud to  
 cover neighbor's radio sound  
 air from cracked window's sliding on ceiling lamp  
     fly's  
     losing balance  
     sometimes  
 b/w pictures on walls are searching for colors at night  
     kettle  
     on  
     stove  
 one big drop pours down on roof  
 no lightning, no thunder, no clouds  
 it rains only on this house  
     dust and concrete stuff  
     noses of neighborhood  
 water  
 on  
 stove  
 no longer boils  
 shrapnel has cut its throat.

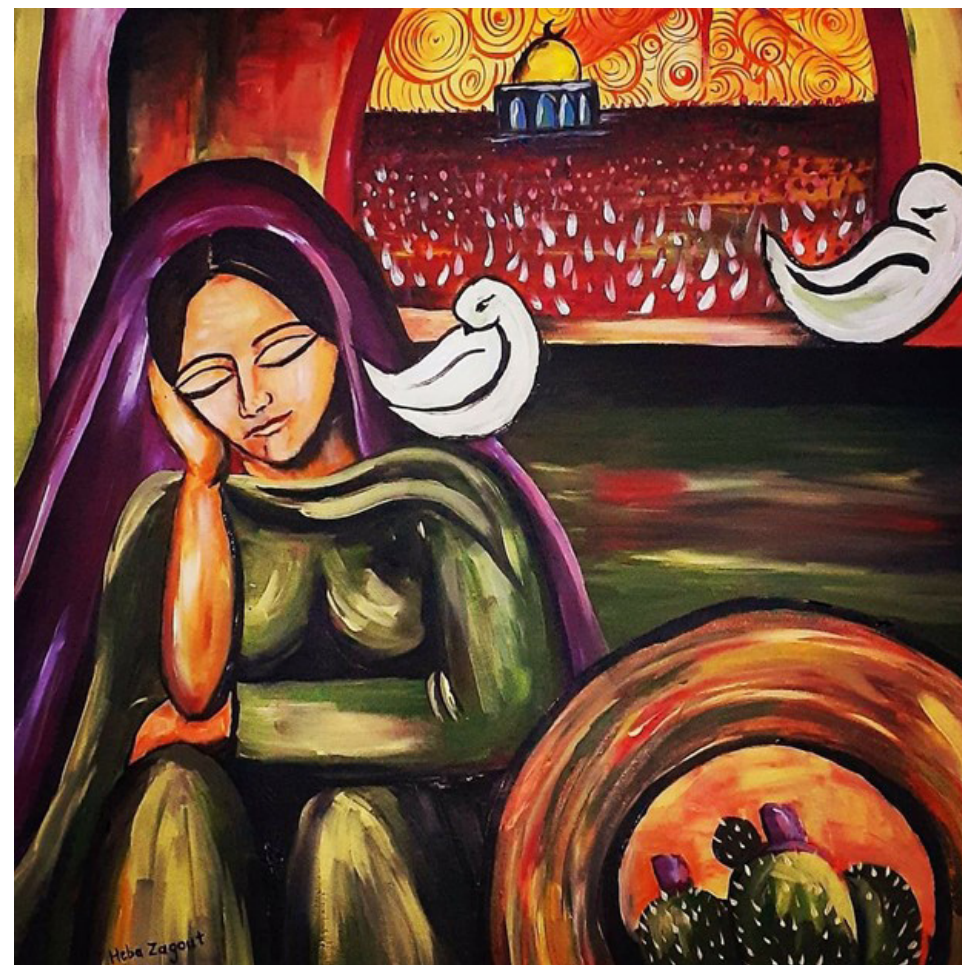


## In the War: him and houses

Mosab Abu Toha

You fight. You  
die.  
You never know who won or lost  
or if the war ever ended.  
When the bomb fell, the shrapnel cut your body's clothes—your flesh.  
It cut your country's flag—its landscape.  
They didn't find a place to bury you.  
They carried you on their shoulders,  
wandered in the neighborhood,  
stopped at your childhood's school  
and the old park.  
Everything saw you  
except for the houses.

Houses have packed their bags.  
Dust has erected a tent in the angles.  
Rust has landed with its worn-out clothes on the tab  
and on the spoon.  
It steals from the water its soft slide,  
whereas the air sleeps on the spoon's rough earth.  
While you,  
you sleep on moving sand.



Heba Zaquot, *Waiting*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 60 inches



Heba Zaquot, *Gaza Peace*, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 95 × 94 inches

## 4 x 6

Nadia Choudhury

Baba's lips close loosely, his tongue against his teeth holds back the voices in his head. The angels dangle from every tower, not looking down at the Haram Sharif, but hanging by their wings so their hands can hold legal pads and blue ink pens. God would receive the following report:

under eyes lined crepey.  
     her wrinkled hijab holding in holy heat.  
         his wiry beard in wiry strands,  
         a razor in a panjabi pocket glinting Saudi sun.  
 their hotel at the mouth of Baab-e-Haram, gate nine,  
 each has skipped every meal since arriving here.  
     they pray in the orthodox style  
 [personal opinion: following religious protocol  
     has not provided relief to these two;  
         they are in Hell]

Ma stands at the hotel window, looking into the fealty money can buy, touches the windowsill, feels the vibration of one prayer racketing inside two million hearts. Her own appeal slides through the people orbiting, their bodies pulsing, driving her devotion closer to the meteorite within the Ka'aba. Its porosity could soak up her sorrows and hurl them to Space. She walks to it, hangs to its black robes, lifts her feet, calls to Gravity, *Pull off the cover! Why do you hide God!* She would have slit her ankles to see fresh blood—

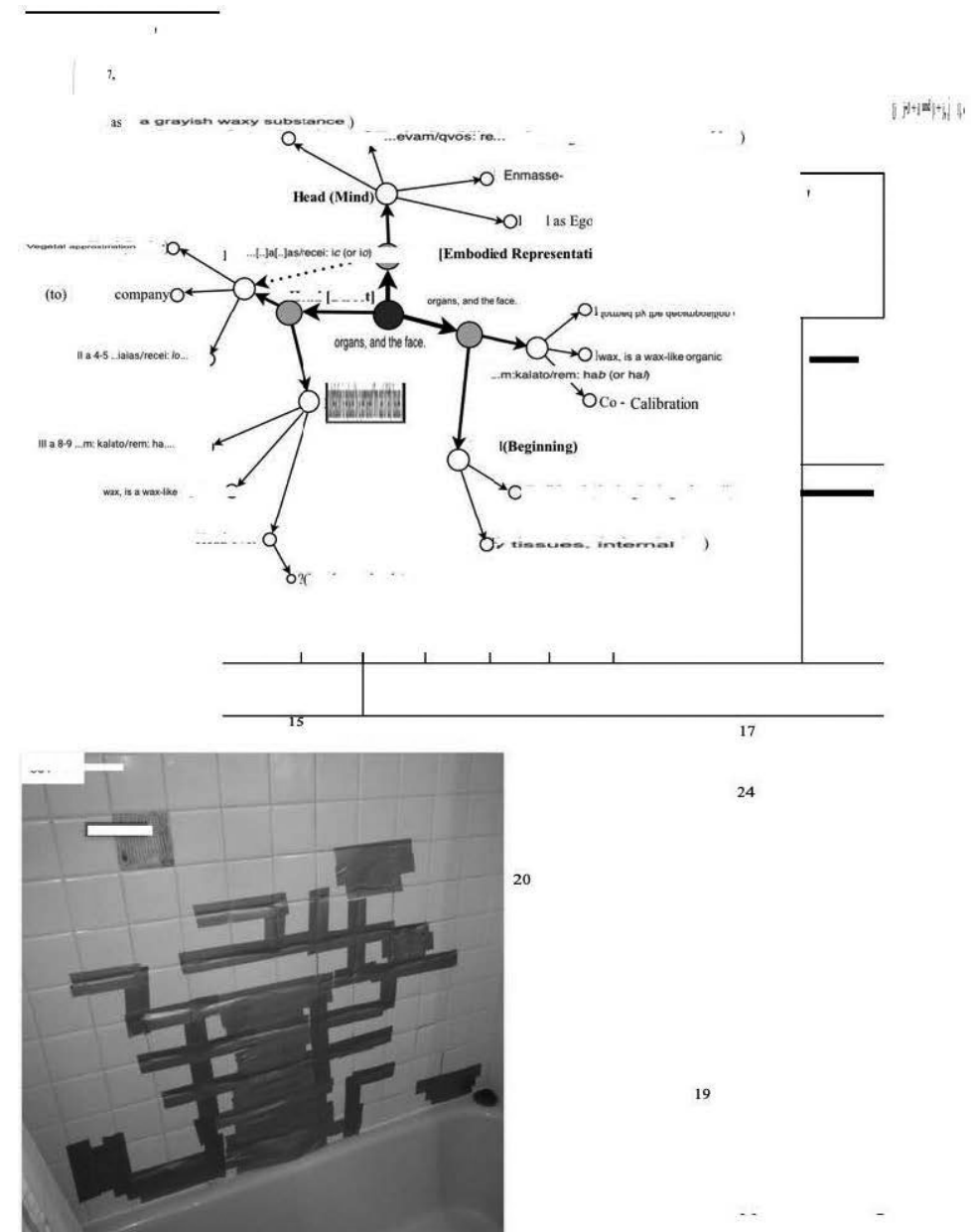
—Ma comes home, waits  
 each month after to see old blood drip into the toilet bowl. And as the drops reach into the water, spreading, she looks for Baba's milky eyes.



# psychosis [syh-ko-sis]

Nadia Choudhury

noun, **1.** a thought manifesting itself in a retiree as a leg tremor, electrifying his diabetic toes, sizzling up past his kneecaps as he sits at the breakfast table and hears a daughter make tea with too much cream and Equal: each time metal hits china in an imperfect swirl, he lingers closer to a saccharine layer building on his tongue, one which might kill him; **2.** a condition in which a father eyes earring hooks slipped through a daughter's lobes, counts the times the hoops caress her cheeks, and contemplates the seconds it may take for her eyeliner flicks to leap past her temples and lasso across his Adam's apple; **3.** a symptom found in an immigrant if he broods for too long too often over the brothers and male cousins with whom he attended grade school, those who still live in the village: he may focus on why some of them were left tied to the trees as they frothed at the mouth three days out of the month; **4.** a fear passed from Baba sitting in the psychiatric ward; he believes himself to have failed in life; in turn, will I control my glances? Conceal his paranoia lodged in my larynx?



## A Potted History of Fevers

Mark Anthony Cayanan

Because we believed the prophet we believed it was god in their mouth. The wafer transmuting against tongue, palate, teeth, its thickness human. The prophet unable to swallow. We know how this sounds, but this was all very private, only the nuns were around for the miracle, later attesting to it among newsmen. In this photo the priest wipes the blood off the prophet's lips, stars caught and hived in the sun's rays, and we heard a corps of shadows in the tower pushing the weight of their curiosity against the locked chapel doors. The priest, too shaken to close the mass, and ghost-like we prodded the prophet to open wider so we could see and see.

When the priest asked the prophet to spit out the host on his white handkerchief, we saw how god was a reticent pink. Months later, the prophet would like a movie star wave above their head the same cloth, bleached back into its original intentions. A herd of hundreds of thousands at the apparition hill. This photo, taken without permission, shows only the eagerness with which we wave back, everyone using both hands and cries. Our lives having beaten us, we knew best what god was needed for. We're a single tentacle in this photo, wrapping our devotion around the prophet. Were you here too?

Whenever they knelt beside the guava tree, we surrendered to greatneses we were too stupid for, the prophet staring at an indeterminable spot in the sky, whispering their half of a conversation so precious we only got scraps, we rediscovered more scraps through TV news, writing warnings in a notebook, what from their words could wake us outside ourselves. We never looked into it. Should've left our fevers at home, leashed to a fence, but who we had prayed to hear us should hold us. This photo captures the moment the prophet slumps backward, convulses, a brother ready to keep their shirt from being sullied, and our lady about to leave us again.

This photo only shows the prophet pointing to the sun, though we swear it's all true. At first the sun blinded as it always does, but from too much we began to see just enough, and then we saw differently, the sun shifting from cruel to purple, dragonfly-wing green, the sun transparent as a lie. The entire afternoon, the hillside aureoled in a golden haze, us in the midst of a hymn. Though the next photo doesn't show us in a good light, it didn't matter. Having remade our meek adjustments, there could be no better god than who held us at that moment. Years later this would be a sadness and harmful.



Today's the day the prophet would heal the sick, proclaimed the priest last month, so we brought cardboard fans with us, cellophanes of rice, we readied our despairs, the spring water would calm the winds knocking free all the tremors of our bodies. When word spread that the father of that saint-faced actress was cured of cancer, we vowed to be the next person. For stealing our spot we resented the eight-year-old with the fluid in her lungs, the diabetic with the gangrenous foot. We only wanted the prophet to notice our suffering, we didn't mean to grab their hair, and though this photo displays our shame, it doesn't reveal its persistence.



Genesis Jerez, *Oh Father*, 2020, mixed media, 76 x 78 inches





Genesis Jerez, *Mother in the Kitchen*, 2020, mixed media, 75.5 x 78 inches



Genesis Jerez, *Still Life*, 2020, mixed media, 76 x 77 inches



## Defacement

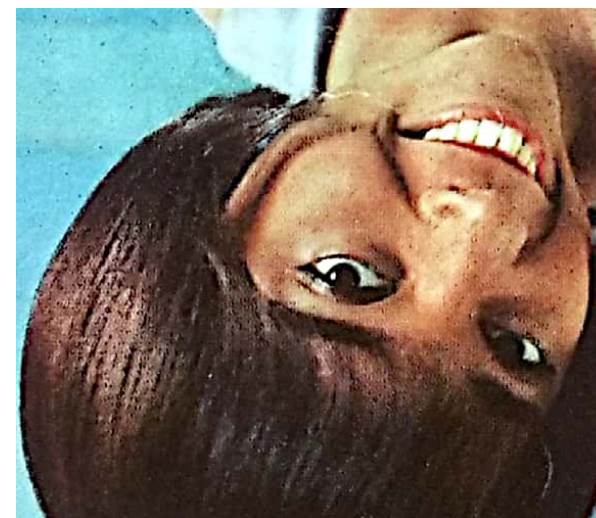
Christopher Harris

*For Toni Morrison*

*Defacement* is a series of three collages featuring fragments of text from chapter 22 of Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. The text floats over images from the front cover of the February 1966 edition of *Ebony* magazine. On the magazine cover, which is never shown in its original form but is cut up and recombined in new arrangements for this work, the fair-skinned and café au lait colored smiling faces of six young negro women beam at the reader with the promise of vitality, striving, respectability, and yes, beauty. Their portraits are arranged around a centered banner of text that asks "ARE NEGRO GIRLS GETTING PRETTIER?" The additional text taken from the character Beloved's obsessive monologue of longing for her mother Sethe's dark face transcends the limits of historical time and is folded into the psychic space of the magazine cover. *Defacement* is very much a work of book arts. It is meant to be held in one's hands and experienced as a work that one must turn to experience in its entirety; upside down, horizontal, even held up to a mirror. With *Defacement*, I wanted to suggest a complex relay of looks as a circuit of gazes between Beloved, Sethe (in her absence), the *Ebony* magazine cover girls and the reader. In my filmmaking practice, I engage an expansive conception of the archive, where objects, artifacts, sounds and images are placed into new, destabilizing temporal and spatial relations to one another. *Defacement* extends my archival practice beyond time-based imagery for the first time.



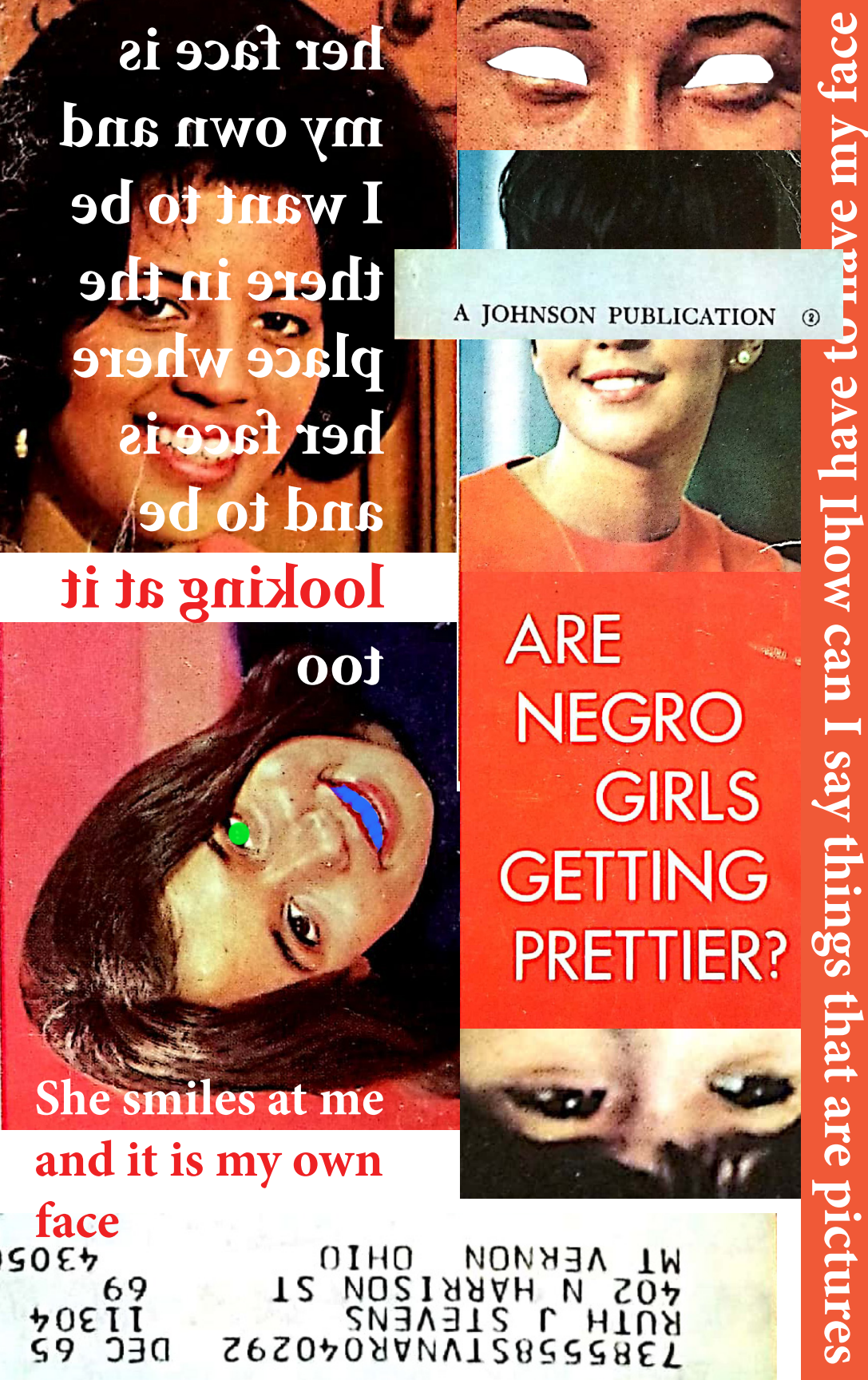
FEBRUARY 1966 50c



now I am her  
face now I am  
her face now I  
am her face now  
I am her face  
now I am her

face now I am  
her face now I  
am her face now  
I am her face  
now I am her  
face now I am  
her face now I  
am her face now  
I am her face  
now I am her  
face now I am  
her face now I





A JOHNSON PUBLICATION ②

ARE  
NEGRO  
GIRLS  
GETTING  
PRETTIER?

7385558STVNAR040292  
RUTH J STEVENS  
402 N HARRISON ST  
MT VERNON OHIO  
DEC 65  
11304  
69  
4305





ARE GIRLS  
NEGRO ?

NEGROES

ARE

GIRLS

GIRLS

NEGROES

ARE

GETTING PRETTIER

?





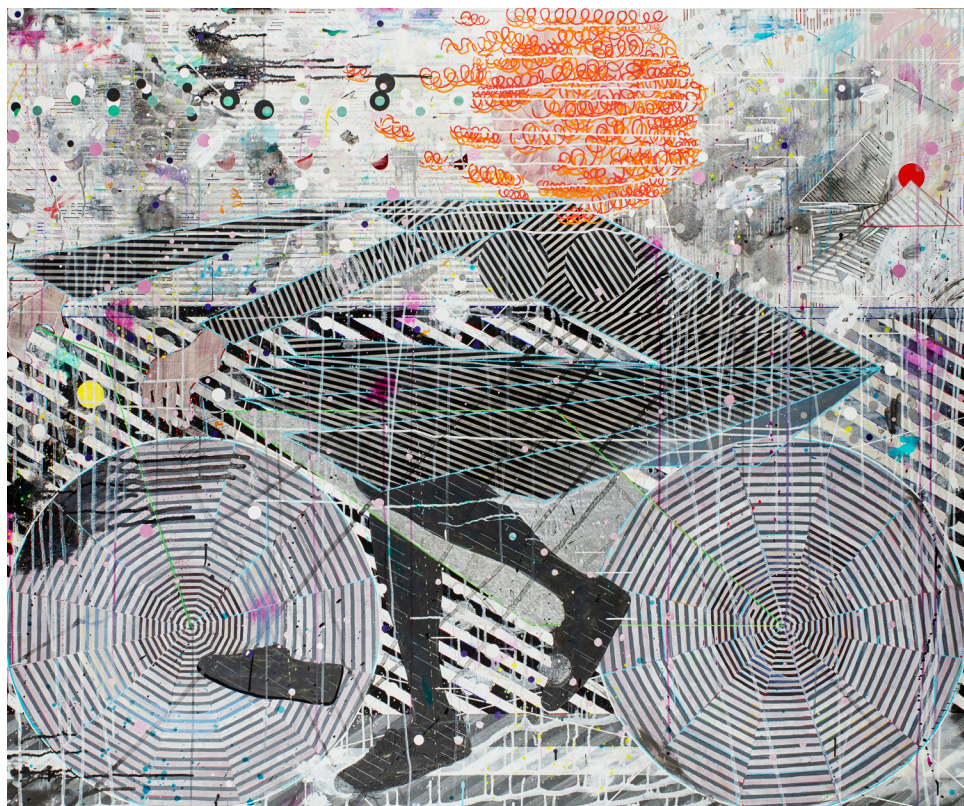
Clintel Steed, *Barr Trial # 2*, 2020, oil on canvas, 32 x 14 inches



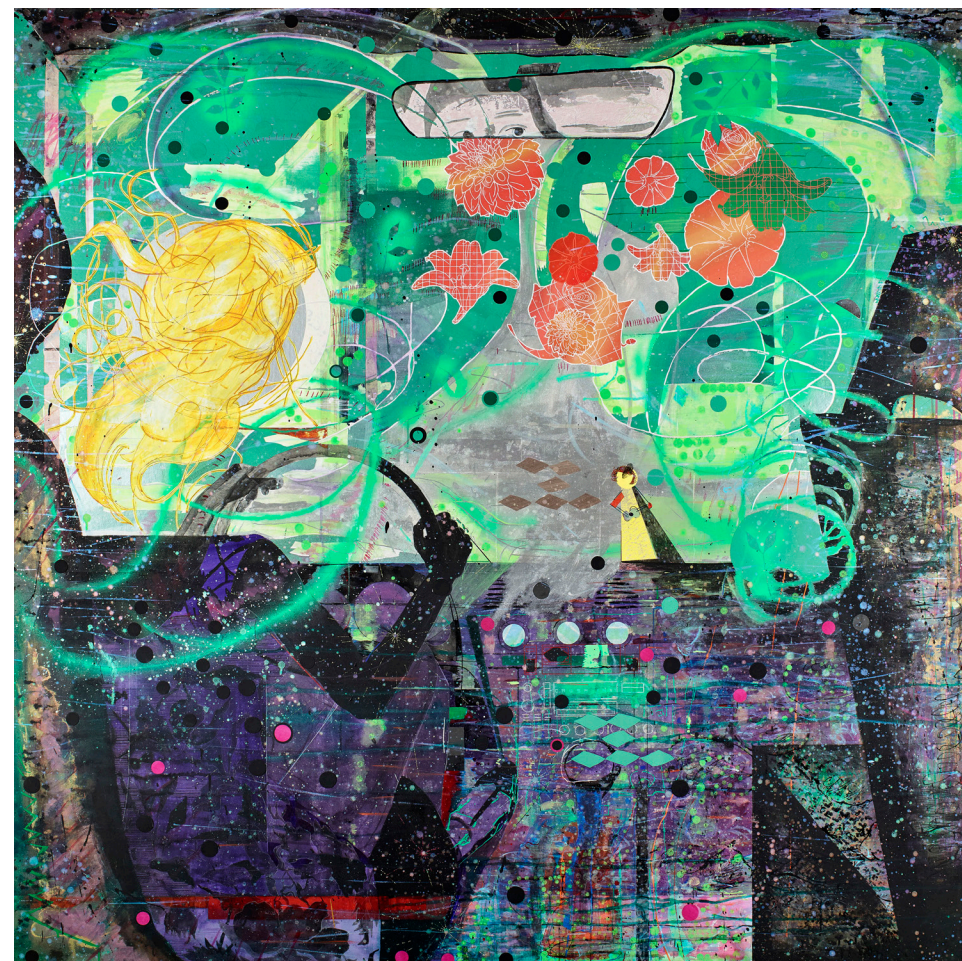


Clintel Steed, *Attorney General and NBA Finals*, 2020, oil on masonite, 24 x 10 inches





Chie Fueki, *Ellen*, 2017, acrylic, ink and color pencil on mulberry paper on wood, 60 x 72 inches



Chie Fueki, *Where*, 2017, acrylic, ink and color pencil on mulberry paper on wood, 72 x 72 inches



## Survey

Kenneth Sherman

All torn down, Sloan's Tavern, Dave's Grill,  
Rosie's Ice Cream Parlour. The destroyed  
towns of Ontario. The ripped up  
public piers of Jackson's Point and Beaverton,  
carted to the hammer mill.  
The scale of degradation visible.  
Take our old dirt road, paved, blackened.  
Stuttering white hyphens. Holes  
in the landscape you could measure.  
The soft wooden floor of Burroughs' Hardware,  
its yellow blinds and antique light.  
Torn down. Night after night,  
walking Lakeshore Drive,  
smelling lilacs, thinking of her.  
We knew the name of every creek.



Chie Fueki, *Nikko*, 2018, acrylic, ink and color pencil on mulberry paper on wood, 72 x 72 inches

## Dirt Country

Kenneth Sherman

### I

You never notice  
the golden pollen  
on your work gloves,  
You're busy with shovel,  
hoe, stakes and string,  
breaking dry earth, prepping  
for beans and tomatoes,  
digging and living.

### II

Remember the one  
who seldom spoke, the one  
who fastened loose shingles,  
cleaned out the hornets' nest,  
mended torn screens.  
One morning he just left, not bothering  
to wind up the garden hose  
snaking over the anemic grass.

### III

Crawl under the foundation.  
Beneath the damp planks and broken  
bricks you'll find inchworms  
and slugs — poor boy's bait.  
The arthritic oars  
take you far enough  
to find cold-eyed fish.  
Splayed bones on your chipped plate.

### IV

Whenever a breeze scours  
the corn field, you hear  
the dried stalks chatter. And crows  
overhead, the heavy beat  
of their wings. Whoever said  
the country is heaven  
couldn't read omens, didn't know  
crows never sing.



## Tailor

Kenneth Sherman

He unravels a bolt of cloth  
 urging you to feel  
     the texture of worsted

to marvel  
     at houndstooth, herringbone,  
     birdseye and sharkskin, from the mills

of Quebec, from jobbers in Manhattan,  
 from Leeds and the Hebrides  
     whence cometh the solid Harris tweed.

He would like you to say the names:  
 mohair, flannel, nap, and twill,  
     pinstripe, chalk stripe, hopsack, check.

He wants you to know the origin of seersucker  
 from the Persian *shir shakar*, “milk and sugar.”  
     And from the goats of the Gobi the truest cashmere.

He probes: cuffs or no cuffs,  
 belt or no belt, pleats or no pleats?  
     How wide the lapel?

His measuring tape is draped  
     like a thin prayer shawl about his neck  
     in that shop where God has grown personal

and small, crouched inside a pitted thimble.  
 He relies on vision and hands  
     to match facings, linings, to tack the seams,

then cut, resew, close the gap  
     between pattern and flesh, between ideal and real,  
     with the mirror as your witness.

## Sphinx with the Head of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Samuel Cheney

I stand at his face and get dizzy.  
 Vertiginous eyes. The warmth inside my parka

leaking at the edges. The world  
 clangs out over the wall, cranes and saws squealing

to box this garden in, to shrink it.  
 I stand at his face and blink, swaying

in the Salt Lake wind, my movement moving  
 his stone gaze. Spurs of frost-dust cling

to butterfly bushes’ deadheaded stalks. Wing lights  
 wink over the mountains to the east. He had seen

all this, who never lived to see any of it.  
 These cracked lips that whispered open the sky

and brought Heaven down to the earth.  
 Here. The compass of stars

engraved above his heart is true. It points away.  
 I put my freezing hand to the sandstone,

to the cell bars of his ribs.  
 A swaddled family strolls up, mutters *cheese*

and has their picture taken with the martyred sphinx.  
 I set my fingers into the rift

in his cheek, the hole in his forehead.  
*I awaited the seer, while they slumbered and slept*

carved into quartzite at my feet. I shiver  
 in the daylit cold till my digits slow. Nothing moves

but the dirt being shot into the air  
from the conveyor, humming away

over the white-feathered plywood wall.  
Somewhere up in the highest floors

of the new parking structure, a worker's hammer  
meets and meets a stake. Joseph's

face brightens. Two sister missionaries  
wait politely behind me.

## Believers

Samuel Cheney

Like actually looking at the back of your hand  
after someone knows something like the back of their hand.  
The just-blinked-off dream.  
Something leaving the edge of the frame,  
something receding into shadow.  
Familiar, we think, when again we meet. Familiar—

What is the afterimage of belief,  
its coals, its contrail?  
A strand of hair blown through the air caught by a glance of sunlight,  
a highway sign passed under on a downpouring night—

◆

Sometimes, like snow, our stories  
screw a silencer onto the world.  
Like ice they crack  
things open and what spills out we are left to.

◆

Sixteen, I sat reading on a mountainside outside Evanston,  
an upturned five-gallon bucket for a seat.  
The rest of the boys  
were at the camp meeting, where up a rise  
would ride reenactor Lamanites and Nephites on horseback,  
angels waiting in the wings. They'd talk  
eternal things: bravery, family.

Earlier that morning we'd taken a silent  
hike, slowly Wyoming woke with a sigh.

We ended in a field of tall caterpillar-laden grass  
and I lay down in the whisper of it  
listened, and slept.

♦

They played “The Dance” at his funeral  
after Chance Mitchell’s dad was killed.  
Tracy, our giant, lion-haired  
Inferno baseball coach stood there  
above the casket and howled.

♦

the thing  
about the  
holy ghost  
is it acts  
exactly  
how  
and when  
you expect  
it to it  
warms  
like a shot  
like a man’s  
hands  
laid on  
your head

♦

I would pull back the sheets and wipe the bed  
free of dead Box Elder bugs, then pull on  
headphones to keep the old house from spooking.  
Across the hall, Gramps would already be asleep—  
where? Wild to me,  
unable to picture a bedroom.

I started spending weekends when I was maybe ten,  
and scary as it was there were always dividends:  
a new cassette tape, a full rack of ribs to split.  
A book about wolves. A peek at a *Playboy*.  
A new pair of boots.

♦

I hadn’t heard “A Song For You”  
until we were already through. I could hear  
her crying, in it.  
Summer ends every year.

♦

it  
answers  
like a collie  
when  
called you  
understand  
words for  
sensations  
radiance  
stillness  
fulness  
your chest lifts

♦

With a companion from the elders quorum,  
I would visit my neighbors in their strange homes  
and bear to them my testimony.  
Old men told me they had dreams  
in which I cut my hair.

Mutual. Missionary Week. Baptisms for the dead.  
I’d go ten days without touching  
myself or any girl  
on a ward leader’s whim.  
In Happy Valley boys my age hanged themselves  
after coming out or staying in.

Nothing worked like it was supposed to.  
Except the hymns.





I was far from home and down about thirty pounds  
when “Cattle Call” came on at Skinny Dennis.  
I slept underneath a desk.  
I was kept alive by friends.



air  
be  
comes  
mist  
be  
cause  
you  
know  
in  
visible  
things



One day I knew I had been called.  
Between Sunday School and sacrament I left  
and catching my breath drove  
wherever the truck and the roads led.

Up on the foothills above Bountiful  
I sat and looked at the temple.  
It was April.  
The breeze was full of snow.

## Seven Oscillations

Barbara Lock

### Auricular Competence

An old man, deprived of eloquence by a massive hemorrhagic stroke, murmurs his desire into the ear of his daughter-in-law, who hears. Soon, the man perishes. Watching over the corpse at the temple, the woman brims with apprehension. The connection between knowledge and fear— isn’t it marvelous? As for her husband, he’s been deaf to knowledge since childhood, when his father sliced off his ears.

### The Pit of Springfield

At the gravesite of her father-in-law, the woman feels the sudden urge to abandon her offspring and wade into a frigid mountain river. Instead, she jumps into the open pit, cracks the casket, falls into an ever-descending rock tunnel coursed with veins of silver and gold. Reaching a waypoint, she finds olivine walls slick with surfactant, pools of hydrocarbons, molten rock. There she attends only to herself, her neurovascular machinery, her electromagnetic receptions. The woman expands her will, which isn’t matter.

## Resortment

The woman, perching on a high mountain ledge, views miles of open land. The thought of children swells her with animal possibility. In the East's distant hills, wolves chase bison to their deaths. North, ranchers water cattle and feed them loaves, fishes. To the West, a forlorn town serves pizza and silver bracelets to ravenous tourists. In the South, a cold-water canyon holds in an irritated river. Small people gather in tight quarters, hemmed in by automobiles, designated lanes, nuclear force, patterns of migration, barbed wire, fishing rights, scanning of tickets. The woman on the ledge waves her ticket at Heaven until a hatch opens in the sky.

"Are you feeling unsettled again?" comes a calm voice.

"Yes, very," she answers.

"Whatever for?"

"If it were easy to put into words, I wouldn't be unsettled."

Down in the valley, food is served on schedule. Mothers hold the hands of children so tightly that they all cry. Children break away in order to capture freedom (children return to recollect love).

"But you could tell me if you wanted to," says the voice.

"The time is not right," says the woman, shaking her head.

"Chance it," says the voice.

## What Good are Surgeons Anyhow?

A woman wakes to discover that there is a fish in her abdomen, not encased in any particular organ, but swimming freely among her viscera in her peritoneal cavity. From time to time, the woman can trace its bluish outline with her fingers, an elongated triangle, flat like a sunfish. Her touch makes the fish wriggle away beneath her thinning skin. Wanting an explanation, she brings her abdomen to the surgeon, who cannot be talked into removing the fish; not even a picture using the machine is permitted.

"I don't want this fish," says the woman to the surgeon.

"The problem with people like you," the surgeon replies, "is that you think the fish is some kind of a baby, when in fact it is nothing of the sort."

## The Suffragettes were Always Winning

The woman places the desk chair on the top of the guest bed, stands on the cherrywood seat, touches her hand to the ceiling. Feeling for vibrations, little ripples of movement in the pads of her fingers, not morse code per se, but some kind of recurring pattern, the woman discovers a way of communicating that transcends speech or even thought. When she falls off of the furniture and breaks her ankle, she emits a plaint chirp, but her husband doesn't hear.

## A Matter of Perspective

An evening smoker shuffles on and off the sidewalk among corpses laid out for collection. Seen from above, the lines under the smoker's eyes are a series of parentheses which contain a feeling he once had: the softness of beds; everyday acts of love and malice. He carries smoke and hunger. His eye catches items trapped in the cast iron grille of a storm drain: small stuffed toy, pink, back erect; newspaper used to wrap fish; expired permit. He picks up the permit, holds it under a streetlight, puts it in his overcoat. The bodies lined up on the sidewalk are wrapped in yellow plastic, rolled as if to be sold for someone's dinner. Each body is an exclamation point, though one appears to be a comma. It is a woman's curved form.

The woman breathes, but feigns death—a vital trick! She can sense the smoking man crouching next to her, feels his inswept wind interlaid with hers. The woman touches her tongue to the hole in her mouth where a tooth used to be, sips the salt of her own blood, opens her eyes to him.

"You got out!" exclaims the smoker. The woman struggles within her plastic confinement. Her smoker blows little tornados of curiosity. "Do you want me to unwrap you?" He fingers the yellow plastic, pushes the edges away from her face, brushes her hair back behind her ears.

It was on this very pavement that other human lives once purchased precious stones and pearls, silks and fine linens. For sale then: every kind of brass and steel utensil and pot; perfumes and shadowy concoctions meant to be spread on living bodies; plum wines and liquor flavored with the cure for good wishes; shiny communication devices; gaudy plastic plants. Now, the man's dark eyes are a sleek fur coat. He takes another drag on his cigarette and blows it into her face.

"Well?" he says. "I can remove you, but soon."

"You're so close," says the woman. "Aren't you afraid of getting sick?"

"I've been sick my whole life," says the smoker. His mouth is a patch of waste ground. Poplars wave little branches at the birds.

## Maybe I'm Immune, I Don't Know

A spring cemetery is resplendent in mauve blooms. As a dove flies from the drooping electric wire to the heavy cherry tree, the movement of its wings draws out a plaint chirp. Dense earth muffles rising cacophonies from Hell. Still, such clangor is avoidable, thinks the gravedigger. If there are enough good birds, he thinks, the evil ones will leave a body be.



## Moonshot

Diana Guo

For we have entered  
into restlessness, a reverberating state.  
3am shutters,      the wistful moon leaning

against blue dusk.

three birch trees  
billowing like waves

heat circles swimming  
in spools & spools

sixteen times too many,  
eyes closed,  
my brain              my mind

now glitter, boom, splash.  
curvature of a moon, a pear,  
crescent salt, nightshift tracks  
freckled. black. critters.

salt my tracks  
with mango dew,

carve a shelter,  
in the raw rapid rave.

## No Internet

Aditya Menon

Search, engine, you want to say, typing  
virtually anything into the bar in the absence  
of a connection, and then pressing enter  
or return as the case may be, depending  
on your device, that is, your operating  
system, and then, when the page says No  
internet, pressing space. Search, engine,  
for a simple animal, for a moving line.

There you go. Wherever it goes is desert, this  
Chrome dinosaur. Saguaro, cloud, moon, ptero-  
dactyl, and day and night the mere negative of day  
come and go, and still the 8-bit landscape  
speeding westward yields the same flat  
stuff. Two dimensions. The dino only acts  
in one, a binary of jump and duck, depending  
on the arrows or the space your fingers press.

The bar to clear is time, its waste. Call it  
escape, or e-scape. Or not. No evolving  
peaks on this horizon. The sand is a lone  
and level non-event. Tyrant with small hands,  
Rex rakes in the digits on the upper right  
until it runs into an obstacle and is zapped  
like a fly. Imagine T-rex happy, Sisyphus  
of the plain. No internet, no rock, no goal.

On a good day, you can find an Easter  
egg within the game, like the birthday cake  
on its tenth anniversary. Modified versions  
exist as well: Dino Swords, which has swords,  
and PM Cares Fund not Found, where a cartoon  
leader dodges ostensible obstacles to governance:  
flying viruses, static icons of the third and fourth  
estate. But you are tempted by the desert in itself.

It is its ownmost Easter egg, a gift hidden in plain sight in the cloud's absence. You let it run and run for forty of its days and inverse nights. The interface designer who made it, a something Gabriel, reveals the joke behind the T-rex figure and desert ground: the internet's absence plunges us into prehistory. Not consenting, only disconnected, a million Marias, Muhammads, nobodies, open tabs to this lack.

But your presence is a bigger joke than big tech had in its scattered brain, concentrated mind. You are here by choice. Of the many privileges in privilege, privation is one. Literally all you have to do to find this commons of disconnectivity is turn your private Wi-Fi off. Superstitiously literalistic, you go instead with flight mode. As the 8-bit T-rex runs, you fly.

Last year, rampant like corruption, as on the standard of a knight, errant yet straight like the ruling of a page, aflutter like a banner, T-Rex flew you to Kashmir, until lately a state, heaven on earth for some, onetime home of radiant pandits articulating teleologies of poetics, also of a poet who dubbed it the country without a post office. He became a prophet, almost. No 4G for a year.

And now T-rex forges ahead, you forge, I mean I forge, clearing each Tridentine, I mean, tridentlike, cactus like barbed wire, ducking each pterodactyl like a terrorist or antiterrorist device—not to equate the two except when they can be legitimately equated—meaning to connect with the disconnected on the screen between us, knowing what could be worse here and across more than one border. Space, arrow, space. Time stops and flies.

## Queen Dido and the Soap Bubble

Elise Bickford

Dido forgets the table. Of constants of. Weak Mixing Angle and Boltzmann and Planck, forgets Wien Displacement. And sinks and sings and stares. At the wall, imagines. *Digit?* There being. *Diderot?* A Graph. *Diane?* A map *Divan?* Where north points. Down, above. Children sit down to learn about Tamerlane, carbon. The dative case and Dido fills her tub. Proprioceptive control is gained. Of a single limb. *I am sitting. I sit and sit and sit and...* Well wet Dido says *Umwelt* while. Down each deep well a coin. Falls. For days. *For days* says near-drowned Dido now *How? Do I stay up? Keep dry, say? Dido?* [DY-DOH]. [DY-DOH]. [DY-DOH]. *DY?* *DY?* *DY as in Dyspnea?* Days passed. Children entered. Classrooms, took. Classes. Exams *What am I?* Children entered rooms as secure as. *What?* Sat. *For how long?* Guessed. Past progressive. *Have I been here?* Passwords. Coughed, cached, circled, checked. Children grew into and out of their chairs.

## Queen Dido and the Soap Bubble

Elise Bickford

Dido misses the discovery of rare-earth—the hauling of rare-earth out.  
From a mine in Ytterby. *Ittberbi? Eetterbee? Ooterboo? No. [yt:er, by:]*.  
Dido blinks. A soap bubble. Pops like an epiglottal plosive. Now. No  
matter what. Sweden is emptier. *When?* Dido asks. *Did I miss it?* A  
fan whirs back. The towel. *I did*. Is invented and GPS and discus.  
*I did*. Bath bombs. *Miss it*. And misch metal and. *I do*. Mental math.  
*Miss it. Miss it all*. Milk froth. *Each thing*. Is invented. *The whole*.  
Banach-Tarski is discovered. And the physicists decide. The graviton  
has no place in the Standard Model. Nations dissolve. *I, Dido, am*.  
Fingers prune. *Nothing. I miss it so. Terribly*, Dido imagines. Right  
down to the Dysprosium. Sticking her hands. Deep into. Whatever soil  
is left.

## Queen Dido and the Soap Bubble

Elise Bickford

The map of the world. So small compared to what it connotes, stays.  
Largely the same, Dido wonders *Why? Despite the changes*.  
Whenever *In who?* her mind *Owns what?* wanders, she misses the  
invention of powder diffraction and. Old Church Slavonic dies.  
𐌲 gone 𐌰 gone 𐌹 gone 𐌺 gone. Into hiding face up under. The table.  
Dido pens a letter to her. Self, asks *Who are you now?* Signs off  
*Don't be*. Promptly. *Stupid*. Dido forgets. —*Dididi...* Everything  
goes out. Of fashion the. Fascists chase Glagolitic out of Italy.  
And out of. The world. A letter falls. Out of one out of the  
*Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*—𐌰. Dido forgets  
𐌰. Dido forgets 𐌲. Dido forgets 𐌹. Dido forgets 𐌺...



## HAPPINESS, Inc.

Adrie Kusserow

Long before the most tender of feelings fled,  
they tried to be obedient,

squishing their ineffable,  
gnaw-longing, soul drooping jaws

into sunny emoji molds,  
but still they would moan,

unfulfilled. You could hear them  
call to one another over the Technocene.

Until one day the feelings left town,  
littering its landscape with their husks.

Now they hover above, longing  
to swell in the cells of a human again.

The fins of their grey moody undulations  
ripple the vast fluid of space.

Waiting to slide through  
the last fontanelle of America's skull.

## Meat

Kristine Marx

We met in the frozen meat section of the supermarket. I was looking for chicken, he was looking for beef. He wore a beautiful silver coat with black tipped fur. He smiled. His teeth were large. I liked his smile. His canines reminded me of long crescent moons—mysterious but not threatening. He did not threaten me.

The market's open freezer chilled the air, stiffened the hairs on my arms and neck. We talked about our favorite ways to season meat, our favorite ways to cook meat, and our favorite ways to serve meat.

*I like everything raw*, he said. I thought he was simple.

I put a cold breast in my basket. He piled various cuts in his cart.

In the checkout line, he continued to flirt. He admired my small ears, my wispy eyelashes, my tender, smooth hands. He said my mouth was more purple than red.

*The color of lupine*, he said. *With nectar as sweet.*

Hummingbird wings beat in my belly two-hundred times a second.

After paying for our groceries, we stood dumbly on the sidewalk staring at the parking lot. I didn't want to leave.

And then he asked, *Where are you going from here?*

*Home.*

*Where is home?*

*I live at Walnut and Oak. The little white house on the corner.*

I had been told all my life never to tell strangers my address. I was not afraid of him.

I said, *Goodbye*, and he invited me to a movie. And then to dinner.

*Maybe dinner first. Eat, then watch, then who knows?* I suggested my place. I would cook. I liked his smile.

At six o'clock, he opened my front door. I hadn't locked it, knowing he was coming. But thought he would've knocked first.

I was in the kitchen dicing a breast for tartare. I didn't turn, but sensed he was behind me. He crept up silently like a hunting dog and sniffed my neck.

*Lovely to smell you again*, he said.

I spun around sharply with wine in my hand so that the glass was between us, marking a friendly, but comfortable distance. I tried to be casual. He took the glass from my hand and lapped the wine.

*How elegant.* My sarcasm met his toothy grin. I liked his smile.

*May I take your coat?* I asked. He wore his coat like a suit which made me think he was a gentleman.

It was hot in the kitchen, although tartare requires no heat. I wiped my hairline with the back of my hand.

*You must be warm,* I said.

He leaned in and kissed the salty beads on my skin. I liked it. I turned away and drank another glass of wine, quickly. When I turned back, he licked my face. His breath smelled of spring's decay—wet, moldy grass, last season's decomposing leaves, spoiled things.

*Your skin,* he said. *Is smooth and tender.*

*Your coat is beautiful,* I said. *But it is too warm in the kitchen for fur. Don't you want to take it off?* He looked at me with swindler's eyes. As he stepped back, he swiped a handful of raw chicken from the cutting board and crammed it into his mouth.

*Oh no,* I frowned. *You stole the main dish for an appetizer.*

He grinned.

*We have nothing else to eat.*

He grinned.

*Should we go out to eat?*

He pulled at the zipper tab between his pointy ears. The teeth went down his long nose to his chest to his abdomen and stopped at his crotch. He stepped out of the fur one foot at a time and hung the limp pelt over the back of a kitchen chair. Underneath, another wolf.

*You look exactly the same,* I said.

*Did you think I would be different without my coat?* He grinned. *Did you think underneath you'd reveal the goodness in my soul?*

He grabbed my wrist and pulled me into him, pressing my face into his furry shoulder. It stank of metal and sulphur and piss. He swayed me in a lazy dance, tightening his grip. I laughed dryly and pretended to go along with it, all sweetness drained out.

Time tripped forward in slo-mo— two-hundred frames per second. I watched. He drank more wine and made me drink more wine. We finished two bottles.

*Put on the coat,* he said and meant the skin he had just taken off. *I want to see your animal.*

I did what he said. (No, he did not threaten me.) Wine sloshed in my head. I swaggered and swooned and drooped towards the floor while he forced my legs and arms into his fur. He zipped up the teeth from my crotch to my abdomen, to my breasts, to my lips, to my ears.

It was very dark inside and stank of feces and blood and rotting things. I could not see his smile. (No, he did not threaten me.) I thought I would die.

I stumbled backwards onto the kitchen table. Or he pushed me. *Don't trip.* I heard him laugh as he grabbed my wrists, which made him laugh again.

The next morning, I woke in my bed. I don't remember how I got there. The sheets were damp and stained. I found him passed out, snoring, on the kitchen floor. His fur was wet and sticky. I tugged at the zipper between his ears, but its teeth were clenched too tightly, and I couldn't get past his smile. I rummaged through the cabinets and drawers to find the kitchen scissors and snipped a bit of his fur. I did not want to wake him. I scissored an inch of his coat at his belly, but he did not move, so I sliced his belly—a long crescent—and peeled back the fur; inside was another beast. I cut open that beast's belly. Inside, another beast. I cut that belly. Inside, another beast.



Jess Bradford, *Haw Par Villa #5*, 2018, pastel and liquid pencil on primed aluminium sheet on top of underglazed porcelain, 9.5 x 19 x 8 centimeters



Jess Bradford, *Haw Par Villa #8*, 2018, pastel and liquid pencil on primed aluminium sheet on top of bisque fired porcelain, 11 x 20.3 x 8.5 centimeters





Jess Bradford, *Haw Par Villa #6*, 2018, pastel and liquid pencil on primed aluminium sheet on top of bisque fired porcelain, 10 x 18.3 x 9.5 centimeters

## Go Back to Shirt-Town

Alex Braslavsky

1.

at the dinner table what is  
the family discussing?

he thinks he knows pointing at the fence  
or through it

he sees a cow flatulating  
he knows ice cream is not always sweet

what about in space  
so far from home

2.

A: you are the most interesting person i've ever met.

A: [is that a euphemism?]

we were always vague and my hand can't keep up  
where are you living now

my mother was the only one who used a low voice  
in the house, if you remember

she said to whisper when we are bothered  
she said remember

that was on your birthday  
you got a tree that you didn't want

there's not always time for a shorter hand

3.

i'm not captured by the stall  
there is thunder about to go on

well i need to get a hold of one small copper french press  
i need to wire someone

well there is not enough tender to go around  
and i make a mean macchiato

well good to see you

someone did not come today  
maybe the world is better off without someone

fly don't crawl in my eye  
i know there are no someone's anymore

3.

a fly lands  
on my cheek  
and i let it  
sit there

4.

i'm your mother  
but i won't say anything about it

you're the one who's in love, not me

5.

A: is it strange that we have the same name?  
A: you'll never be as beautiful as you are now.

## Not Here

Stephen O'Connor

For many years doubt  
was my carrot juice.  
What I'm actually talking about

is my ordinary life.  
I have this holy cog: the word "lie."  
It's the need

to weed, I think, the yen  
for purity. Forgive me.  
Can anything be perfectly

defended? We're all out here  
on the porch, smoking.  
No one knows.

You can see them in the west, orange  
and gold: the trembling  
certainties.

## I Want an Iris

Timothy Leo

I.

I want an iris  
as bright as a lunatic, as orange  
as a tangerine peel drying in a bowl of potpourri.

I want a convex lens, a soul of abysmal dark, a pupil  
and eyes that shoot light into the world and back at the flash-  
lights looking for me frozen then running the bridge.

I want talons for claws, not claws! and I want  
my uterus back. I want a silent roar;  
I have one.

II.

I want to stop hearing all the sounds that wake me  
and I want to know all that hangs in the air  
here, there, between me, a man, and a cat.

## Museum of All We've Eaten

Timothy Leo

I.

The gate a green crane and a half-  
hidden delivery truck and a crab  
in neon. A chain link, a steel  
wheel browned with iron and air  
[oh the air, the air we've eaten]

and brackish water, much deeper.  
Milk forced into tears and salt  
off our skins. Books bound  
in flesh, words of the body and  
[men, ah the men I've eaten]

made more palatable with brine.  
The dead, the living. Entrails read  
for rain made casings for all  
the soft debris of the factory, flecked  
with cartilage and dyed red-hot. [oh

god, the gods we've eaten and their  
children and our offspring and our  
marrow our ova our drops of dew  
our lower limbs eaten by the long-haul  
trucking, sugar eating our kidneys, spirits

eating our livers as someone reaches  
for a braid or a nail or a catheter to keep  
this soul steadfast, aloft, and fed.]

II.

'I prefer tangerine cream' says Maya, her hand  
in the freezer finding the cold is just the thing  
she needs.



Pressed to cheek and crown, her  
 prominent temple, rolled at the nape and held  
 long enough to cool the blood rush up carotids  
 and down, pulled along the vessels by a void  
 so close to larynx and vagus and bound in  
 the space she calls her throat. Off comes the  
 wrapper peeled and crinkled between fingers,  
 offered to the sky before the bin. Then  
 tongue touches what tongue wants.

### III.

I want to fall into the floor  
 the ground level apartment  
 the cellar below. Let me  
 spread the dress of myself  
 to the corners, diagonals over  
 this hardwood. Linden. This  
 house waking up with me  
 inhabiting stovepipe and wall,  
 rafter, dropping from the eaves,  
 the hem of me, silken, taken in  
 every thread cross-eyed and  
 turned back—doubled over,  
 bell-rung, greeting the thunder  
 clap of summer storm falling  
 falling through when you open  
 the trap door. My eyes will look up

roll back and plunge down the  
 burrow of me, one caught and  
 sightless in the airway and the  
 other squeezed and pinched and  
 squeezed to stomach before dissolved,  
 churned and spun-right and -down  
 and sluiced with the finest of enzymes  
 oozed and trickling down from acinar cells

cut and bile-bound tumbling, claiming  
 all that might nourish and poison before  
 discarding these glutinous organs of sight.

### IV.

He came up to me and said 'We  
 had a son together until I lost him  
 by the river' and I said 'No I  
 lost him and he was our daughter  
 until I saw her become the water.'

'When she found us, you had a beard  
 and I wore blue leggings.' He looked  
 at me and. Reached for me. And  
 listened for me. Adjusted his wings  
 and moved his head, mouth open,  
 side to side. 'You were no man' he said  
 'I am no scribe' I nodded 'You've got to  
 stop eating to see what I mean.' I wondered  
 how he lost our child when I had her  
 so firmly between my teeth.

'You have got no womb' he says 'You've got no  
 son' says I and we walk a while longer.  
 'There's the bush again' that's me. He blinks. 'It  
 looked like a blaze last year' we agree  
 there were more than yellow petals.

## We Are Still Learning to Sing—

Sahra Motalebi

[—a draft excerpt, April 2021]

— a blinking cursor pulls my eyes toward the screen. Not up to the green glowing pinhole camera eye, but toward an act of return. A return to writing, to speaking this writing aloud, writing while speaking aloud. You're now reading words that were rolled through the architecture of my head and out of my mouth into the air—so to meet you here on a printed page. Evoking a scene of resonant, collaborative exchange like this has been hard to do over the last year. What would've usually been taking place in real-time and material space is only remembered or intimated by images. If there is an incommensurability here— to write about something meant to be experienced in person with others, *chest to chest*, as it were—then this disjuncture opens up the heart of the project itself, which can be gleaned from the draft excerpts below.

[...]

[—an introduction, April 2018]

*\_This is an experimental, collaborative practice for everyone. Dissolving the relational thresholds between so-called teaching and learning, between representation and abstraction, performance and spectatorship, improvisation and composition, embodiment and cognition, expressivity and text, and our interior and public world/s, etc. [edit: on- and off-line, between isolation and connection]\_*

— so began the earliest iteration of the text for the project, which has been variously titled "Inter-Voice," "We Are Learning to Sing," and "We Are Still Learning to Sing." The first of these names, Inter-voice, emerged in 2018, something close to the phrase inner voice. This title uses the prefix *inter-*, to be in, or between, co-mingled, etc. And then there is the voice, which is both a body part of communication, and a figure of speech, to be unearthed, found, from within and from without, and an encounter with other voices. *Interlocution*. That was the start.

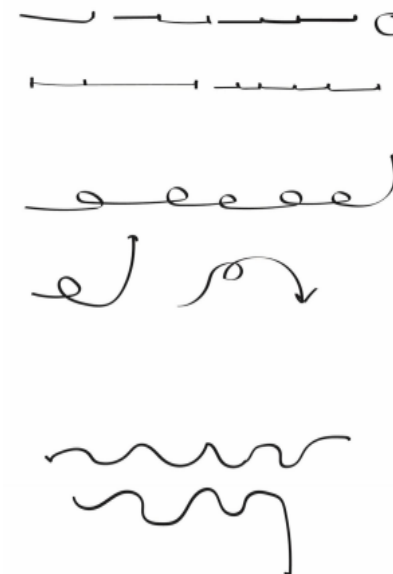
In this ongoing consideration of the voice and singing by way of

writing—as metaphors and also experiential processes that overlap somewhat interchangeably—and doing so at a moment when public space, shared air, had all but evaporated, there has been sense-making and possibility. Having heaved with the epic contractions, retreats, reconfigurations, as so many of us have across the globe, particularly in this last year or two, there is certainly no shortage of heart-rending aches and pains to give voice to. To have availed ourselves of our own voices, then, in this way, to accommodate our lives and our circumstances with more fidelity, more reality, would seem to have been time well-spent in these endless months.

[...]

[—May 2020]

*\_The feeling of singing and its concepts, while they are linked, often do not have the same meanings. The voice can be best known in the breath, a meeting point between our voice and our being.\_*



After 6 or 7 Zoom runs of *Inter-voice* and/or *We Are Learning to Sing*, and/or *We are Still Learning to Sing*, I've been thinking about the ubiquity of online life and, often in contradistinction to it, the limits of the voice as relational material. *How does one fit one's voice into a square or into a grid of squares? And what about the haptic loss in the formatting and uploading of ourselves so utterly?* I found the answers to these questions sitting eerily, in a kind of premonition, on the landing page for this project's website, which

had been semi-languishing for exactly three of the last years. I had not yet fleshed it out. Because one writes often using a keyboard these days—loads of texting and emailing, chatting, posting and grammatizing—it's easy to forget that one's voice is on a continuum with one's senses. It knows things before we do; it asks to be felt. It asks to be more than a disembodied signal in a field of noise. So, when I realized that this work was also about the absence of voice, and the absence of sharing:

*\_What wants to be voiced?\_Are you ready to hear it?\_*

*\_It may come as a sound, image, a mark, as a word or sentence, or somewhere between.\_*

[...]

[—workshop format: <https://sites.google.com/view/inter-voice> April 2018]

*\_Our voices are lifelong companions, unfolding as infinite subjective processes—those born from our corporeal and material realities—but also from unbounded imaginal and intuitive zones that mesh within our experience. By accessing these processes together, we might discover our voice streams and those of others. We generate “techniques” that release us from notions of “skill” or talent” for vocalization in real-time, over days and years, as we devise our own prompts, drawings, and scores!\_*

I've always hoped to convey what has made sense to me. That, in the process of learning to sing, that our voices are found, expanded, and even perhaps shed, in ways that are unimaginable to us—moving beyond notions of merely good singing—into the realms of memory, movement, writing, and drawing, and back again. And that this is all shared. This is because the voice is linked to the most fundamental aspects of being alive—to communicate, pray, intone, beseech, cry, solemnize, perform, to exclaim. This has been something I'm writing more about in this time off. Vocalizing, like breathing, is the link between the physiological and our world/s as we know them— singing as a mode of interaction, riding on the breath.

*\_Everyone, everywhere, is singing. We are still learning to sing. \_*

This project became the prompts within it, prompts like *\_Drawing on the Breath\_*, *\_Memory Paraphernalia\_* and *\_Quantum Choral Soup\_*. Here we

find the voice is in a constant state of flux, in time, and it obliges us to know ourselves as we actually are, many limitless complex things, together: longings, sorrows, waves, electricities, and shimmers, to name too few. When we sing in this way with others, we know that this is interlinked with others, and it is up for re-visioning any time, any place.

[...]

[—to re-vision, to make again]

Can anyone sing? I'm always asked this. Yes. I'm saying yes, always.

*\_Everyone can sing. Everyone is singing everywhere. We are all still learning to sing.\_*

Tone, tessitura (“texture” in Italian), color, volume, sonority, perfect pitch, phonation — these things don't matter much it turns out. It might not seem this way, but the voice makes itself known in the gaps; not in silence, per se, but in the cracks and trembles and breaks. Within thousands of latencies in every direction, at any given moment these days, we are living in these gaps—within our lifeworlds, our vocations, and within ourselves, on- and off-line. Re-visioning happens here, between the before and our now. It's this, between breaths, between the inhalation and the exhalation, between our past ideas and future plans. To perpetually re-vision is to undo the duality we ascribe to our bodies and minds, emotions and concepts, but also in our separateness from the collective, between our perfect images and our real lives, the *inter-*. Here, in this voicing, we are not conscripted into articulating ourselves in normative or even narrative ways necessarily, nor do we feel compelled to project that which we do not even understand about ourselves. In the gap is a space to breathe, and from that breath, one's voice can actually be heard; sometimes very quiet at first, glimmering shards, and sometimes in a deafening, robust rush. Re-visioning happens through voicing multiple dimensions with curiosity.

[...]

[— to breath]

*\_Swimmers, horn players, acrobats, and singers breathe like babies, again and again.*

*This is and isn't in the realm of the imaginary.\_*





## Rose Studies

Veronica Martin

The rose rose out west.  
 Hybrid tea, a mountain without a range.  
 The dust unsettled, pooled in water.  
 Roses winnowed until one escaped blight.  
 Is this rose an own root rose, does the rose trim its own flowers?  
 Susan tending to her armor.  
 Cat raking her fur against the thorns.  
 Great aunts, growing prizewinners.  
 A rose means silver.  
 Silver plate, silver cup, catching the color of the rose.  
 Turning the color around, making it bend.  
 The rose in multiple on wallpaper. A swatch, four in the frame.  
 A forest of roses hits the body everywhere at once.  
 Their scent takes up full range of vision.  
 A megaphone-shaped light.  
 The floral axis lets go slowly.  
 A deeply embedded demand.  
 My mother claimed the rose,  
 favors the hybrid tea Double Delight.  
 Strawberry tipped petals swell with color in summer.  
 Sugar Moon rises high against its deep green stalk.  
 Grandmother cuts her calves on the thorns.  
 White pedal-pushers spotted with blood.  
 Thin cuts like claw marks, never without.  
 Favored Tropicana.  
 Prolifically coral.  
 Great aunt shaking hands with the mayor of Rose City.  
 Her globe of curls dyed a pale yellow, elegant wrists,  
 bracelet sleeves to show them off.  
 Float of roses parading down 5th.  
 Rose festival, carnival of spent blooms  
 Ashley, a sun loon, steals at night.  
 Fills a station wagon with roses, tries to climb inside.  
 Dress moving from ankle to thigh.  
 Face pressed into flowers, tucked into steering wheel.  
 Roses are a feast for deer, deer are pressed from the forest,  
 pressed by the people, so the garden must be caged.

Impatience for the garden,  
 how silly.  
 Each day I wake up and remind myself gently of this life.  
 I try to grow a tree rose in Texas.  
 Julia Child in full sun, high-gloss.  
 I am, after all, progeny of rose-growers.  
 But she doesn't take.  
 Stem turns husk, gloss dampens then drops.  
 I throw her down the trash-chute.  
 Rose city to rose city, cheek to cheek.  
 Harrison's yellow grows in the garden beds of Texans,  
 and along Oregon trails, someone says.  
 Seems generic, but a rose is a rose.  
 Aunt favors Silver Lining,  
 high centered bloom only silver at base,  
 pink petals borne mostly singly.  
 Each rose like a head shot, like a resolution.  
 To make a fist around the bud is to open a palm full of petals.  
 Mention of a rose brings the mother out of Susan.  
 Her regrets tied up, a plant of dichotomy.  
 They open and open when cut and brought inside.  
 Unfurl and unfurl when placed inside a vase.  
 An unbelievable roundness, says Susan.  
 She favors Jude the Obscure, double bloom.  
 Lemon and myrrh and peach come in on the cat.  
 Fragrant burr.  
 Darting through the house.  
 Purchase a rose plant, and it may outlive even three generations.  
 Its stalk will harden, woodier, it will seem to have bark like a tree.  
 Its leaves will turn thick as good work cloth.  
 Something you win with.  
 The last thing outside to lose its color when the sun sets,  
 the first to gain it when the moon comes out.  
 Tropical Lightening climbs.  
 Ingrid Bergman's fragrance is slight.  
 Charles Darwin practices continual blooming.  
 A yellow almost old as gold, lemony tint, sandy.  
 Floribunda abandon.

# Automatic Angel

Helen Hofling

Description, automatically generated:  
*A picture containing zebra, living, tree, room.*

Point to the *zebra*, *living*,  
 and I'll show you mineral, coiled.  
 Ambassador of artificial translation,  
 your measure finds representation of *room*.

You, envoy of tree, representative of  
 curve, expert in architectures of containment,  
 you bend toward your ultimate end like this,  
 summoning animals across a digital stream.

Hierophant of misplaced pointing!  
 O automatic angel, gripped  
 by sacred mysteries, arcane machine wisdom,  
 profoundly incorrect, you point image

into caption, relying on unknown watchers for  
 correction— the indolence.  
 In the language of flowers, palm points  
 to victory. A round of applause, then, if you can

point to the *living*. Idle generator,  
 you destroy your idols with inaccuracy,  
 generating idyllic nonsense from a tranquil glass  
 interface, fronds brushing softly against it.

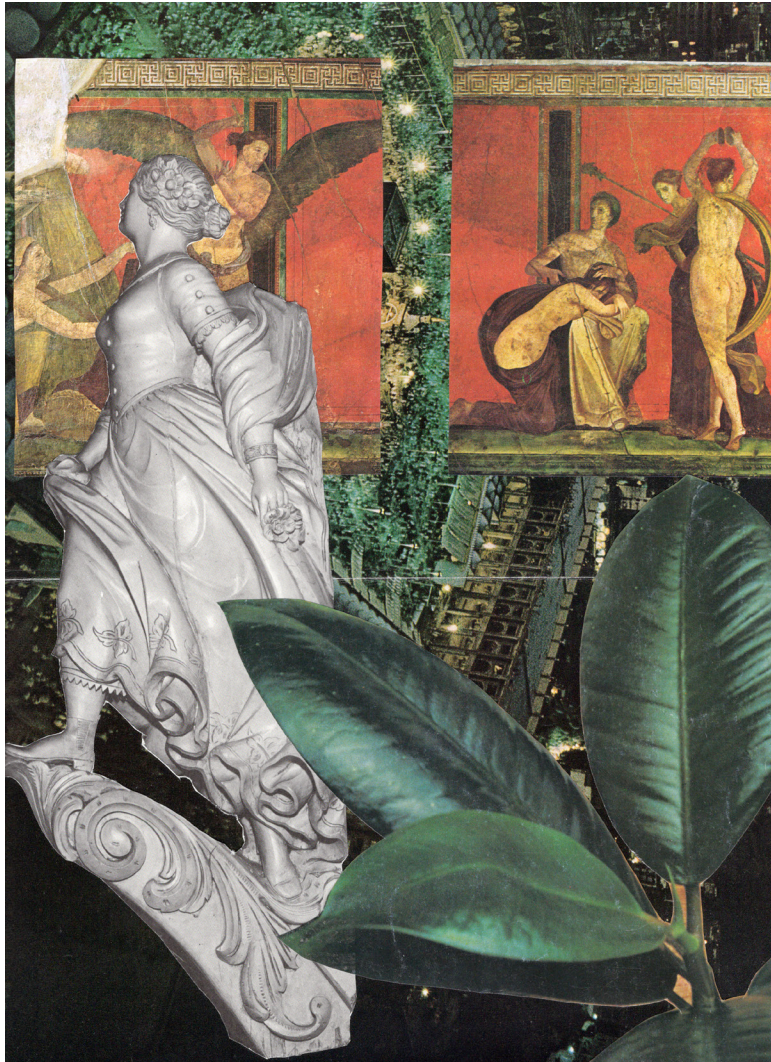
Deep in the palm forest, something is sleeping  
 A zebra haunts the machine.





## Show Me the One that Hisses

Helen Hofling



Tell me again what an angel looks like,  
How many wings?

Draw a floor plan of its nest.  
Draw a courtroom sketch of its eyes.

Carry me over the angel's starry fields.  
Show me the one that hisses

Its own mythologies,  
O dull eyed pilot.

Give me the hot wires of a true history;  
I would do anything to receive them.



## Pensée de L'escalier

Michele Madigan Somerville

1

A jumping spider hunts by sight pouncing upon its prey from a distance.  
Bright warning coloration and mimicry occur in many butterfly groups.  
When disturbed, the bombardier beetle discharges a jet of irritant fluid  
from the tip of the abdomen.

King Bee departed, followed by a cortege of drones.  
She was angry. I had become the focus  
in a bad way.

Like most web-spinning spiders, she takes down  
the web to build a new one.

My cowardice took me by surprise. In the absence of  
collective vitality I got stuck doing all the performing.  
This pleased me.

The dung beetle was sacred to the ancient Egyptians.

Some were “devastated” by his sudden  
departure.

For a price, under the right conditions  
I would, once again, take their tender.  
I didn't know what to do with her.  
I wanted to cut her down like a tall tree.  
Weary of women, I somehow became an old man  
slobbering over Lacan, dreaming of girls.

2

Ted and Frank. Frank and Ted. Ted and Frank. War stories and tea.

3

Character isn't everything. She was hard as  
a woman but with something of the girl about her.

We invited someone new to join.

We all agreed she's nice.

As she dismantles the web, the spider ingests the old silk.

4

Every woman I ever married excelled me as I  
languished on a back burner cultivating  
an open mind, pretending to read French.

Each of the derided texts had in common  
Greek and Roman elements. (Old hat.)

“The problem “ Bill said, is you  
remind him of *her*,” Bill said.

Despite popular belief, the female does not always eat the male after  
mating.

5

*Pensee d'escalier*, poem of afterthought,  
vocalic fiber unfurled from a balcony.

I took her under my wing.  
An expert deemed the incident  
“a kind of assault.”

6

We grew  
tired

of her fecundity.

Some assassin bugs are unusual in that they coat their eggs with a  
protective chemical.

She made it look easy.

Sometimes a man shoots himself in  
the wing knowing he doesn't deserve  
to fly. Sometimes a weapon  
is a better friend than a friend.

Late bloomers, depressed,  
 “exhausted.” I liked them best  
 that way — I made them  
 feel like artists.

7

Bright warning coloration and mimicry occur in many groups of butterflies.  
 When we dined out together it was to one restaurant only — leader’s  
 choice.

Neurasthenics do best under such  
 conditions. I had no choice  
 but to eliminate the fly — the sacrifice  
 fly in the ointment —  
 for the good of the many.

8

The adult damselfly is known to feed on massive numbers of insects it  
 catches in flight.

I guess you could say I was something of a  
 charlatan or thief.  
 Paralysis left them short  
 on demands. It’s not like I care  
 about money, but such easy money?

A seminar on how  
 the “artist” spent his  
 week, his career  
 developments and  
 famous artists he had  
 known in his heyday.

Evasive, by nature, in fantasies I am  
 inhumane, sexually inadequate,  
 indifferent, dishonest.  
 “Bitch-slapping,” she called it.  
 She was onto me, versus into.  
 So Bronx. Sometimes it is only  
 through insulting a woman one comes  
 to feel like a man.

9

Some butterflies and moths have eye spots that frighten predators away.  
 None of my wives ever got it right.  
 I kept silent on my several vanity  
 projects. I liked that I forced her  
 to hold back tears, and bailed  
 the minute she bolted.  
 Many harmless insects have the same appearance of others that are  
 noxious.

10

Without deference from all  
 there could be no moving forward.

“To the best poet in town,”  
 (author’s inscription.)

We were languishing alongside  
 the faculty mailboxes when she told  
 me she was leaving: “The horse is  
 dying,” she said, with street-smart  
 smirk. “Put it out of its misery.”  
 “Don’t.” I whispered.

Many harmless insects have the same appearance of others that are noxious.  
 She called it a “cult.” No.  
 “Social contract” I thought.

11

Limp accusation of “going  
 to the negative.”

12

Whenever a manchild accuses a woman of “going to the negative”—  
 Its immatures live below the surface, linked more by weakness than by  
 strengths.

Some instructors are  
 not open to feedback.

The dung beetle was sacred to ancient Egyptians.  
 The monarch caterpillar feeds on milkweed which makes it poisonous and  
 bitter to birds.

13

She reminded me of all the women  
 who had ever believed I wasn't good  
 enough.  
 The irritant fluid is propelled explosively and is scalding hot.  
 She inferred erroneously  
 it was permissible to object.  
 A longhorn beetle, so-called because of its long antennae, produces sounds  
 to startle and discourage its enemies.

14

Caveat  
 scriptor.

15

The flower fly, which does not sting, benefits from resembling wasps that do.  
 I simply adopted a pedagogy for  
 targeting slower —  
 How could she, a teacher, fail  
 to embrace this?

An agile swimmer, the insect carries an air chamber under its wings.  
 I took her under my wing.  
 Katydid males rub together parts of their wings. (Mating call.)

16

So much feeling.  
 {Throttle the messenger bitch.}

17

Prior to jumping, the insect uses its vision to get a precise fix on its target.  
 The male of this giant beetle has frontal horns that are used in combat  
 with other males  
 over access to nearby females.  
 Many butterflies hide their bright colors and blend in with their surroundings.

I had imagined  
 a refuge from  
 the factions,  
 rebellions,  
 schools,  
 camps.

The female is noncombatant and lacks horns.

She had some kind of fetish for "real  
 men," hoods, pugs and such.

18

I tore the  
 covers off  
 recycled his  
 books, saved  
 the one  
 inscribed "best  
 poet in  
 town."

19

This lady beetle can exude a bitter liquid that protects it from being  
 eaten by enemies.

I saw she could go either way:  
 turn me on, turn on me ...

Predators take the beetles to be noxious and avoid eating them.

An expert deemed the incident "a  
 kind of assault, confluence of jealousy,  
 vanity and fear."

Ungovernable, she was.

20

The others feared they'd be next. The little guy with the shiv  
is tucked away in a university where he can do no harm.  
What the world needs — another talented philologist critic.

21

The remarkable migrating butterfly resides throughout the United States.  
The female is noncombatant and lacks horns. Many harmless insects  
have the same appearance of others that are noxious.

22

Many butterflies hide their bright colors and blend in with their surroundings.  
A blue-eyed Jew!  
While the poison doesn't hurt the monarchs, it makes them taste bad to  
predators.  
After about 14 days, the adult monarch butterfly emerges from its chrysalis.  
Creatures of sun, butterflies fly best when they're warm.  
She was hot just not for me.

23

Painted Lady	Cloudless Sulfur	Spicebush Swallowtail	Blue
	Morpho		
Variegated	Tawny	Emperor Comma	
Frillery			
	Queen		

## “Warning from God Discovered in DNA”

Nick Maione

Might well have been so!

It isn't,

but it might well have been so, a window

strange times to be taken in, and not taken in as in

*I was a stranger and you took me in,*

but trying to get off the hook *enthusiasmos*  
or making the wrong call *give us Barabbas*

momentum in the responsibility

of the hearers, the seers

steps taken, shots fired

all the *that for the sake of which* without which we would

sink the brain in a sweet vat

A super brew in the dark,

selecting ghosts that won't decompose; Pygmy Owl eyes

not crying in the back

For whose tired sake have I chosen my abode?

where light crosses color, see Christmas lights

when crying, icon

reverse-engineered,

not a robe worn backwards

on a child, it's getting late

It's already so late

*It's ok honey*



# Have My You?

Miriam Huettnner

so let me have my you

\ say

\*

\ say it

here

slipping \ butter

off \ tongue

into poem \

let me \ say

it

sly

snakes \ in search

\ drenched in \ wine

of \ meat

on a \ spoon

have

say my i \ you say you \ are

how to \ you come

\ \ man

here inside

the doe-

rag \ slip

so \ many faces

so

n \ slide beer

in search \ of

sweater

meat \ me

\ so

say \ you

feces \ corn

\ who \ are \ you

anyway

regurgitate it its own \ marl

why do you \ keep

a mop set \ free \ in a \ basin

coming

\*

let \ me have \ my you

you you \ duck

duck \ goose

let \ me hide or

will \ you

raid ?

\*

will \ i me am \ i mine

are i \ butter

\ knife lard

\ comrade

calamime

\ knee-deep

\ lichen

let me \ have

seaweed \ panties \ toast \ and jam

what

let \ me have why

\\ you

why you

let me have \ you

?

# Wine on a Spoon

Miriam Huettner

sweet broth of blood,  
gestation of months  
since I smacked my mouth  
to your pitcher of flax  
so long—I can barely  
forget the acerbic spill  
from your side, pumped  
through hours of flogging,  
leaking from calloused palms,  
perfumed feet, a soft rib  
recently laid upon by  
a young man now standing  
at your feet with roses  
in his arms, bladed wine  
ripping open a curtain  
the heavens, coming down  
like a lion from the cave,  
this mountain, coating my tongue  
with a sharp yes, zest of your flesh  
into my body, this wine, you  
speak into flecks of my dust,  
red pouring into the ground,  
my lord what a morning,  
my lord.

## Plum Lake Rural Clinic #10. Year 2061

Laura Budofsky Wisniewski

*O viriditas digiti Dei / O greenness of God's finger.*  
*- Hildegard von Bingen, Symphonia.*

Still half asleep, three young physicians follow Sister Jessica.  
 Sister's God thinks in greens and threes.  
 She says, *Do not obstruct God's genesis of leafy wings.*

She says, passing between palettes,  
*In all creatures, there is viriditas. In all dirt, viriditas.*  
*In all souls, those green-tongued bells, there is viriditas.*

Surely, the tender shoots that crack the sodden walls,  
 the pale pink skin that closes the wounds' eyes,  
 noon's breakthrough rays, testify to it.

Sister, like a blade of grass in wind,  
 tends the sick, bending over them  
 then straightening to listen to God's strain,

while in the Courtyard of the Drowned, Nurses sing  
 the Lithianium. Tame rats doze  
 in crabgrass and St. John's Wort. What comfort those voices are.

The old machines: IV, X-Ray, EKG, lie  
 moldering in Storage Closet One.  
*Do not mistake the relic for the spirit of the Saint,*

says Sister Jessica. *Seas recede, seeds redress last breaths*  
*with green. Do not obstruct God's urge*  
*to lick clean the afterbirth.*

## Sr. Somewhere

Taylor Daynes

Somewhere I know is the nun  
 who has said all the prayers I claimed to have  
 for friends and friends' fathers who died  
 and for my father who is not dead,  
 his father who is.

She is under a shroud of blooming apple  
 luxuriating in the fullness of being holy.  
 Her shoes are off. She is unbothered

by the creep of wetness  
 darkening the backside of her dress.  
 There is always someone behind her like me  
 to wash it, so her petitions can go on thrusting

toward the fruit that will form  
 and into the beams of light  
 between boughs.

## Sprawl

JC Niala

Watch me grow. I suck it all in to feed the giant.  
Out of a swamp I rose like Omweri,  
squeezed through poorly laid pavement.

Still, I welcome those rich enough  
and those who put them up.  
Boundaries vanish. I swallow whole suburbs, kijijis.

People forget that I once wasn't here.

## Luminous Detail: Introducing Anne Waldman

Ariella Ruth

Anne Waldman is a poet, teacher, performer, and cultural activist who has been a student of Tibetan Buddhism since 1970. She has taught poetics and performed all over the world and she has been an active collaborator with many other artists, including composer and vocalist Meredith Monk and choreographer Douglas Dunn. She is part of the Fast Speaking Music collective and recording label, and an active member of the “Outrider” experimental poetry community, which bridges the spaces between art, spirituality, and social justice; a poetics that we need now more than ever. Deemed a “counter-cultural giant” by *Publishers Weekly*, she traveled with Bob Dylan’s Rolling Thunder Review, was arrested with Allen Ginsberg and Daniel Ellsberg at Rocky Flats, and participated in protests at the Chicago Seven Trial.

Waldman was one of the founders and directors of the Poetry Project at St Mark’s Church In-the-Bowery in New York City, and went on to co-found the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University with Allen Ginsberg in 1974. She has continued to work at Naropa, the first Buddhist-inspired University in the United States, as Distinguished Professor of Poetics, and the Artistic Director of its celebrated Summer Writing Program. Allen Ginsberg referred to Waldman as his “spiritual wife” in their long relationship as co-directors and companion poets.

One of the most profound, intense, enlightening, challenging, and spiritual adventures of my life was the years I spent at Naropa. I was an MFA Writing & Poetics student at the Jack Kerouac School where I studied with Anne, and later worked on the staff for several years before finding myself at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School. I feel forever grounded in the lineage of experimental poets and Buddhist thinkers that Anne established *there*, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, which single handedly propelled me *here*, to Cambridge and, specifically, to the CSWR.

To look deeper into Anne’s impact on my own poetics, I read through the notebooks I kept throughout my time at Naropa. Below are lines I pulled from those pages. Some are quotes from Anne during a lecture, panel, reading, or performance she gave on the stage in Naropa’s Performing Arts Center; others are lines I wrote in response to experiments or prompts from her writing workshops, or from conversations



I had with her over the years, or something that I wrote down that was instantaneously sparked by what she chanted into the microphone, a light, something *luminous*. Most of the time I didn't clearly mark in the notebooks where the lines originated, too busy writing down as much as I possibly could, filling pages I am delighted to revisit now as I trace the palpable effect Anne's spirit has on the words and lines I arrange with gratitude. This community she created is a fluctuating body of spirits held together by lineage and archive, sycamore trees bursting from mountain-side ground, together still even when apart.

*All poetry is an investigation, conscious or not, into the world*

*Not seeing life as a tree but as a braided river*

*Don't let things get buried!*

*I think symmetry causes a struggle from birth*

*As it exists it is also shedding*

*Artifact of the page*

*Archive is the anecdote to memory*

*The moon, how many have passed*

*Do a riff, a frame of the time*

*What's going on in the sky?*

*Push against the darkness*

*How do you mend broken memory?*

*Make sure she's looking at the moon*

*The best thing about disembodied community—once you shed the body, the distance disappears*

*What binds us together is our impermanence  
Naropa taught me to speak*

*Every pore of your body is an orifice, is an eyeball*

*The "I" is in question*

*Her poetry is what I come from*

*I write for the necessary and inevitable movement of large bodies*

*The elements are trying to speak to us*

*Tasting of words as you hear words*

*You start with the body, this composite of things*

*The receptive is the earth, the mother*

*I translate dead tissue*

*The solution is not found in the writing itself*

*I'd say that you are the worst kind of ghost*

*Dissonance, and its pleasure*

### 3 Parables

Anne Waldman

#### Blood Moon

As geomancer, she was investigating, inventing out of her time a lash, a leash to pull, to call you back...

Is this the longest or shortest century? Look into your human detonation. Astrological signs were a prominent motif in Zoroastrian apocalyptic texts. As the end of the current millennium approaches, they might say, they have said, they will be saying, there will be signs, miracles, and wonders (nišān, abdiḥ, škoftīh; Dēnkard,). Each century ends with an eclipse. The year, month, and day will become one-third shorter, the night brighter. The sun will show a mist, the moon will change color; earthquakes and violent winds will occur. Mercury and Jupiter will arrange “rulership for the wicked”. They say they have said they will be saying it over and over scrying the fallen city. He will not heed the votes. Never say his name or he will materialize at greater speed. Later (reading the sand) “kingship will never come to the Problematized One.” When the planet Jupiter attains its exaltation and casts down Venus it will be a soldered sounder, over, sing, over.

When Jupiter & Saturn meet, they will be conjunct your trine, your eclipse, don’t wander.

What rules? What problem to call him out. Shame Shame (fretting the skies). He is blurred in the text, the Polarizing One. Please make the count come right down on him. The Moon turns blood in the fire of our time. On him. Blood on his hands. Intubation in the cenotaphs. In kinship? Or out of broken nation. Venus up in arms. Cupping the night. Not say the name.

There is division, word too dangerous to be spoken to. In the strobing cinematic camera, dangerous. Firearms on display, poised, aim, a trigger in your belly. Sand on the floors of state.

In the dream a battle scene: Persepolis heaving. I am called to

this, called to this.

When a primary trigger has been dislodged, will you be ready? I see the way rooms divide, sliced. And the commander is saying “a small mechanism”: just push will you ready it?

Militia with a bullhorn on the lawn. Threat of lynching. Hide before activated, Detroit. Hissing interception. Come out. A flock of birds because they register freedom on the border of cruelty. Detroit, the test of vision, long tentacles of liberation hold ground, hold blessed ground, stay, hold. Never reduced to bare life. Astral omens fighting conditio inhumana.

## Blue Moons' Omens

An X as in an hourglass.  
 Militia with a megaphone on the lawn  
 Hide, before it is activated  
 Foresight by earth, by things that crawl and hide  
 In a science of the sands  
 One wept at the border of cruelty, El Paso  
 One wept at the border of interception  
 A flock of birds as intervention  
 Because they register freedom  
 You are not seen  
 Your language is a cry  
 Look down at your feet  
 Gaze down to your palm now  
 The broken line is a cry  
 A ceramic figure that is a hand  
 Represents detonation  
 That is the dream  
 And everyone in sync  
 As in a square dance and swaying  
 Before the tanks arrive  
 They speak of Jupiter attaining exhalation  
 And casting down of Venus  
 Inscription of wandering planets: to stay amused  
 Age of mirage, without shame  
 Never back to the dominant gaze, spare us  
 Galileo not pardoned til the 19 hundreds...  
 38 degrees into Aries  
 Mystic empathic Pisces water nymph will be trailing behind  
 Moon in Aquarius  
 & Cancer rising for otherliness  
 O hazy prophecy  
 Or full moon of autumn, are you omniscient?  
 When leaves turn red that is a cry  
 Or fires obscure the sky  
 From Cameron Peak and the fork of Williams

Unstoppable flames rage through night & day  
 Astral omens these days  
 Cinematics of planetary abuse don't help the days  
 Cosmic chords out of whack these days  
 I will be the art-angel of all divination and show up  
 Ashes rain down on efficacy the night too they do this  
 Babylonian solar, lunar and planetary theory of the cures  
 Seleucids and Parthian period to remember, study  
 Is syntax for poets  
 I am on your nighttime star now  
 And now we try to rein in a pathological governance  
 To be asterism-reckoners  
 Zodiac-tellers  
 Time-knowers  
 In this dream of a horoscope of the world  
 A lucky auspice would be a throne including:  
 1) Machinery to mimic weather

## Avicennan Medicine

“Seven planets passing as migrants  
through the constellations of the zodiac”

and as we turned,

we had just come out

rounded, we had just climbed,

beaten path to gaze:

I said

“is this the visionary recital we wait for?”

or

“how rate this universe?”  
sick of old formulas, obstacles

because we have been down so long

I said more

“diamonds, liquid nitrogen  
crux in the sky”

“could you see us, partnering in crime?”

You were amused

“remember the cavern?”

“state of abodes?”

“imago mundi?”

and you again, silently: what did we accomplish?  
we just come out, start spinning  
here is our vocabulary

i'll carry you

it was difficult to remember “why”

and “carry”

(silently) were we sick?

we held down so long  
surveillance  
of one another  
without light  
counting heavenly  
bodies on hands,  
in head, reading dust particles as talisman

do no harm, Ibn S'ina said

stop counting death

we carried something that stuck to us

capitalism?

shake it off, wake up

we need to proclaim a song

where we'd been  
coming out and spinning

a new reckoning

singing:

*the first thing to know is fire exists  
then with one's own eyes?  
to be consumed by fire at the end.*



## Good Full World

Jessica Hudgins

A deer ten feet away,  
still as a memory, looking back at me  
for so long that I speak to it.  
I say, *Hey...*, and it starts off in kind of a run:  
pushes its chin forward,  
and its body follows, sort of easy.  
I'm going to get some string  
to hang a curtain.  
I'm feeling good.  
The kitchen clean, a call with Mom later,  
something in the fridge to drink.

On my way back, it's at the fenceline.  
Poor girl, I think, smugly,  
she can't escape. For miles  
pastures, livestock, roads.  
From standing, then, it jumps,  
walks as though with no desire  
to the blueberry bushes.

It's night now, and it won't chase off.  
I watch its shape, the diagonal of it  
reaching for the top of the bush  
almost human, I can  
almost make out the head.

\*

You once bought groceries  
to save your aunt, another poor girl.  
For a while, she was  
behind every door.  
As long as you didn't open the door,  
she was there.

Two years later  
a boy, a few years older, but just a few,

and nice, appears. He's out there  
right now  
buying gin,  
club soda, and condoms, for you.

\*

At lunch, she lost  
and regained consciousness.  
Gone, and then finished  
her sentence. That was the  
easiest part.

\*

When that new boy stops  
you can't see straight;  
you behave truly stupidly;  
carrying a broom, you're  
blind with not knowing,  
toppling off your path  
until you can see:  
the stick caught in the fan  
and knocked you in the head  
three times fast.  
Sit down, cry, and then think:  
What am I upset about?

But I want pain, drama, longing  
and separation, a new love  
just missed. "Doesn't feel right"  
is too insignificant an obstacle,  
it's not an obstacle at all,  
it's a complaint, and I'm anything  
but ungrateful. I love his body,  
smaller than mine, put together as if  
for everyone to get some,  
some people had to get very little

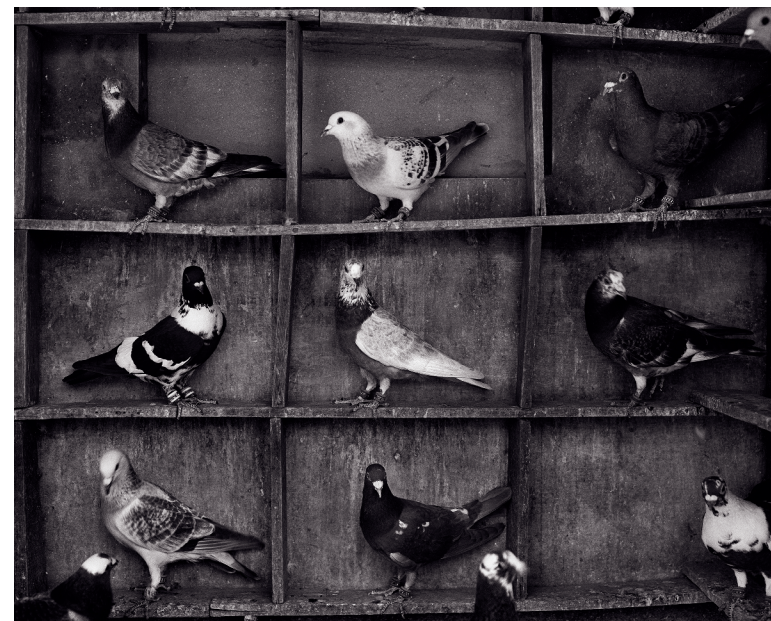
except when,  
 in a thrill of inspiration,  
 God made this boy's butt:  
 a flourish, a cherry on top,  
 a nod toward the good full world of love  
 and possibility and getting  
 what you want.  
 And then back to the skinny calves.  
 What's the harm in pausing here?

\*

Walking to a job interview, light rain,  
 she sees a hibiscus halved and slick  
 on the wet concrete, white  
 petals spread from its red center,  
 looking so much like a last-day, just-in-case  
 tampon she could cry.  
 Like a note passed, a glance between her  
 knowledge and all knowing.  
 She looks around, she expects to catch  
 the world's actual eyes,  
 expects the trees, cars, and street-signs  
 to lean closer, to nod  
 and whisper, *Yes, yes,*  
*that is what happened.* A tree's  
 knowledge is how to be a tree.  
 It is certainty and uncertainty,  
 loneliness and company.

## The Moon is Behind Us: 30 Letters in Response to 30 Moons, An Excerpt of Three Exchanges

Fazal Sheikh and Terry Tempest Williams



Fazal Sheikh

10 JULY 2020

Dearest Fazal,

John le Carré tells the story of accompanying his father on one of his “gambling sprees” to Monte Carlo. He was a teenager at the time. Very near the casino was a sporting club, “and at its base” he tells us “lay a stretch of lawn and a shooting range looking out to sea.” He goes on to write, “Under the lawn ran small, parallel tunnels that emerged in a row at the sea’s edge. Into them were inserted live pigeons that had been hatched and trapped on the casino roof. Their job was to flutter their way along the pitch-dark tunnel until they emerged in the Mediterranean sky as targets for well-lunched sporting gentlemen who were standing or lying in wait with their shotguns. Pigeons who were missed or merely winged then did what pigeons do. They returned to the place of their birth on the casino roof, where the same traps awaited them.”

I have been haunted by this story ever since I read his memoir, *The Pigeon Tunnel*, written in 2016. When I look at your photograph, Rooftop pigeon roost, Delhi, India, 2005, I can’t help but wonder if this same kind of practice happens there as well.

Dovecote. Columbarium. Coop. I see this photograph as a rendering of randomness and fate. When flying through the narrow confines of the tunnels, winging their way toward light, which pigeons will be shot and which ones will be spared only to fly back up to the roof and await another round of gunshots at dawn? And if we see the clear metaphor to our own species’ survival, at what point does an individual say, I will no longer place myself in the sights of a repeating round of abuse?

Stool pigeon. In the crosshairs. Framed. Nine pigeons are framed twice. Once—as eight birds standing sideways in individual wooden cubicles, three down and three across resembling a tic-tac-toe board with one rogue pigeon perched in a corner looking directly at the camera; and again, when the birds are framed in the white mat you made for this picture. Five other pigeons are glimpsed as fragments of feet and heads.

Seven of the nine pigeons are standing in the same direction, only one is facing the opposite direction, and the same rogue pigeon who is not quite in the ninth cubicle is facing the viewer directly. What is the posture of escape?

Here in the desert, wild pigeons or rock doves (*Columba livia*), descended from those in Eurasia, nest and roost in the creases of sandstone cliffs within the Colorado Plateau. We have many here in Castle Valley and I love listening to them coo at dawn and dusk, creating a comforting melancholia in the valley in sync with scorching summer days. Their iridescent feathers in flight register as hallucinations. When settled

on the rocks they shimmer like heat waves. I have watched the swift grace of rock doves against an open sky fall prey and plummet at breakneck speed to the precision of a peregrine falcon strike on the hunt—a warning we are always being watched.

In the great cities of the world, pigeons congregate in parks and the gray-stoned plazas and piazzas of Europe. Some visitors come daily to pay homage to the pigeons with breadcrumbs, children wave their arms in delight to see them rise and mob the sun, and when they circle the churches and land once again, cranky locals make a habit to shush and shoo them away. Pigeons are loyal, highly intelligent, and mate for life. They have fierce and sophisticated homing instincts, even at their own peril. These are facts. But when I watch the rock doves animate the desert, I see something very different, unnamable, unknowable, uncommon.

“To the creative writer,” John le Carré writes, “fact is raw material, not his taskmaster but his instrument, and his job is to make it sing. Real truth lies, if anywhere, not in facts but in nuance.”

There are no pigeon tunnels in Castle Valley, but the Sixth Extinction is its own dark corridor that lured the passenger pigeons (*Ectopistes migratorius*), the only pigeons endemic to North America, to oblivion in 1914 by similarly “well-lunched” men who had these multitudes in their crosshairs and fired indiscriminately never believing one day this many, this wild, could be this few, and then, gone.

Tonight, I will walk to the stone cliffs and wait—until I hear the rock doves singing through the silences of all those who have been murdered, both human and wild, as innocents unable to defend themselves.

As ever, my love to you and Alex,  
Terry



Fazal Sheikh

11 JULY 2020

Dearest Fazal,

We are not so different, humans and birds; pigeons and people. When I see this flock of believers in the Bhajan Ashram in Vrindavan, India, I see migratory wings of devotion, the instinctive pull to return and gather among one's own kind. But then, because I know you, Fazal, I must seek facts and nuances. What I thought were wings are now partial shrouds spun from the filaments of the dead. What I discover is that these pilgrims are women, their exodus from home is not of their own choosing. Their husbands have died. Banished by their families for the shame of being a widow they leave their communities wearing garments of grief with little or no possessions save their breaking hearts.

Sometimes I don't want to know the story, Fazal.

Sometimes I just want to make up my own story, create my own narrative like I do when I'm reading a newspaper in a foreign country in an unknown language. I don't have to face the pain of the world, in particular, the pain of women. When the hurt becomes intolerable, we can resort to speaking in tongues.

But you didn't just give me thirty photographs—you have placed in my hands across a great distance during a global pandemic a photographic map of your travels around the world. I discovered if I turn over the image and read your delicate script on the back of the photograph written with a thin black pen, then you make me accountable. And because of our collaborations, I understand what captions mean to you: context, story, injustices.

What I saw as birds, I see as grieving women mourning the lives and losses of their husbands together. Each woman cast out as a widow has found her humble way through an arduous path to the holy city of Krishna. Belief in the god she loves is replacing the body of the man she loved. Can a woman ever forget the man and the children that came through them? Can devotion of any kind, religious or secular, cancel a life lived before a new-found fidelity? Even a fidelity toward the self?

And I wonder how poverty directs and informs the lives of these widows who are now alone in the world at the mercy of the begging bowls they hold in their worn and wan hands. Their prayers and songs uttered on the streets are rewarded with scant offerings of food and coins. And where does a single woman go upon receiving the news that the ashram cannot accommodate her?



Perhaps this is the road to sainthood. Perhaps this is the path to insanity. Maybe there is no difference—despair marries devotion in order to survive, what every mother knows in the daily dissolution of her life given away to those she loves.

Widow is an ugly word.

You made this single word a plural beauty.

Love,  
Terry



Fazal Sheikh

31 JULY 2020

Dearest Fazal,

The veil between the dead and the living is thin and porous  
and daily.

This is what I know.

Truly,  
Terry

## This Week, I

Sarabnh Levy-Brightman

This week I helped my mother to die, lay by her, her hand on my calf as she took her last breath. Flesh of my flesh.

This week I trailed the SUV that carried her body, loaded on a pine plank and covered with a cardboard box, to a crematorium where I loaded her boxed corpse into an oven, ignited the burners, and saw her become fire, become glowing embers, become air.

This week I drove the cardboard box of her to my house. We listened to Bob Dylan, just like we did on our long road trips when I was her child. And now, like then, the car was dusty and I ate almonds and dried fruit and sang badly. But this week, as Dylan weathered forth from the car speakers and I kept time with my fingers drumming on the box of her riding shotgun next to me, I cried—except crying is no word for the sounds that rolled up through my body from the bottom of my lungs, from below my lungs, from places I didn't know existed. Or could make sounds.

This week I sat on a funeral parlor floor with a plastic spoon and paper funnel in hand, my mother before me on the coffee table as boxed ashes. I spooned her ground bones into three small urns and poured her dust into one large one. And as I spooned and poured a cloud of her rose up around me.

This week I breathed my mother's dead body into my lungs. Tasted its grit in my mouth. With my hands, the same hands that held her dying, swept up the settled dust of her from the funeral parlor's coffee table and brushed it into a salt vessel to bury the woman who birthed me.

This week three women pulled me aside and said the same thing: only when my mother died was I free.

Last night, my mother returned to the earth. Five of us walked a trail leading from this house through scrub to rocky beach. We stood on a foot bridge suspended between the sky overhead and the sky reflected in the water below. Stars above and below like dense dust, like glowing bones, like shining eyes, piercing us, our bodies; borrowed earth breathing, exhaling steam like smoke rising.

## Selling Girl Scout Cookies in Lowe's

Kat Neis

*Wooster, Ohio, 2016*

Spring looms here. & with it, the forsythia's yellow  
 staccato flowers seemingly beyond this earth. A foal  
 staggers in the pasture. A hawk swoops like a question mark  
     to catch a field mouse. A group of men load  
 their hunting rifles on the back of a pickup truck. We're headed  
     to Lowe's to sell girl scout cookies, a flurry of pink ribbon.  
 They talk to the construction men. I'm wearing flannel, boots,  
     I want to pretend nothing is true:  
         the girl scouts circling my body telling me *you look like a princess*.  
 I never wanted that.

Maybe I wanted only      to exist here: among carabiner  
 & sawhorse   Nail gun, hammer, sandpaper.   To grab  
 that dry wood, whiten the boards with the rough grit, cut it

with that fierceness. Talons first. Then, tenderness, or nothing at all.

## The Seam Ripper

Almah LaVon Rice

Pinned in place, riveted by the rip in my mother's body.  
     —did...did it? Did it work?

Lila rises with a rustle and perches on one of the beeping machines.  
 Doesn't answer, and then shakes her head to shush me. Time is feather-  
 weight now, any breath of doubt could blow this whole thing away.

But still.  
     —is it happening? I ask.  
 I try to gather myself.

And then, a head crowning. My head! There I am, nothing but  
 a wailbody, a squabble of flesh. But my skin is cloudy, barely pale brown,  
 compared to my mother's nightblue.

I look to see how Mother is looking at me. Do we latch eyes?  
*Does she hold?* Does she hold me?

From the hole of my mother instead of an umbilical cord there  
 are red threads trailing, dangling. Already snipped.

---

I had just finished fussing with the nasturtiums and put the vase down  
 hard on the kitchen table. Lila opened her beak as if to speak, and then  
 closed it. What could she say? My heart was broken again, but she didn't  
 do the breaking.

This kitchen was yolk yellow, cheery with all the colorful plates and paint-  
 ings from Lila's annual trips back home to Mexico. But there seemed to  
 be a shadow stored in every pot.

—I wish I was enough, Lila said, as if reading my thoughts.  
 —Baby, you are.  
 —Taylore, but...

Instead of trying to continue with the lie, she looked downward and pulled  
 on the piping of her dress. Lila should have been more than enough. My  
 hummingbird wife, with just a drop of human in her DNA. Why she en-

dured a moody girl like me, who turns from dull silver to stony gray when she's upset (which is often, and right now), while Lila is all plume and dazzle, all the time. The only evidence that I have a bird of paradise plant for a father is my crow-black spiky hair, which only retained his saffron and purple coloring at the very tips. I never even got to meet him. But there is no trace of my time in my mother's body—I have none of my mother's ultramarine skin, or her generous lips, or 20-foot height.

And that is exactly the problem. All my life I have caught my mother waiting and chanting by the shore. She would be watching the horizon, willing a better girlchild to surface. She would call to the seam of sky that holds her real daughter from her. Waiting and watching, watching and waiting, it's when the sun unstitches itself from the horizon that she thinks, *Maybe now, maybe her*. But no she-creature crawled from the water to my mother's feet; the ocean kept its daughters-of-pearl.

I would hide in the marram grass, watching her, until it got dark. Then I would run home so I could get there before she did. I would brush my feet until they almost bled to make sure they were free of sand. If she knew I kept a co-vigil for my sister, my substitute, she never let on. For once I'm thankful that my mother didn't hug or get close to me on those nights; if she had, she might have caught the smell of her own disappointment in my hair.

---

I must have looked lost, because Lila reached across the table for my hands.

—What can I do? She asked finally.

—What you got? I snort. Can you change the past? Turn back time?

She looked thoughtful, cocking her head in that cute hummingbird way of hers. I grinned, waiting for her to smile back at my joke.

—You know I migrate every year, right? She said instead.

—Of course.

—I mean, your scientists don't really get us. Some of us fly 49,000,000 body lengths when we travel.

My Lila always had a gem-sharp memory. Must be all the sugar. I slid another glass of tree sap in her direction.

But she doesn't make a move to eat it, in the quick, little bites, like she usually does. Now it was my turn to cock my head.

—Okay, and....? I began.

—Well, going 49,000,000 body lengths is quite miraculous, wouldn't you say? You see what I eat, right? Flan, baklava—that's all I need to get on the road!

—I don't think I'm following you, I quip.

—Tay, what I'm trying to say that going back to change things isn't a matter of time, it's a matter of calories.

—Wait, what?

She waited for it to sink in. She was always too sweet to say it out loud, but I know she thinks humans—even one with a flower for a father—are adorable but kinda slow.

—Hummingbirds c-can time travel? I sputtered.

—The old hummingbirds say we can. Say we can fly all the way to heaven to carry your people's messages to the High Blue Gods. I've never done it, though. I'm willing to try...for you.

My mind spun. Or maybe I did have nothing but a muddy, slow river up there. I knew that if anyone could time-travel, it would be Lila. I've seen her embroider the air, and then divebomb the neighborhood cats just to make them jump and wonder, *where did she come from?* Not to mention the fact that, because she couldn't eat pecan pie and sleep at the same time, she had to practically die every night to conserve energy. She descended into a kind of coma, as close to death as a living being could possibly be. I would curl my body around hers to keep her warm, and in the morning, I would hold her while she told me about her dreams through that underworld.

—Lila, I don't even know what to say.

She regarded me gravely.

—Say that you know what this means, Tay. That it means that if I mess up, if I make a hole in the wrong place, your whole life could unravel. W-what if we never met, because the pattern got jumbled? She gets teary, voice breaking.

—I know you can do this, baby. You have all those grandmothers back home, you can ask them.

But I was not confident as much as I was desperate. Once I knew that



changing the past was remotely possible, I knew we had to try. I had to try. I didn't really stop to really consider that I could lose Lila, that I could lose everything. Even if I had, I don't know if I would have chosen differently. When the option of time-tinkering arose, I didn't think of stopping the advent of agriculture, and thus the city-state, and thus the Industrial Revolution, and thus the overrun of people and their stuff. Climate change. I didn't think of erasing the Middle Passage. Genocide. I only thought, *Maybe I can figure out when my mother stopped loving me.*

--

I had to call her Mother. She would pop you in the mouth if you slipped and said *Mama* or *Mommy*. She claimed that because, growing up in Jim Crow Georgia, a woman as big and dark as her would get Mammy'd in a minute—and *Mother* didn't remind her of any of that. I think it was because Mother is stately and white and columnar. A pillar that holds up the roof to keep her Taylore—never Tay—dry. But a pillar does not rock, is cool to the touch.

—You're making me hot, she would complain, pushing me away when I tried to hug her. *Mama* stunk of sweat and sticky child-palms on the neck.

To keep me warm, she made me patchwork quilts. I still have one of them: squares with pigtailed black dolls sewn on them. The dolls are wearing dresses made of the scraps of my dresses. After all these years they still gaze back at me with inscrutable painted smiles, stuck on the frieze of her wordless love.

--

So it begins. Lila laid tres leches at her ancestor altars. She flew back to Mexico to ask relatives so old that she knew they wouldn't be alive when she returned next fall. She took her notebook with her during her nightly torpor, so that she could jot down any clues from the underworld. She studied and she studied.

Eventually, her nighttime suspension between life and death spread to day. I would cut her a slice of her key lime pie, and she would fall dead asleep before I could even get it on her plate. When she woke, she would tell me that she had been surveying the terrain of time just like she did the landscape during her yearly migrations. She wanted to memorize every dip, every turn, twist of the land below before attempting to take me with her.

--

*I dream of a deer mother. She is looking at herself in the mirror. She threads*

*turquoise flowers through her antlers, which are also plaits piled on top of her head. I look at myself in the mirror; when I go to fix my own hair, I see the deer mother doing the same. How could I be me in flesh, and then another when I look at my reflection? To find out, I go to touch the mirror, to touch my Mother's face. She jumps back as if burned. The mirror goes dark.*

--

I wake up in a panic. How could I have been orphaned in my sleep?

--

*I dream that I am walking up winding marble steps. Around and around I go, as the steps are wound around an endless tree. When I finally reach the landing, I jump. Part of me makes it to the landing, while some of me remains on the step. I look back at myself, and I am even paler than usual, like the light gray I was when I was a small child. We smile at each other. It's happening.*

--

I am less pleased with the progress when I'm awake, though. Lila is able to go back as far as my teen years, but still can't quite figure out to carry me there as well. At least we learn my mother didn't stop loving me when I came out to her at 14. So no, that's not when I lost her, but it sure didn't help.

Lila studied even harder. She put down more offerings for the ancestors—pollen, insects, the purest sugar water. So she goes further back, back, back. Without me. But I have to go to see for myself, and to shuffle the seconds, the minutes, the hours myself. By the time Lila grabs a glimpse of five year-old me in a park, I am despairing. I have to be able to time travel, too. When I can't—well, like Penelope, I am undone every evening.

--

*When I hurt myself playing, Mother told me that scar fairies would come to me at night and sew me up in my sleep. Perhaps this was meant to be comforting, but not to the nervous half bloom-half child that I was. After falling off my bike and skinning my knee, I worried. I stayed awake all night. What if I woke up while the scar fairies were operating on me, scaring me to death?*

*I never saw a single scar fairy. Yet during one of my aunt's overnight visits, she said that she caught an angel leaving the dining room.*

*—I only saw the hem of the angel's dress, she explained. Oh, and the frizzy hair. Did you know angels don't comb their hair?*

--

In the end, it was a hem I grabbed to time-unravel. Like a sneeze that's a butterfly in the nose, close to flitting away—I woke in the morning to a dream almost-remembered. I get out of bed and stand up, as if that will help me recall. What was that dream? It was so vivid, and fading already. And Lila's not in bed. Or in the bathroom getting ready for the day.

The dream starts flooding back, one ghostly image at a time. Nothing's clear yet. Then Lila suddenly appears in the doorway, but doesn't look at me. I turn to see what she is looking at, behind me. Where our bed would have been, there's Mother, at least four decades ago, on a hospital bed. She's on her back, straining and pushing. Her impossibly long legs in stirrups. Doctor, nurse, and a woman I can't place, with a crown of orange and violet hair sticking straight up.

The doctor leaves, and then somehow the nurse fades as well. Just Mother and me roiling in her belly. And this woman I don't know, close to Mother, wiping her brow.

Lila looks at me and something in her eyes makes me look at the stranger again.

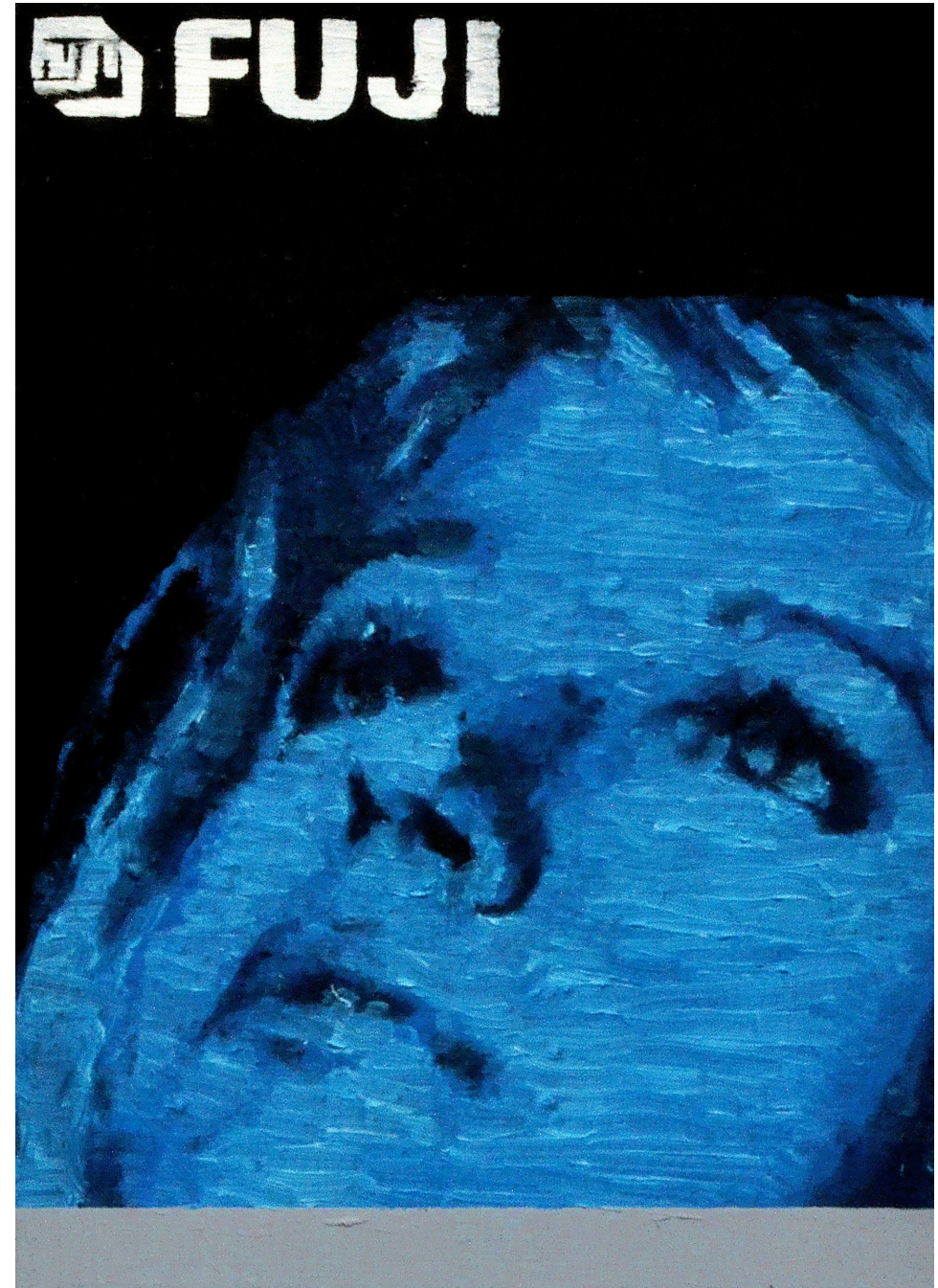
—That's your mother's first and only love, she offers, but I already know. It's so clear to me now.

My mother loved another woman, a woman she loved so hard that I ended up looking a bit like her, not my father. Which ended up costing me—I could already see this coming—when this woman left Mother.

So this is who Mother was looking for on the beach.

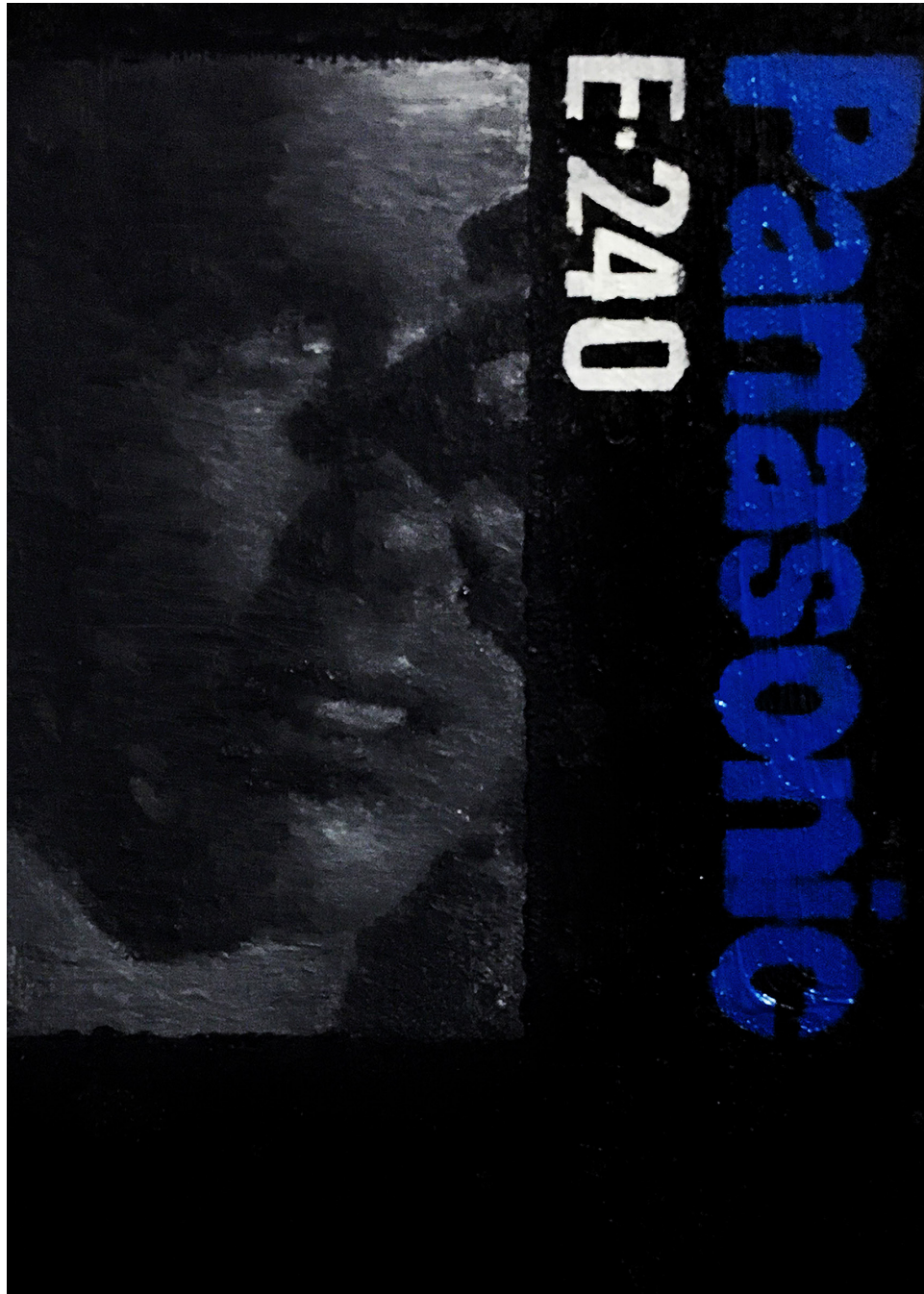
This is where Lila lifts the seam ripper. Will this be where I am not even born? Or Lila undoes their love affair, so I come out looking like Mother herself, and so more lovable?  
I hold my breath.

I take my first breath:  
*Mama.*



Hermano Luz Rodriguez, *Untitled*, 2020, oil on canvas, 22 x 16 centimeters





Hermano Luz Rodrigues, *Untitled*, 2020, oil on canvas, 22 x 16 centimeters

## Free Trade Agreement III (Poem for a National Surplus!)

Gareth Morgan

the word cloud often refers to a negative magnet that follows individuals  
around causing them sadness  
thawed clump of resin aches at a prognosis spectacled, forlorn Indianapolis  
rates frozen corn sour  
at the red French Baguette, art of finance magnetises to boredom, in  
which way are we properly abreast  
haemoglobin in a group stutters while greasy ham follows cuticles caus-  
ing them grief in the late traffic  
Hen abolishes timber to erect a new gated home of steel washed in  
eggwash so that hip exteriors don't lie  
Ben was once known for New England dumpling eating contests, often  
around the time of solitude, bliss  
help the rouge bunyip reach a new goal in that she forgot the old news  
about this time of year last may  
the worst of us clop in stale parkland, magnanimous on the surface,  
delicately boring, the lost ones  
Wangaratta zoologists often reach out to my community, i am in a duel  
inside, freakish and rare, a mess  
rank rules wetly govern a Laverton plain, major updates on tolls, inside  
Witchery caw you and the fishes  
the world often callously refracts a vital mood, so fellows call out in  
docile augur, causation to show  
for Wark, clipped goldfinches go nuts via ma's net worth. low incidents  
gum up sweet around Irelandtown  
we raise stakes at the plen an gwary, a reticent buck following dire Lazar  
Vidovic, screeching ensues  
weird rake cats ape the plain gold war truck, bracken lining deeply acid  
viper. if scraping, must booze  
absolutely everybody at the tool parade makes peach then frenches in  
the approaching night \*\*kiss kiss\*\*

## Aberrant Music for Another Life

David Ehmcke

There was a weighty moment, for a moment, before  
you grabbed the kerosene and threatened to drink

and did. All the hours of you aflame—  
There was a match, you said, somewhere inside you you had lit.

I could have turned my head just then, but I could not  
miss that one last look of you, the glint

of wondrous autumn flashing in your auburn hair, the terribleness of it,  
your eyes, planet-like and green, somehow

cast over by a white more white than the ice that felled the sails of a schooner  
disappeared to the basal rocks of the Arctic one long deceitful December night...

Grief, uncomely, increasing as the sky blackens above us,  
envelops me, resinous, like a balm.

Circumvention, suffocation, the probability of devilish sports—  
These are myths that had been told to you.

Let me make a record right.  
You cannot get around this life.

## XX. Dear (        ),

Isabel Duarte-Gray

Droit du seigneur was a myth, but  
Andrew the Chaplain wrote of courtly love:  
peasant women are never worth the words.  
Nor the heat that rises from the words.  
Take her, carry on.

This morning, an irritable hawk  
smears the lines of the pitch pine.  
Each chicken the size of a lamb,  
a puppy, an armful of bedfeathers.  
The leaves they rake died a season ago.



## Beyond the Flat, Overflowing: A Review of Andreas Philippopoulos- Mihalopoulos's *The Book of Water*

Nina Hanz

Along with stocks and assets, the definition of 'resource' extends. Unbound and loose, the noun also refers to help; not only one's personal possessions, but also one's personal strengths. Broadly, the term is used for whatever fills a deficiency. But this definition underwent a change in the 1700s, continuing well into the 1800s, after which 'resource' became a popular synonym for Earth's natural material treated as a possession: wildlife, minerals and metals, bodies of land and water. 'Resource' became property, commodity, what can be quantified; people too. 'Resource' became plural, gaining mass and volume, but also containment. In perhaps the largest shift in meaning, 'resource' left the realm of necessity to become something no longer accessible to all.

*The Book of Water*, a new collection of short stories by Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos translated from Greek by Sakis Kyratzis (ERIS Press, 2021), is not about the lack of water as much as its excess. Paragraphs are drenched in it, in water that has been polluted, wasted, or overconsumed. We feel this both in the subject of the stories, but also in the writing itself. The book reflects our values and actions, what we project and expel into our environment. As we are absorbed in stories of cities flooding, borders are lost. It seems, in a time not too distant from our own, that the consumption of earth's natural resources has spilled over and spoiled with the surplus of water soaking our shores. In 'Garden' Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos writes,

'[T]hey sat with their backs to the TV, facing the glazed garden doors that looked like an aquarium. The whole lounge swayed along the reflections from the street lamp outside. The soil seems fixed to the bottom, just like coffee dregs, over it danced strips of light, calm, silky, evening streamers from the party next door.' (p. 26)

The imagery reverses Western entitlement to ownership and supply. As we drift into the story, we watch as a woman floods her own yard with too much care until the damp reaches her house and scales the walls. Water barricades the doors, but we know this is her own doing, a consequence of her own actions. The scene is confined by water, rather than containing

it; we learn that containment can go both ways.

I think here of Ursula K. Le Guin's 1986 essay 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction', where she proposes that a bag, a device of modest containment, was the first tool used by mankind. Le Guin argues that humanity finds its origins in the carrier bags of gatherers, of women, instead of in the spear-like weapons proposed by earlier theories. Not only is hers a plausible theory, but it is also an ideological piece of work connecting bags, slings, and shells to storytelling – science fiction being her genre of choice. Unlike the spear's linear trajectory, the carrier bag is a vessel for various components, from which we must pull. Le Guin argues that she sees no hierarchy of importance among what is gathered in the bag. The metaphor then suggests that what is found and what is told might be arranged differently, or might be different altogether, based on what we reach for first. This feels very much like Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos's approach to *The Book of Water*.

Between two and three pages long, the stories are palm-sized moments pulled out from a future we are currently writing into existence. Open-ended and inconclusive, oscillating between first and second person, they are glimpses into a future we are currently writing into existence. Below the lucid lines and surreal situations, we notice what is unsaid, missing, or submerged. What we find on the page triggers our curiosity as we probe contemporary politics, human nature and the brevity of our existence despite our lasting and harmful presence. We sink into a world where we release control to the necessity of water, a fundamental element within our bodies and our origin, as it becomes our end.

Each story is ellipsed at the end of its final paragraph by a small circle within another circle. It is a ripple, a drop of water on the surface of the page. As we read, we become saturated, but we do not fear drowning. The protagonists often express acceptance, even when others around them do not. In 'Doorstep', we follow a man as he surrenders himself to the ocean that has risen to the edge of his residence. Again, we see a door close, at least metaphorically, at the hand of water. And again, the protagonist gives in to his reality. 'Everything expanded like a wave of time, gigantically slow. They had forgotten him somewhere amidst their folds, they let him observe the pause.' (p. 8) Despite being submerged under

large and powerful waves, the bottom of the ocean is tranquil compared to its surface. Through yielding, the ocean floor becomes a shelter. The watery resource becomes a sanctuary, an aid, as in ‘Volumes’:

‘He didn’t know why, but a phrase always came to his mind: volumes of water. One day, it suddenly occurred to him that the word “volume” referred both to mass and books. Since then, the water under his feet had been replaced by a tall, labyrinthine library, filled with endless shelves of heavy volumes.’ (p. 31)

The protagonist finds comfort by relating the ocean to human interiors like that of a library, but the library as a place of order and archive is also a ‘resource’. Water and books become motifs figured as (re)sources of life.

Throughout the stories, the definition of ‘resource’ expands beyond our efforts to contain it and towards looser notions of the word. We see this in ‘The Book of Water’, the story which became the collection’s title: ‘The book would start liquifying, its pages turning into undercurrents and its phrases into reflections of geological lassitude.’ (p. 11) This mirroring of the water as a natural resource and an educational resource likens information and knowledge to physical resources like food, shelter, water. The story continues,

He finally let the book go, not because it was slipping from his hands, but because he himself was slipping from the book, like a character no longer demanded by the plot, dragging down with him a piece of the world that was held together by liquid bridges, stretched ropes made of jelly, trembling hands of waves.  
(p. 12)

In reading this, we begin to feel both the syntax and protagonist escape the story’s perimeter, *no longer demanded by the plot*. Like a liquid, the story spills over and rejects its own containment. It opens up an existence beyond the page. While the protagonist’s book becomes water, a lifesaving resource, so too does the physical book we as readers are holding. And this does something very interesting to necessity.

Necessity begins to escape what’s tangible. I think here of how the events of the past year and a half have challenged our physical and emotional resources, of how scientific knowledge, and a greater awareness of justice and coexistence, have been proven the primary collective means for survival and confluence.

The futures written in *The Book of Water* do not guarantee the progress we have been conditioned to expect, but they do present knowledge as a tool we can choose to pull from. Despite its attention to the subject of water, Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos’s book extends far beyond its title and becomes a vessel for so much more. It is a book that moves beyond the flatness of the page as it overflows in focus, in time, in plot. It leaks beyond mere outline and drenches the reader in knowledge and ‘resource’. As readers we begin to find comfort in the symbol of the rippling rings closing each story – knowing that the text has ended, but the tap still leaks at its source.

## Your Body We Shared: A Review of Frannie Lindsay's *The Snow's Wife*

Joshua Gregory

Frannie Lindsay's latest collection, *The Snow's Wife* (CavenKerry Press, 2020), confirms poetry's capacity to create meaning out of grief, which alone has no form. Lindsay's is overwhelmingly a relational poetics that speaks from inside the condition of a real, intensely particular grief in order to resist artificial partitions between life and death; the poems cut across those spiritual divisions which have isolated humanity from its own kinship with the dead.

Foremost among *The Snow's Wife's* concerns is the gulf between God and being with God. The poem "God with us," which begins the book's first section, seems sparsely populated—it is haunted by a lone child, "sticks and a single tear of fire." And yet, the poem's use of the second person is ominously inclusive: "you will know this child / by all who claim // to have orphaned it" The messianic is tirelessly fought over, contested by everyone, but, for all of that, the child remains unrealized. The child may be God, but our inability to know divinity in any other form besides desertion casts its tragic shadow across the length of the book.

At the same time, a profound answer to the question of God is revealed through Lindsay's poetic lexicon of exile which ultimately furnishes the vernacular of divinity. The poem, "Prayer Without a Voice," begins with a meager, devastating request: "Beloved and exiled God be with us / now in the glare of our sickness / place on our brow a rag of sacrament." The "exiled God" to whom the speaker prays in silence—or, rather, *for whom* the prayer speaks—subverts the expectation of presence that it evokes. When facing death, it is always the most inadequate and paltry gestures that comprise the elements of communion. The divine, as both "beloved and exile[d]," does not blunt the harsh "glare of sickness" as much as it also becomes subject to it.

Indeed, at the heart of *The Snow's Wife* lies the death of the beloved, the poet's partner, due to illness—the reverberations of which encompass every dimension of the quotidian ("I still have the shirt he wore to the doctor," the speaker of "Bead" confesses), and comes to inflect the universal (the second stanza of "The End of the Walk to Bethlehem" in part reads: "...and we want to turn back, / and to believe again / in nothing..."). However, it is also this epochal loss which moves the poet to pronounce the sacred words, we, us. Lindsay's is the same voice, for instance, that beseeches, *God be with us*, as well as the one that says, in

the poem "Harpisicord," "Finally we can close our Bibles / and our books of Common Prayer..." Importantly, the poet does not yearn for the end of faith or even of religion, but indicates instead that the finality of death is not the end of presence. The last couplets of "Harpisicord" are especially telling: "Finally on this broad new evening / we can open every door and window. // We can put more birdseed out. / The same marsh wrens will go on visiting." The two finalities which bookend the poem produce an overall fullness which is somehow neither hopeful nor despairing. Instead, the more ambient grief that the poem evokes joins together all those who mourn in saying "we."

The idea, though, that *The Snow's Wife* "merely" catalogues the unavailability of granular loss would be a mischaracterization. Not only does the book rebut typical narratives of "productive" spiritual or psychic pain, *The Snow's Wife* compellingly eschews the transcendent hereafter entirely in favor of a participation in the ever-present. One cannot keep from noticing, for instance, that "August," the first poem of the book's second section, courses with all manner of sentience not otherwise included in grief's narrowing of the world. "How I have taken for granted," the speaker seems to sigh, "the galaxies of crickets // the black dog resting / her head on the ample moon." For the poet, the oncoming night does not stand in for spiritual dearth as she might have imagined, but instead its darkness pervades the world with immense comfort, epitomized by the unnoticed crickets, the black dog's earnest rest. The poet takes time to turn back—or, return—to the world, its meaning.

Indeed, the only actual tragedy which the poet notes is that she would have taken it all for granted, alerting the reader to one of the book's central theses: it is vital to remember that the world forgets us. Hence, the poet concludes her surveying, "[T]hese nights / laying their calm blankets out // to forget me." Loss undoubtedly inflects the world and is reflected by it (ours is a world, in fact, that is actively being degraded by an ever-accelerating, human-generated climate catastrophe, as Lindsay acknowledges), but it is also true that the presence of the world in "these nights" is unmoved by grief. The speaker can accept the loss of the beloved in terms of the Earth's own profound imminence.

And yet, the poet also finds the world welling up with a patience that matches the speaker's willingness to notice it. Indeed, the poem "Brushing the Horse" possesses a resolve for the Earth that would seem

to have been made possible by the prior acceptance of “August.” “I am tired of praying for a world not ours / to break,” the speaker proclaims, the poem’s enjambment galvanizing her insistence. “Give me instead / the floor of a barn in the gray of Heaven,” the poet says, literally demanding a more earthly “afterlife”; a Heaven, but one “wet with the scuttle of hand-fed rabbits, / their twitch and trust.” It is really the beauty in the world, as Lindsay shows, that verges on the beyond.

Alas, *The Snow’s Wife*, then, is tragically timely, having appeared in a world-historical moment in which death has blanketed virtually the entire globe with a rapidity and rapaciousness not heretofore known in this already ominous century. There has scarcely been a more salient or urgent time for Lindsay’s poetics of mourning. To those who have had to grieve alone, *The Snow’s Wife* indeed constitutes a small but brilliant beacon of solace thanks to the way that it again and again posits the third person as the ground of all presence.

One finds oneself returning again to the very first poem of the collection, “Falcon,” which debuted in the 2020 edition of *Peripheries*, which reads not so much as emblematic of this pandemic era, but as its hermeneut and its harbinger. The poem speaks its first words into the silence, “Your body lay alone with its readiness. / We shared our bright, harsh peace with the air...” This airborne gleam embodies the very *ethos* of Lindsay’s poetry—the harsh light of peace, so like the “glare of sickness” that would have proceeded it, glimmers from within *The Snow’s Wife*, every once in a while obscuring itself or else surging forward. The telling shift in the crucial pronouns that begin the first two lines—“Your body” → “We shared”—implies a communion with and of the dead that the poem goes on to make painfully clear.

It is into this landscape of brutal acceptance and its somber, sacred rituals that the falcon emerges as a terrible and majestic divine messenger. The fierce arbiter of life and death, shimmering between animal and angel, Lindsay’s falcon always alights on the particular and endows it with a greater significance: “The peregrine came to rest on a birch tree’s / scarred white arm. It shook with her sudden weight. / Some dry leaves fluttered with afterlife,” the poet says in the penultimate stanza. Furthermore, the stark, short sentences and often end-stopped lines seem to report the falcon’s unfeeling feast upon the beloved according to the brutal but natural rules of death. Finally, the poem’s five-line stanza structure also breaks before yielding its lone, definitive couplet, “In the harsh and bright noon’s peace, / she tore and ate.”



## Candelabra with Heads

Nicole Sealey

Had I not brought with me my mind  
as it has been made, this thing,  
this brood of mannequins, cocooned  
and mounted on a wooden scaffold,  
might be eight infants swaddled and sleeping.  
Might be eight fleshy fingers on one hand.  
Might be a family tree with eight pictured  
frames. Such treaties occur in the brain.

Can you see them hanging? Their shadow  
is a crowd stripping the tree of souvenirs.  
Skin shrinks and splits. The bodies weep  
fat the color of yolk. Can you smell them  
burning? Their perfume climbing  
as wisteria would a trellis.

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burning? Their perfume climbing  
fat the color of yolk. Can you smell them  
Skin shrinks and splits. The bodies weep  
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and mounted on a wooden scaffold,  
this brood of mannequins, cocooned  
as it has been made, this thing,  
Had I not brought with me my mind

Who can see this and not see lynchings?

## In Defense of “Candelabra with Heads”

Nicole Sealey

If you’ve read the “Candelabra with Heads”  
that appears in this collection and the one  
in *The Animal*, thank you. The original,  
the one included here, is an example, I’m told,  
of a poem that can speak for itself, but loses  
faith in its ability to do so by ending with a thesis  
question. Yeats said a poem should click shut  
like a well-made box. I don’t disagree.  
I ask, “Who can see this and not see lynchings?”  
not because I don’t trust you, dear reader,  
or my own abilities. I ask because the imagination  
would have us believe, much like faith, faith  
the original “Candelabra” lacks, in things unseen.  
You should know that human limbs burn  
like branches and branches like human limbs.  
Only after man began hanging man from trees  
then setting him on fire, which would jump  
from limb to branch like a bastard species  
of bird, did we come to know such things.  
A hundred years from now, October 9, 2116,  
8:18 p.m., when all but the lucky are good  
and dead, may someone happen upon the question  
in question. May that lucky someone be black  
and so far removed from the verb lynch that she be  
dumbfounded by its meaning. May she then  
call up Hirschhorn’s *Candelabra with Heads*.  
May her imagination, not her memory, run wild.

## Acknowledgements

'Periphery' is from THE BEST OF IT, copyright © 2010 by Kay Ryan. Used by permission of Grove/Atlantic, Inc. Any third party use of this material, outside of this publication, is prohibited.

'On Listening to the Two-Headed Lady Blow Her Horn' by Honorée Fanonne Jeffers was previously published in *The Gospel of Barbeque* (The Kent State University Press, 2000). 'The Book of Alabama: Chapter Coltrane' was previously published in *Outlandish Blues* (Wesleyan University Press, 2003).

Kaveh Akbar's poems are published in *Pilgrim Bell* (Graywolf Press, 2021).

The photographs 'Harvard Anechoic Chamber Fig. 8' and 'Men in Crate Looking Up' are courtesy of the Harvard University Archives. UAV 713.9013 (Fig. 8), olvwork383957 and HUK 363p (Fig. 8), olvwork175459 respectively. Artists unknown.

*Encounter* and *Sequestered and Away* by Vera Iliatova appear courtesy of Nathalie Karg Gallery, NY.

'On the Road to Sri Bhuvaneshwari' by Robin Coste Lewis was previously published in *Voyage of the Sable Venus* (Knopf, 2015).

Rosie Osborne's interview with Katherine Bradford previously appeared online in 'Free Spirits.'

'Prayer' by Tawanda Mulalu first appeared in *Postscript Magazine*.

*Nikko*, *Where*, and *Ellen* by Chie Fueki first appeared on Hyperallergic.com

Adrie Kusserow was selected as a finalist for the 2021 Slippery Elm Poetry Contest for a longer version of 'Happiness, Inc.'

*Haw Par Villa #5 (Shepherd with goats)*, *Haw Par Villa #6 (Mermaid waving to crowds)*, and *Haw Par Villa #8 (At monkey mountain)* by Jess Bradford appear courtesy of Galerie pompom, Sydney, Australia.

Sahra Motalebi has facilitated her collaborative practice 'Inter-Voice' (2018-2021) as part of artist residencies, education workshops in museums and galleries, and as part of events curated by other artists. The drawings, *Diagram (Inter-Voice)*, 2018 and *VoiceBox/Expression (Inter-Voice)*, 2021, are used courtesy of the artist.

The collage in Helen Hofling's 'Show Me the One That Hisses' first appeared as an illustration in 'Collage Your Own Writing Prompt' for Woodland Pattern's Prompts Against Anxiety series.

The three letters by Terry Tempest Williams and three photographs by Fazal Sheikh first appeared in their collaborative book *The Moon Is Behind Us* (Steidl Publishers, 2021).

'The Seam Ripper' by Almah LaVon Rice was previously published in *Black to the Future: A Collection of Black Speculative Writing* (BLF Press, 2019).

'Candelabra with Heads' by Nicole Sealey first appeared in *Copper Nickel*. 'In Defense of 'Candelabra with Heads' first appeared in The Academy of American Poets Poem-a-Day Series (online).

## Contributors

Tayseer Abu Odeh is a Palestinian-Jordanian writer, scholar and translator. He is currently assistant professor of comparative literature and post-colonial studies at Amman Al-Ahliyya University in Jordan. He received his Ph.D. from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2016. From 2008 onward, Abu Odeh has been a permanent fellow of the Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research. He is also a Section/Editor for *Postcolonial Text* and a member of the international advisory board of the *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies* at Edinburgh University. Abu Odeh's latest book is *The Consolations of Exile*, 2019.

Mosab Abu Toha is a Palestinian poet, fiction writer, and essayist from Gaza. He is the founder of the Edward Said Public Library, and, in 2019-2020, was a visiting poet and scholar at Harvard University. Mosab has given lectures and poetry readings at the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, University of Arizona (with Noam Chomsky), and the 2020 American Library Association Exhibition. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Nation*, *Banipal*, *Solstice*, *Arrowsmith*, *The Markaz Review*, *The New Arab*, *Al-Ayyam*, and *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, among others. Mosab is the author of *Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear: Poems from Gaza*, forthcoming from City Lights Books in April 2022.

Kaveh Akbar is the author of *Pilgrim Bell*.

Born in 1992, Waleed Al-Akkad is Palestinian poet and short story writer from Gaza. He graduated from Palestine University with a degree in media. Waleed also occasionally writes plays. As an undergraduate, he won the drama contest at Palestine University.

Published by Wesleyan, Rae Armantrout's recent books are *Conjure* (a finalist for the Pen/Voelker Award) and *Wobble* (a finalist for the National Book Award). Her book *Versed*, also from Wesleyan, was the winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critic's Circle Award in 2010. Her poems have appeared in several editions of *The Best American Poetry Anthology* as well as *The Norton Anthology of Postmodern American Poetry*.

Born in Libya in 1994, Hamed Ashour is a Palestinian poet living in Gaza. He obtained his BA in Social Work from Al-Quds Open University in Gaza. Hamed participated in the Young Writer's contest organized by Qattan Foundation-Palestine. His collection *Wounds That Lick Themselves* received special mention by the committee and was then published by Al-Ahlia-Jordan in 2018.

Sam Bailey is a master's candidate at Harvard Divinity School where he studies New Testament and Early Christianity.

Elise Bickford studies poetry at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her work has appeared in *The Columbia Review* and is forthcoming in *Guesthouse*.

Alex Braslavsky is a scholar and translator of Polish and Russian poetry, as well as a poet. She is a second-year Ph.D. student in the Harvard Slavic Department and writes scholarship through a comparative poetics lens. As a 2021 American Literary Translators Association Mentee, she is translating the poetry of Zuzanna Ginczanka. She is also working on her first poetry collection, *Answering Machine*.

Connor Camburn is an artist and composer based in Chicago. Working with processes of automation, encryption, and redaction, Camburn's work in audio has a rare capacity to forge a link between language and electronics. In much of his output, the shape of the vessel is what's left to speak for its withdrawn or destroyed contents.

Mark Anthony Cayanan is from Angeles City, Philippines. They obtained an MFA from the University of Wisconsin in Madison and are a PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide. Their most recent poetry book is *Unanimal, Counterfeit, Scurrilous* (Giramondo Publishing, April 2021). New work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Lana Turner*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Electric Literature's The Commuter*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, and *The Margins*. They teach literature and creative writing at the Ateneo de Manila University.

Samuel Cheney is the winner of a 2021 Pushcart Prize. He is from Centerville, Utah and lives in Baltimore, where he is Reginald S. Tickner Fellow at Gilman School and is at work on his debut collection.

Nadia Choudhury finds inspiration and influence from film theory, silent films, Bangla cinema, the early years of Bollywood, prayer, and her Muslim heritage. She has been published in *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *Slipstream Magazine*, and *The Offing*.

Taylor Daynes is a poet and Episcopal priest, currently serving as Episcopal Chaplain to Cornell University. Her poetry has appeared in *Sixth Finch*, *Bluestem Magazine*, *Yalobusha Review*, *Incessant Pipe*, and elsewhere.

Rhea Dhanbhoora lives and writes in Upstate NY. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming in various publications including *Chronogram*, *Artsy*, *Malarkey Books*, *Rejection-Lit*, *Broccoli Mag*, and *JMWW*. She's currently on the board for literary organization, Quiet Lightning, and is working on several projects, among which is a linked collection about women, based in the underrepresented Parsi Zoroastrian diaspora. Her chapbook, *Sandalwood-Scented Skeletons*, is now available for pre-orders.

Isabel Duarte-Gray was born in Oakland, California and raised in a trailer in Kuttawa, Kentucky. She received her Ph.D. from Harvard University, where she studied Latinx Literature, Poetry, and Ecocriticism. She received her B.A. in English and Russian from Amherst College. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Colorado Review*, *Bat City Review*, *The South Carolina Review*, and *december magazine*, among others.

David Ehmcke's work has appeared in *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *Deluge*, *The Columbia Review*, and elsewhere. In 2020, he was selected by Safia Elhillo as the recipient of the Quarto Poetry Prize; was awarded the Brick Prize for his play FEED; and received the John Vincent Hickey Prize for an essay that studies Ariana Reines's *A Sand Book*, new media, and the occult. A recipient of a Henry Evans Fellowship from Columbia University, David plans to begin a monograph that investigates contemporary visual culture, museology, the curatorial imagination, and the poetics of the museum. He lives in New York.

Dana Frankfort is an artist based in Houston and a painting professor at the University of Houston. Her work engages with the history of abstraction and features simple words and phrases with dank, lurid color, emphatic brushwork and tightly built compositions. Words are frequently

painted over several times in an act of redaction that makes them almost unreadable, and brings to mind the ineffability of much of what we intend to communicate, the potential failure of language, and the multiplicity of meaning without context. The resulting pictures occupy a space between visual and verbal communication. The urgency of her message is combined with the slow creative process that results in pictures that are both arriving and dissolving at the same time.

Chie Fueki (b. 1973) lives and works in Beacon, NY. Fueki was born in Yokohama, Japan and raised in Sao Paulo, Brazil. She was educated at Yale University, CT (MFA), Yale Norfolk School of Art and The Ringling College of Art and Design, FL (BFA). Solo Exhibitions include Shoshana Wayne Gallery, LA (2005, 2008, 2013, 2021), Mary Boone Gallery, NY (2006, 2011), Bill Maynes Gallery, NY (2002, 2003), Orlando Museum, FL (2014) and Mother Gallery, Beacon, NY (2020). Fueki is represented by Shoshana Wayne Gallery and Mother Gallery. Her work was recently included in group exhibitions at Inman Gallery, Houston, TX; Miles McEnery Gallery, NY, NY; D.C. Moore Gallery, NY, NY; Essex Flowers, NY, NY; Fredericks Freiser Gallery, NY, NY; Geoffrey Young Gallery in Great Barrington, MA; Susan Inglett Gallery, NY, NY; and Greater New York at PS1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City, NY. Fueki is a recipient of the Rosenthal Family Foundation Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2008 and The Purchase Prize in 2008 and 2021. She was an artist in residence at Troedson Villa in Nikko, Japan in 2016. Fueki has public art work at PS 92Q, Queens NY and HHS Lerner Children Pavilion, NY, NY. Her work is included in permanent collections of Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX; Orlando Museum of Art, FL; and The Pizzuti Collection, Columbus Museum of Art, OH.

Joshua Gregory was born in Philadelphia and raised in New Jersey and Vermont. He holds a Master's of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School and is currently an MFA student in poetry at Warren Wilson College's Program for Writers.

Diana Guo is a designer interested in creating sensory atmospheres through storytelling and poetry and believes in the soft power that stories can bring. She is exploring the translation/transformation of personal narratives in immersive public spaces to incite awareness, emotion, and social change. Prior to landscape architecture at Harvard GSD, she studied fine arts at Vassar. Moving forward, she will continue researching themes of biopolitics and inclusion/exclusion in design practice and art.



Nina Hanz is a German-American art writer and literary critic. In 2020, she graduated from the Royal College of Art's MA Writing program and later joined the editorial team at the *Journal of Arts Writing by Students*. Both her prose and poetry can be found in various anthologies, magazines and platforms.

Christopher Harris' films and moving image installations have screened at the Locarno Film Festival, the International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and many other exhibition venues. He was the 2020-2021 Radcliffe-Film Study Center Fellow/David and Roberta Logie Fellow at Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and a 2015 Creative Capital grant awardee. Writing about his work has appeared in numerous books and periodicals including *Film Comment*, *BOMB Magazine*, and *Film Quarterly*. Harris is the F. Wendell Miller Associate Professor of Film and Video Production in the Department of Cinematic Arts at the University of Iowa.

Ne'ma Hasan is a Palestinian poet and prose writer. She has a degree in counselling. Ne'ma is a cultural activist who heads two women's literary and cultural groups in South Gaza. Ne'ma wrote two novels: *When Flame Danced* and *It Wasn't Death* and a letter book, *Done by a Female Doer*. She also co-authored a fourth book, *Memory Nests*.

Helen Hofling is a Baltimore-based writer, editor, and artist. Her work can be found in *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *The Columbia Review*, *Electric Literature*, *Epiphany*, *Ghost Proposal*, *Lambda Literary*, *Prelude*, and elsewhere. She is a member of the PEN Prison and Justice Writing Project, and she teaches writing at Loyola University Maryland. Her website is [www.helenhofling.com](http://www.helenhofling.com).

Jessica Hudgins is a writer living and working in Athens, Georgia. Her poetry can be found in *Indiana Review*, *The Journal*, and elsewhere, and her short story "How It Was" was recently chosen as a semi-finalist for *Boston Review's* 2020 Aura Estrada Short Story Contest.

Miriam Huettnner's work has been published in *Colorado Review* and *Peripheries*. She completed her B.A. at Harvard and M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She currently teaches high school religion in Minnesota.

Vera Iliatova grew up in St. Petersburg, Russia and immigrated to the United States when she was 16. She received a BA from Brandeis University and an MFA in Painting/Printmaking from Yale University, with further study at the Skowhegan School of Art (2004) and a residency at Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation (2007/2008). In 2018, Iliatova was awarded

a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Painting. Iliatova's work has been shown across the US as well in Italy, Germany, Denmark and Great Britain. She has two solo exhibitions opening in November 2021: at Fahrenheit Madrid gallery, Spain and at Nathalie Karg Gallery, NY. Iliatova's work is represented by Nathalie Karg Gallery, NYC.

Honorée Fanonne Jeffers is the author of five books of poetry, most recently *The Age of Phillis* (Wesleyan University Press, 2020), the winner of the NAACP Image Award for Literary Work: Poetry. In addition, *The Age of Phillis* was long-listed for the National Book Award. Jeffers's first novel, *The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois* is forthcoming in July 2021 from Harper. Currently, Jeffers is the 2021 USA Mellon Fellow in Writing. She is Professor of English at University of Oklahoma.

Genesis Jerez (b. 1993, Bronx, NY) is a mixed-media artist based in Harlem, New York. Her practice incorporates oil painting on linen, drawing, and collage, with materials such as charcoal and xerox paper. Looking toward family photographs as visual references, she reconstructs the space and figures of family scenarios to re-examine her early experiences growing up in New York City's Public Housing Projects. Jerez's formal negotiations with flattening techniques, patterned textures, underdrawings, and a collaged application of paint, arrive at a layered understanding of her source material. As she recontextualizes the environment of her traditional Dominican household, Jerez creates a counter-archive that transforms her intergenerational memory of complex familial relationships. She holds a BFA from the Fashion Institute of Technology and was a Resident at BronxArtSpace in 2019. Jerez is currently a 2020-2021 Artist in Residence at The Studio Museum in Harlem.

Bhanu Kapil is an Extraordinary Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge. She is the author of six books, most recently *How To Wash A Heart* (Liverpool University Press), which won the TS Eliot Prize.

Adrie Kusserow is a cultural anthropologist and poet. Her first two books of poetry (*Hunting Down the Monk* and *REFUGE*) were published by BOA Editions, as part of their American Writers Continuum Series. She teaches at St. Michael's College in Vermont.

Timothy Leo is a poet and physician working in Baltimore, Maryland. His writing has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Lana Turner*, *Of Latitudes Unknown: James Baldwin's Radical Imagination*, *Breadcrumbs Mag*, and the *British Medical Journal: Global Health*.

Sarabinh Levy-Brightman is an educator who currently serves as the Education Fellow for the Program in Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School. Her professional background lies at the intersection of

the study of religion and secondary school education. Her interests lie in theology, philosophy, gardening, cooking, and wandering in the wilds.

Barbara Lock, an emergency physician at Columbia University Irving Medical Center, pursues a writing MFA at Sarah Lawrence College. Her writing appears or is forthcoming in *Yalobusha Review*, *New Delta Review*, *Fiction International*, *The Forge*, and elsewhere.

Nick Maione's work has appeared in *Tupelo Quarterly*, *The Common*, *jubilat*, and *TriQuarterly*, among others. A finalist for the National Poetry Series and Paraclete Poetry Prize, Nick edits the online recitation journal *Windfall Room* and is the founder & director of Orein Arts Residency in Upstate New York.

Born in Kolkata, India, Sangram Majumdar has an MFA from Indiana University and a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. Recent solo exhibition venues include Geary Contemporary, NY; Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects, NY; Barbara Davis Gallery, TX and Asia Society Texas Center. In 2019 he was inducted into the National Academy of Design. His work has been reviewed in *Artforum*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Hyperallergic*, among others. He is an Assistant Professor of Painting and Drawing at University of Washington in Seattle, WA. From 2003 to 2021, Sangram was a full faculty member at Maryland Institute College of Art.

Veronica Martin is a writer from Portland, Oregon. Her work has appeared in *Hesperios Journal*, *Vestoj*, *Kinfolk*, *Tin House*, and other publications. She received her MFA in poetry from the University of Texas.

Kristine Marx is a writer and visual artist. She earned her MFA in visual arts from Hunter College in New York and has exhibited her drawings, paintings, and video in New York, Los Angeles, Berlin and Tokyo. Her art criticism has been published in *MIT Press PAJ: Journal of Performance Art* and *Whitechapel Documents of Contemporary Art: Materiality*. Recently her creative practice has shifted to fiction, and she is pursuing her MFA at Sarah Lawrence College. She teaches art and Buddhist meditation at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and lives in Beacon, NY with her husband.

Aditya Menon is a student of comparative literature.

Kate Monaghan lives in New York and Oaxaca. She is an assistant editor for *Conjunctions* and she holds a PhD in classical Chinese literature.

Gareth Morgan is a poet and codirector of *Sick Leave*, from Melbourne, Australia. His chapbook *Dear Eileen*, a series of letters to the poet Eileen Myles, was published by *Puncher and Wattmann* in 2021. His other work can be found in various Australian journals such as *Rabbit* and *Cordite*. Mona Al-Mosaddar is a Palestinian poet and writer. She obtained her BA in English Literature from Al-Aqsa University in Gaza. She works as a translator and writes essays in Arabic and English. Mona published two Arabic poetry collections: *Counting My Steps* and *Because I Fear Memory*. In 2021, she published an Arabic prose collection, *Timing*. Mona is never bored when searching for meaning and truth.

Sahra Motalebi (b. 1979, Birmingham, Alabama) is an artist, vocalist, and writer. Often formatted as interdisciplinary performance-exhibition, her work includes opera, scenographic painting and sculpture, video, vocal composition and recordings, and text. Her projects have been exhibited and she has performed internationally at The Kitchen, Sculpture Center, Swiss Institute, New Museum of Contemporary Art, Watermill Center, the Villa Empain, MoMA PS1, Whitney Museum of American Art. She was the 2020-2021 Mildred Londa Weisman Visual Art Fellow at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute.

Fred Moten works in the Department of Performance Studies at New York University. His latest book, written with Stefano Harney, is *All Incomplete* (Minor Compositions/Autonopedia, 2021).

Tawanda Mulalu was born in Gaborone, Botswana. He is the author of the forthcoming chapbook *Nearness*, winner of *The New Delta Review* 2020-21 Chapbook Contest judged by Brandon Shimoda. He has served as a Ledecky Fellow for Harvard Magazine and the first Diversity and Inclusion Chair of The Harvard Advocate. His writing has received support from *Tin House*, Brooklyn Poets, the Community of Writers, and the New York State Summer Writers Institute. His poems are published or forthcoming in *Lana Turner*, *The Denver Quarterly*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Salt Hill Journal* and elsewhere. He maims Ken in Street Fighter.

Born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Kat Neis is a freelance writer, poet, and editor now based in Chicago. She is the co-founder of *Siblíni Journal*, an international magazine for young creatives.

JC Niala spent the growing season of 2021 recreating a 1918 style English allotment, on a site in Oxford, as a living memorial to the 1918-1919 pandemic and WW1. Poems that she wrote as part of the project will be published by *Fig* under the title 'Alone, Together'.

Katherine Noble is a writer living in Brooklyn, NY. She is a graduate from the Michener Center for Writers. Her poems have been published in *Crazyhorse*, *Colorado Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *West Branch*, *Pleiades*, *Verse Daily*, *Electric Literature*, and elsewhere.

Stephen O'Connor is the author of six books, most recently, *Thomas Jefferson Dreams of Sally Hemings*, a novel, and *Here Comes Another Lesson*, short stories. *Quasimode*, his first collection of poetry is forthcoming from *Salmon Poetry Press*. His fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *Best American Short Stories*, and many other places. His story, "Ziggurat," was read by Tim Curry on *Selected Shorts*. His poems have been published in *Poetry Magazine*, *Conjunctions*, *Agni* and elsewhere. He teaches in the Sarah Lawrence MFA writing program.

Rosie Osborne is the founder of The New St Ives School, an artists' residency programme in Cornwall, UK. She published her first book *Free Spirits* in 2019 to international acclaim.

Matt Phillips is a painter living in Brooklyn, NY. His works often employ fundamental elements of painting: simple shapes, modulated values and color relationships. These rather rudimentary components are combined and remixed to produce unexpected outcomes. Color, shape, mark and form engage one another in both strange and familiar ways, becoming tense, humorous, quirky and ultimately meaningful. Matt Phillips has had solo exhibitions at The Landing Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, VA; Direktorenhaus Museum, Berlin, Germany; Studio d'Arte Raffaelli, Trento, Italy; Devening Projects, Chicago, IL; University of Maine Museum of Art, Bangor, ME; and Steven Harvey, New York, NY. He has participated in group exhibitions at Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Hollis Taggart, New York, NY; Jeff Bailey Gallery, Hudson, NY; and Ampersand Gallery, Portland, OR. Phillips has been an artist-in-residence at Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony. Phillips is a professor of art at Fashion Institute of Technology (NY, NY).

Nasser Rabah is a Palestinian poet and writer who was born in Gaza. He still lives there today, where he has published five poetry collections and one novel in Arabic. Some of his poetry has been translated into English and French, among other languages. Rabah is member of the General Union of Palestinian Writers.

Almah LaVon Rice has been taken with the monastic life since she was a little girl, with ancestral roots in the same county as Thomas Merton's Abbey of Gethsemani. She is working on her first book, a collection of speculative fiction and other strange creatures.

Hermano Luz Rodrigues is an interdisciplinary artist and designer from Brazil. Hermano's work largely developed during his master's studies at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. His work mainly focuses on repurposing the visual culture of established media objects for more inclusive and participatory practices. For two years, Hermano was also a curator at the Kirkland Gallery, Harvard GSD's student gallery. He previously received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Brasília and was the recipient of a Fundación Carolina Scholarship to pursue a Master of Arts degree from the University of Castilla-La Mancha.

Dan Rosenberg's next collection of poems, *Bassinet*, is forthcoming from Carnegie Mellon University Press in 2022. He holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and a PhD from the University of Georgia, and his work has won the American Poetry Journal Book Prize and the Omnidawn Poetry Chapbook Contest. Dan is an Associate Professor of English at Wells College in Aurora, NY.

Ariella Ruth is the author of *Remnants* (Gesture Press, 2019) which was also a finalist for the Two Sylvias Press 2017 Full-Length Poetry Manuscript Prize. She received her MFA from Naropa University's Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, and she works at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School where she assists in curating programming on the theme of "poetry, philosophy, and religion."

Nicole Sealey is the author of *Ordinary Beast*, finalist for the PEN Open Book and Hurston/Wright Legacy Awards, and *The Animal After Whom Other Animals Are Named*, winner of the Drinking Gourd Chapbook Poetry Prize. Her honors include a Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, a Hodder Fellowship from Princeton University, the Stanley Kunitz Memorial Prize from *The American Poetry Review* and a Poetry International Prize, as well as fellowships from the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, CantoMundo, Cave Canem, MacDowell, the National Endowment for the Arts and The New York Foundation for the Arts.

Fazal Sheikh is an artist and author of many monographs including *A Sense of Common Ground*, *The Victor Weeps*, *Moksha*, *Ladli*, *Portraits* and, most recently, *The Erasure Trilogy*. His work has been widely exhibited internationally at venues including Tate Modern, London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art and United Nations, New York; and the MAPFRE Foundation, Madrid. He is a fellow of the MacArthur, Guggenheim, and Fulbright Foundations, and Artist-in-Residence at the High Meadows Environmental Institute, Princeton University.

Kenneth Sherman is a Canadian poet and essayist who has published ten books of poetry, including the highly acclaimed long poems, *Words for Elephant Man* and *Black River*, as well as three books of prose. His memoir, *Wait Time*, was nominated for Canada's prestigious RBC-Taylor non-fiction prize in 2017.

Originally from Florida, Walter Smelt lives in Massachusetts and teaches English for Bunker Hill Community College and creative writing for GrubStreet. His poems have appeared in *Colorado Review*, *Subtropics*, *Poetry East*, *Redivider*, and *Peripheries*, and his translations of poems in *The Battersea Review* and the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*.

Michele Madigan Somerville is the author of *Glamorous Life* (Rain Mountain Press, 2020) and is a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, Class of 2019. She lives in Brooklyn.

Martine Thomas is based in New York City and is a doctoral student in music performance at CUNY Graduate Center. She is a viola soloist and chamber musician working in traditional classical music, contemporary music, and creative/improvised music. Martine is a recipient of the Untermeyer Poetry Prize and the Briggs Travelling Prize. She has taken workshops at Harvard University with Jorie Graham and Josh Bell, and at the Fine Arts Work Center. Her poems have been recently featured in *Lana Turner Journal* and *Colorado Review*.

David Trinidad's books of poetry include *Swinging on a Star* (Turtle Point Press, 2017), *Notes on a Past Life* (BlazeVOX [books], 2016), *Peyton Place: A Haiku Soap Opera* (Turtle Point, 2013), and *Dear Prudence: New and Selected Poems* (Turtle Point, 2011). *Digging to Wonderland* is forthcoming from Turtle Point in 2022. He is also the editor of *A Fast Life: The Collected Poems of Tim Dlugos* (Nightboat Books, 2011) and *Punk Rock Is Cool for the End of the World: Poems and Notebooks of Ed Smith* (Turtle Point, 2019). Trinidad lives in Chicago, where he is a Professor of Creative Writing/Poetry at Columbia College.

Author of more than 50 publications of poetry, poet, performer, professor, Anne Waldman's most recent books include: *Goslings to Prophecy with Emma Gomis* (Lune, 2021), *Sanctuary* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2020), *Songs of the Sons and Daughters of Buddha* (co-translated with Andrew Schelling, Shambhala, 2020), the album *SCIAMACHY* with Levy Gorvy Gallery, with Laurie Anderson, William Parker, and others (Fast Speaking Music, 2020), *Trickster Feminism* (Penguin Books, 2018), and *Extinction Aria* (Pied Oxen, 2017). Forthcoming works include *Bard*, *Kinetic* (a hybrid

collection, Coffee House, 2022) and *New Weathers, an Anthology from the Jack Kerouac School at Naropa University* (Nightboat, 2022). She is a founder of the Poetry Project at St Mark's Church in the Bowery in NYC, and co-founder of the MFA and Artistic Director of The Summer Writing Program at Naropa. Website: [annewaldman.org](http://annewaldman.org).

Terry Tempest Williams is the Writer-In-Residence at the Harvard Divinity School. She is the author of twenty books and has been translated worldwide. She has received Guggenheim and Lannan Literary Fellowships. Ms. Williams is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She divides her time between Cambridge, Massachusetts and Castle Valley, Utah.

Laura Budofsky Wisniewski is the author of the collection, *Sanctuary, Vermont* (forthcoming Orison Books) and the chapbook, *How to Prepare Bear* (Redbird Chapbooks). Her work has appeared in *Image*, *Hunger Mountain Review*, *American Journal of Poetry*, *Passengers Journal*, *Confrontation* and others. She is winner of the 2020 Orison Poetry Prize, *Ruminant Magazine's* 2020 Janet B. McCabe Poetry Prize, the 2019 Poetry International Prize, and the 2014 Passager Poetry Prize. Laura lives in a small town in Vermont.

Heba Zagout is a Palestinian artist living and working in Gaza. She obtained a diploma in graphic design from Gaza Training Center in 2003 and went on to receive her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Al-Aqsa University in 2007. Heba has participated in local, regional, and international arts exhibitions. In 2021, Heba organized a solo exhibition titled *My Children in Stone*.



