



NUMBER

forty-eight

HARVARD REVIEW

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PUBLISHED BY
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HARVARD REVIEW (ISSN 1077-2901) is published twice a year by Houghton Library

DOMESTIC SUBSCRIPTIONS:

INDIVIDUALS: \$20 (one year); \$50 (three years), \$80 (five years)

INSTITUTIONS: \$30 (one year)

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS:

INDIVIDUALS: \$32 (one year)

INSTITUTIONS: \$40 (one year)

ENQUIRIES TO: *Harvard Review*, Lamont Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138

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PAPER SUBMISSIONS should be accompanied by SASE.

ONLINE SUBMISSIONS should be submitted at harvardreview.submittable.com.

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HARVARD REVIEW is indexed in ABELL, Humanities International Complete, Literature Online, and MLA.

Full text available online through JSTOR, EBSCO, Proquest, and the Gale Group.

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Printed in Canada by the Prolific Group and distributed by Ingram Periodicals and Ubiquity.

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Editorial

I remember writing an editorial just after 9/11 and thinking that the world felt as if it were going mad. There is some strangeness in the air again: this overheated political climate; the rampant shootings; a sense of fear. The world of literary magazines can feel as glassy and still as a mill pond by comparison: what have we to do with all of that? And yet, this is where history is really written—where stories and ideas are taken apart, rolled around, spliced, diced, examined, and put back together again in new and, hopefully, enlightening ways.

In this issue we have lots of politics, mercifully none of it involving Donald Trump. Brian Doyle writes about Irish independence and how his parents always took him out of school on the anniversary of an Irish patriot's birthday. Roxana von Kraus remembers life under communism—"In Romania I never ate a whole orange by myself." Patricia Vigderman asks where Western Civilization's antiquities belong; Aracelis Girmay writes about race in America; and George Choundas takes a long and humorous look at the 2000-year history of antagonism between the Italians and the Greeks.

I often feel that ideas ricochet around inside an issue, and there are some connections between these pieces and a story by Catherine Carberry that appeared, miraculously, in a pile of unsolicited submissions. "Salvo for New Spain" is not quite like anything I've read in a long time. A dashing, vivid story with strange elements, it is at once political (the setting is the rise of fascism in Spain) and magical, or maybe mythological, like something out of Ovid or the Brothers Grimm. Carberry's story is one of rebellion and transformation, but its characters are not partisans or fighters but fractious adolescent girls.

A very different story—cooler in tone and more completely realized—is “The Accident” by Andrea Barrett. I don’t know how long I have been trying to solicit a piece by Barrett for *Harvard Review*, but I’m sure it’s going on at least ten years. Barrett is one of my all-time favorite writers; *Ship Fever* and *The Voyage of the Narwhal* have a special place on my bookshelf beside some books by Jonathan Raban and Janet Browne’s biography of Charles Darwin. Somehow I just kept missing my chance, and so you may imagine my delight when an email arrived offering us one of her stories. “The Accident” is also about teenage girls, but this time the setting is an American town with an aerodrome during the early days of flight.

One of my favorite pieces in this issue is Brian Doyle’s proem “A Sprawl of Brothers.” The first thing of Doyle’s I ever read was a short story called “The Boyfriends Bus,” which was really funny—in a soft-hearted Brian Doyle-ish sort of way—which we published in HR 39. Doyle, I subsequently discovered, is not only a wonderful and prolific essayist, but a novelist, poet, and the editor of the University of Portland’s magazine, which has been described by Annie Dillard as “the best spiritual magazine in the country.”

Formally, there are some nice sets of poems here—Joshua Marie Wilkinson’s “The Easement,” Raúl Zurita’s “Anteparadise” poems, and Cole Swensen’s “More pearl:” and “More pearl again:”—which are both good to look at and interesting to read. Finally, we are pleased to present a number of new voices: Elizabeth Gray, whose reviews we have published for many years; Walter M. Robinson, a physician and emerging writer, who writes movingly about death from a doctor’s point of view; the innovative poet Danniell Schoonebeek; and T. Y. Lee, whose long and harrowing story, “My Name is Manuel Vargas,” contains a clear-eyed look at the fallout from mental illness and the pressures of living in the shadow of the INS.

—Christina Thompson

ANDREA BARRETT

The Accident

I DON'T KNOW WHAT went on in town those first few days. I didn't see the reporters chasing the story or the neighbors my parents turned away. I was seventeen; I had a snail named Samuel who lived in a jar with a bit of dirt from the forest; I wore hand-me-downs and had odd habits and not many friends. Until that summer, my family had kept me busy, in both good ways and bad. For the week after the accident, almost all I did was sleep.

In my dreams, I was running up the path at the side of the Glen, picking grapes on Bully Hill, driving a buggy, swimming under the dock. I was at school, under Aunt Henrietta's watchful eye; I was dressing one of the twins; I was flipping pancakes or lifting grapes from crates and repacking them into baskets. I was dancing. I was skating near the hotel where the parties were held; I was ducking Alice into the water or walking the shore with Elaine. But when I woke, I was always in bed, both legs and one arm stiffly casted, my head bandaged, the left side of my mouth and face sliced past the cheekbone to the place where a chunk of my scalp was gone.

This was during the grape harvest of 1913, when everyone in Hammondsport was busy and accidents at the wineries—a hand caught

in a crusher, a full crate dropped onto a foot—were so common that the doctor was already working night and day. My right thigh and left shin were broken; I'd fallen twelve feet when the aeroplane scraped me from the canvas hangar. Where the wing hit—I'd raised my right arm—both bones broke between wrist and elbow, and also some ribs, but because my arm had partly shielded my head, the propeller slashed my face at an angle instead of hitting straight on. I couldn't see because of the bandage over my nicked eyelids, but the doctor said my eyes weren't damaged and I wasn't blind. Bluntly, and too soon, he also said that Link had crashed his machine after hitting us, but he was alive and not badly hurt. Raney's friends, the two Navy lieutenants who'd pulled us up onto the ridgepole, had walked away with cuts and bruises. Raney was dead.

I slept, woke, slept and woke again: and still, Raney was dead. I dreamed about the red silk wings of the first flying machine I ever saw, rising briefly above the frozen lake. I dreamed I was flying a glider, and then that a little boy I knew had built me my own aeroplane. I dreamed that my father brought me black kid boots, as elegant as Raney's, magically fitting my swollen feet—and I dreamed about Raney, a large fair girl with straight hair hardly darker than champagne. The first time I'd seen her, she was sitting on the dock of her family's summer place, talking with her friends as I watched my sisters at the town beach. I'd pretended not to notice her.

Soon the door would open, bang shut, open and open again—Elaine, who was supposed to wait for the twins but seldom did, followed by Agnes and Alice. After crashing around, dropping their books, rushing into the kitchen for something to eat, my younger sisters would tiptoe into what had been the dining room but was now given over to me and the borrowed bed. My feet toward the kitchen, my head against the wall. My broken legs lined up with the windows that opened to the porch, and beside me, on the floor, the heavy glass jar that had once held specimens for my aunt's biology class. *Caroline*, Elaine would whisper, *Are you awake?*

I'm giving Samuel a leaf. Her job, now, to take care of him. Then Alice would sit on the piano bench and tell me what she'd done at school, and our older sister, Marion, would crash pots in the sink as she waited for our aunt's arrival to release her. She had work at one of the vineyards and couldn't stand tending me.

Before she graduated, Marion had been an excellent student and I'd followed in her footsteps, always doing more than required and never cutting class. But on the day of the accident, Raney had looked at me scornfully when I'd first refused her invitation and said, "I never thought you'd be a *coward*," so upsetting me that I'd walked the twins to the main door, gone to my classroom, claimed a stomachache and walked back out. Partly I still wanted to please her. Partly I couldn't stand for her to do one more daring thing without me. She loaned me a dress so I wouldn't have to wear my everyday waist and skirt and we ran to the boardinghouse where the two Navy aviators she knew were waiting to take us for a ride in a motorboat. Palmer, who was taller and had a wonderful nose, took the picnic basket from Raney. Elly lifted a canvas tote and said, "That blue suits your eyes." We were almost at the dock when Palmer stopped and turned his head toward a buzzing sound. "I'll be damned!" he said. "He's taking the new one up."

"Who?" I said. "What?"

He pointed to an aeroplane rising from the field.

"That's Link," Palmer said. A famous flyer, I knew. He dropped by now and then but hadn't been around for some months. "Want to go see?"

"Why not?" Raney said. We'd been watching the flights all summer but neither of us had seen Link perform and Elly said his machine was brand new.

As we crossed the flats Link landed and then took off again. A crowd of curious people swarmed across the grass, surrounding the machine when it touched back down. Palmer, or maybe Elly, said it was always worth watching Link fly. Elly, or maybe Palmer, pointed to the canvas tent sheltering the hydroaeroplanes.

"Sometimes we watch each other from the ridegipole," he said. "Great view—think you can follow me up?"

Maybe I nodded. Maybe I showed him my sturdy wrists. Raney, when he turned to her, said, "Yes!"

Later, lots of people would tell me how the accident had looked to them. None of them would be Link, who came to the hospital along with Elly and Palmer to see my broken body but then fainted next to the bed where I lay unconscious. They dropped him off at the train station the following week, when they had to return to their base at Annapolis, and I never did get to talk to him. He'd be dead in eighteen months, first the right and then the left wing of another machine snapping off as he came around the top of a loop and crashed into San Francisco Bay—but on the afternoon we shared, the air was still, the lake serene, and the field empty when he started, but for him. Quiet and calm, Kingsley Flats dry, the hangar tent free of Navy officers. *On this day, October 7, 1913, I wanted before flying at the Aeronautical Society's celebration of a decade of mechanical flight to try out this new machine privately and quietly,* he'd tell the newspaper men while my eyes were still bandaged. *I was not attempting to loop the loop nor to do any other extraordinary feat at the time.*

Someone brought me that clipping, but I wouldn't have blamed him even if I hadn't seen it. He'd meant to have a simple flying day: start the engine with the help of a workman, roll over the ground, rise into the air. Everything the same as always. Below him our village square—he'd dip a wing over his boardinghouse—and also the Depot, the steamboat docks, the sailboats, the vineyards climbing the hills. Then the Curtiss factory and the half-built aeroplanes, the train headed down the valley to Bath—and the place where he'd tested the new dirigible engine, and the places where he'd crashed his first machine and then the others, and the tavern where—

Suddenly the field was full of people. He'd hoped to keep this private, but he hadn't flown in months and word that he'd gone up spread

quickly. More people were leaving their houses and shops and crossing the streets, three motorboats were trailing him in the water below, everyone was charging toward the cluster of hangars on the shoreline, crowding the field so densely he could hardly find a place to land. What did they think he was going to do? Thin white clouds hung high above, while smaller tufts started moving below: wind. The machine felt heavy, but still better than last year's tractor model. Was it his fault so many men had died trying to imitate the tricks he'd invented? His vertical glide, which the newspapers liked to call the Dip of Death. His Dutch Roll, his Figure Eight: easy for him, disastrous for inexperienced men flying machines they hardly knew. The wives wrote terrible letters to him; the newspapers pounded at him. In March he'd announced his retirement. Then (this was in the papers, too), he'd learned that a French aviator had flown a loop, which so many thought impossible. How infuriating! That was *his* trick, surely; who was better equipped? Within weeks he'd ordered a new machine from the Curtiss factory. This one should fly upside down no matter what—but it did feel heavy, dipping in the rising wind, and he turned over the water again and headed back toward land.

Annoying to have so many people in the field. And to see, on the ridgepole of the largest tent, still more observers: Elly and Palmer, who often watched from there, with two figures he didn't recognize. Palmer flourished his cap and reached for a girl in a light dress. Then all four figures sat, legs dangling, cheering him on. He was fifty feet above the water when he turned to line his nose up with the clear patch of field, and then he was close enough to the tent to see a girl point a camera at him. And then—

An air pocket, a downward gust, too much headway lost when he turned? He dropped hard, struggling to clear the tent, his own mouth opening as Palmer jumped from the ridgepole and slid down the canvas, reaching to pull Raney after him. A thump—something hitting

the ridgepole—two thuds, a clatter, the pull of gravity, the crunch of bamboo collapsing around him and then he was upside down, hanging from his shoulder straps, caged in broken struts and shredded cloth, the engine still sputtering behind him. Pants and shoes and skirt-hems and boots, a dog nosing past a tangle of wire. What had been his front wheel spun slowly above; his top wing lay crushed below his head. His feet were pointed at the sky. Someone was crying, someone screamed twice and was silent, someone cursed steadily and savagely as someone else begged for him to stop. He'd swept the people from the tent, he heard. (He'd swept me from the tent.) Both men were hurt, but they could walk. His own hands could open and shut but he didn't know what to do with them. His wings had hit the girls, he heard: one was dead (Raney was dead) and the other hurt (I was badly hurt). He couldn't see them or the hangar or the blood sprayed around, the automobile dented by the falling girl (that was me), the doctor who pronounced the other girl dead. Only the legs surrounding him, and a bit of sky, and his front wheel. Someone reached through the wreckage with a knife, to cut his shoulder straps and pull him free, but even before the knife touched leather he could feel the hands of the souvenir hunters tearing off scraps of the cloth. (Mr. Benner made a postcard of this scene, there are copies everywhere.)

But here I'm getting ahead of myself, or behind myself: I was in bed. Upstairs our mother's bed creaked; she'd been an invalid since the twins were born, nearly half my life. For a long time Aunt Henrietta had come to help in the late afternoons, after she finished teaching school; that was when she'd first brought us Samuel, or the first Samuel, so deftly swapping the quick for the dead over time that we could believe—Agnes and Alice still believed—he was a single, remarkably long-lived snail. Eventually Marion and I had taken over most of the housework. Now, while I waited for time to pass and the bone fragments to knit themselves to each

other, the cooking and cleaning had fallen back on Marion, who was furious with me. Femur, the bone in my thigh. Tibia, the bone in my shin; ulna and radius in my arm. In my bed in the dining room I heard the doors open and close and felt a strip of shadow over my throat: my aunt, who always seemed to smell like a fern, stretching a cool hand down to where the stitches itched and pulled.

She'd brought me not schoolwork, which I could make up later, but Amundsen's account of his expedition to the South Pole, which she'd extravagantly purchased so she could read to me for a couple of hours every afternoon. The volumes were blue, she said. Gilded edges, lots of maps and photographs; before long I'd see them for myself. *Here I am*, the first chapter began, *sitting in the shade of palms, surrounded by the most wonderful vegetation, enjoying the most magnificent fruits, and writing—the history of the South Pole!* Which meant that Amundsen knew, as I now had to learn, the secret of sending his imagination to one place while his body was someplace else. *One circumstance has followed on the heels of another, and everything has turned out so entirely different from what I had imagined . . .*

On the tenth day after the accident, the doctor came, re-dressed the wound on my head, tended the stitches on my face, and then unwrapped my eyes. First warmth, then light: then—everything. The sky, the clouds, the glinting lake, Samuel tucked beside a fern, my hands and legs—I turned away from the casts—the sky! Almost at once my eyes began to itch, burn, drip tears, but the doctor said this was normal, I'd be sensitive to light for a while.

Marion was out and Aunt Henrietta was still at school, but my mother returned to my side after the doctor left. Her face, which I was so glad to see, was more deeply lined than I remembered, and she reached over and smoothed the bandage on my head when I asked her for a mirror.

"You could wait," she said. "There's no hurry."

"Now," I said.

She went and fetched her hand-mirror, along with a glass of water. “It’s temporary,” she said. “It’ll get better.”

Nothing was left of my long dark hair except a rough fringe below the bandages, but I’d already felt that with my hand; my hair would grow back. The black circles around my eyes would disappear, the nicks in my eyebrows would fill in, the scabs on my eyelids would vanish. The long row of black stitches crossing the raised red flesh on my chin, through the corner of my mouth, over my cheek and cheekbone and into my temple—that would leave a scar. And where the stitches disappeared, under the edge of the bandage, I had no hair at all.

“Don’t cry,” my mother said.

I wasn’t crying; the tears were from the glare. I turned my head, inspecting the damage. Some would improve, some wouldn’t: I was alive. I had been pleasant-looking, unremarkable. Now I was different. I put the mirror down and feasted my eyes on the view from the window.

Then on my aunt’s face, when she arrived; on my sisters and my father. The newspaper turned in my father’s hands. The steam rose from a chicken. Alice, beautiful Alice, braided Agnes’s hair and at dusk the swallows gathered and darted, as if at a signal, into their nests. After everyone went to bed I stayed up for a long time, watching the moon on the trees and the shadows below. The next day I read a few pages of Aunt Henrietta’s gift and saw the wonderful maps with my own eyes. Amundsen had delayed until they reached Madeira telling his crew that they were not heading north, as he’d announced, but toward the opposite pole. *It must be admitted that it was a big risk*, he wrote, *but there were so many risks that had to be taken at the time*. From that I might have learned something about the timing of announcements.

When I was a little girl, I saw dirigibles rise from unexpected places often enough to think that normal. Trudging up a snowy hill with my sled, I passed gleeful strangers running down with gliders and hoping to take

off, and I saw the first crashes of the first aeroplanes. With my sisters and Aunt Henrietta and a boy named Constantine Boyd, I watched the *June Bug* rise from the bumpy field to claim the great prize. Reporters hung around then as well, eager to glimpse the newest models, always hoping to be the first to the site of an accident. Photographers made postcards out of the crashes (Raney and I became a postcard), which drew more young flyers from France and Spain, Russia and Cuba, New Jersey and California. The boardinghouses were packed; the market stocked strange groceries; my father made boots for them. Everyone sought out the men at the flying school.

On good days we fly, on rainy days we learn why—the flying school motto, which all of us knew. The flyers gathered at the edge of the lake before the sun was up; took off while the air was calm; landed before most of us were fully awake. By the time I was in high school, a hundred men were working in the Curtiss factory and every session at the flying school was packed. Because Curtiss had managed to interest the Navy Department in the idea of an aeroplane that could take off and land on water, contractors and naval officers (Palmer was one of those, Elly another) came and went as well. The instructors worked from dawn until the sun was fully set, darning together the shores of the lake.

When the men weren't flying or tinkering with their machines, playing cards or drinking with each other, they went to the parties thrown for them by our wealthy families and summer people. Raney's father, proud of their "cottage"—two kitchens, a double-sized reception room that opened to a long porch perched over a private beach, a swim float and a wooden dock with padded pilings and room to tie up several boats—hosted several each summer. Middle-aged men and women from Rochester and Corning and Syracuse circled among young flyers from all over the world, instructors from the flying school, and a few of the wealthier neighbors. If the wind was right, you could hear them laughing from the beach where I brought my sisters.

I'd imagined that cottage as looking like a magazine advertisement inside, all gleaming wood and thick soft carpets, but when Raney first invited me over, I saw how wrong I'd been. Everything was new but designed to look old, the furnishings meant to suggest the rustic without being actually uncomfortable. "You think that's silly," she said, watching me trace the unpeeled birch branches forming a chair frame.

"Hard to dust," I observed. When she laughed and pointed out the twisted vine trunks supporting a tabletop and the frosted glass globes on the chandelier, which were shaped like clusters of grapes, I thought we might be real friends. All summer I held onto that, even though sometimes, as I entered parties and dances at her side only to lose her as she was swarmed, I'd wonder what she wanted me for. Men talked about flying while their eyes moved from Raney's arms to Raney's chest to Raney's eyes and hair.

I remember slipping down the porch stairs at one party, sitting on a bench bolted to the dock as I listened to the voices hum: *Raaaaaaay-nee. Raaaaaaay-nee. Raaaaaaay-nee*. All those men. Farther out on the dock were the only ones not paying attention to her, a Dutch flyer I'd met once or twice before (this was Adrien Hendricks, but at the time I didn't know his name) and another flyer wearing a turban. Jasper Durand, disconsolately headed their way after half an hour of trying in vain to get Raney's attention, walked past me on his way to them. Tall, dark-haired, sharp-nosed like all the Durands, he was also uniquely pigeon-toed, which gave his walk an interesting sway. He looked so unhappy that as he passed I almost said something to him. I didn't, though—his family owned one of the largest wineries in town, and his circle didn't intersect much with mine—and he continued down the dock to the other two men. I went home before they left, not expecting to see any of them again except in passing.

Jasper surprised me, though, both by his persistence with Raney and by showing up after the accident. He arrived with an envelope, which he

first held out but then, seeing my casts, opened himself. I read the letter twice before letting it fall to the quilt.

"You know what it says?"

"I do," he replied. "I hope it's all right." His grandmother's large, forceful script expressed the family's sympathy and then announced that they, along with several other winery families, had settled my hospital bills in Bath.

"That's—that's wonderful," I said. My aunt had thought Link might offer to pay, but he hadn't, and my father had been frantic. "So generous." Jasper nodded politely and rose from the chair. "Would you thank your grandmother, from all of us?"

"Of course," he said. He leaned over toward the big glass jar and tapped the rim. "Terrarium?"

"Aunt Henrietta," I said, knowing she'd taught him in high school.

He nodded, said, "I loved her class," and left, looking as if he wanted to say something else. Once, when we'd crossed paths searching for ferns in the Glen, my aunt remarked that he'd been one of her favorite pupils, and we all knew the story of how he'd gone to France a few years earlier to study at a branch of his family's winery and there, at a great flying expedition outside of Rheims, seen our neighbor Mr. Curtiss win the race against Blériot. He'd come back determined to enter the aviation game but instead had given in to his family's demands, learning to take over the business.

That night my mother read the note and said vaguely how kind this was—the same words with which, for years, she'd accepted our neighbors' help when she was confined to bed, and everything my aunt did every day. My father flushed, flicked the paper off the table, and then retrieved it, muttering, "I suppose we'll have to take it." My aunt wrote the thank-you letter. I didn't expect that I'd see Jasper again, but a few days later he showed up with a potted fern and offered to read to me.

"It's hard for you to turn pages," he said. He seemed pleased to have noticed this.

"True enough," I said.

My aunt had reached the part in the blue volumes where Amundsen recounted his arrival at the Pole, and Jasper picked up where she'd left off and read for ten minutes. Then he put down the book and said, "He finally got what he wanted, after all." Through the window I saw both the golden willow twigs and also a white landscape scored with ski tracks, the dogs' curled tails moving steadily toward the horizon. I longed for him to keep reading. "Just like my cousin," he continued. "Thibaut wanted to build and fly aeroplanes, and that's what he does. Meanwhile I do what my family wants. Raney..."

And there it was. I knew that he'd been seeing her, but not that he'd been aware of her for so long. His father and hers, he said, had worked together on several community events and because her mother was dead, and her father was busy, she did exactly as she pleased. When she was fourteen, fifteen, sixteen (I couldn't remember seeing her then, I'd first noticed her the summer she was seventeen), she used to walk down the road to the Durands' winery and visit him in the laboratory where, when he was in college, he helped out during the summers.

"Mostly to tease me, I think," Jasper said. "And because she was bored. She liked to see if she could rattle me when I was doing something complicated."

I murmured politely each time he paused. Finally he stopped and said, "Your face looks better," as if, after being interested in me only because I knew Raney, he'd suddenly decided that we were friends.

I touched my slashed cheek. Now that the stitches were out I felt less conspicuous, but the flesh was still inflamed and one of the smaller cuts, which went clear through my eyebrow, was infected. My aunt had been treating me with salve she'd made from some plant in the woods

but that lid was still swollen, closing the outer corner of my eye, and my hair—I was trying not to think about the bald patch.

“Do you think?” I said.

“You were lucky,” he said. “Really.” He caught himself, stood up and crossed to the window. “The last time I saw Raney alone . . .”

He stopped and pressed his forehead to the glass. A few crows crossed the heavy sky; the leaves were down and soon there’d be frost. I’d been in bed when the leaves were on the trees and would still be there when the snow fell, piled up, packed down, turned to ice, and then was covered by more; I’d be there when the snow began to melt. Five months, the doctor had said, before I’d be walking easily.

“Sorry,” Jasper said faintly.

“Why don’t you read,” I suggested. I knew some of what had happened the last time he saw Raney alone and I didn’t want to hear more. “We could both use the distraction.”

“I’d rather talk,” he said. “I can’t talk with anyone else. You know how people in town feel about her family.”

Summer people; pushy strangers dripping city money: I knew. I also knew how much people like us depended on that money. I had classmates who cleaned their houses, pruned their shrubs, tended their boats and docks. My father stocked special hobnailed boots to tempt the bankers who wanted to hike. Raney’s first words to me, early that summer, had been a request to grab the line she tossed from her sailboat to the dock where I was standing. I was carrying a box I’d picked up for my father, and she might have thought I worked at the boatyard. When she asked me later if I’d like to sail with her, I thought at first she was offering me work.

Instead we sailed across the lake to dances, we swam together, we picked berries and made ice cream and met college boys and out-of-town flyers at parties and band concerts. I slipped away from my sisters to join her every chance I got. She didn’t follow our rules; she acted

like they didn't exist—and from out of all the others, she'd chosen me. Me, to confide in, and misbehave with, and join her in flirting with the intriguing visitors who normally would have ignored me.

I'd turned my back on everyone else and then, when she left for Rochester at the end of August, been stupidly surprised to find that my classmates, who since first grade had been inhaling the same dust in the same rooms where the same clocks moved too slowly, thought of me as a defector. A few of them, not kindly, let me know I'd only been that summer's friend, picked as others had been in other years, to be dropped eight weeks later. I'd known that all along, I claimed (I had and I hadn't). And I didn't care (of course I did): I'd been enjoying myself.

I wrote her four times after she left. She didn't answer until she came back with her father in early October. The note she sent then gave me hope. She was bored, she wrote. So bored! What should we do? I was offended, I was delighted, I wanted to snub her, I wanted to see her. I couldn't meet her on the Saturday she came back—I had work in the vineyards that day, and I was anxious to pile up my earnings while the weather held—but I said I'd meet her at the dance that night.

After I brought in my last boxes I walked home by the path at the base of the hill, behind the yards attached to the handsome houses. Jasper, his parents, and the rest of his sprawling family lived in one, with a huge back garden where I sometimes saw his grandmother or his three ancient aunts. A lawn stretched toward the path from the rose bed, sinking damply as it neared the gazebo. From there someone whispered, "Go ahead. Come on."

Not his elderly relatives but a girl's voice, a teasing laugh.

Then, "Don't," I heard. "Don't you..."

A man, not laughing. Against the gazebo's back wall, Jasper was entangled with another pair of arms and hands, a swirl of skirts. A bit of white gleamed in the dusky light: a breast, perhaps; the girl's shirtwaist was all the way open. The heads bent together, stayed together. I backed

toward the hill until I was off the path entirely, my boots in the ferns, but I couldn't make myself move on. The girl was Raney.

Jasper said, "Is that fun for you? To tease me like that?"

"Do what you want," she said. "You know I'd let you."

Jasper pulled away a couple of inches, his hands still reaching toward Raney but neither touching her nor resting at his own sides. Just—stuck there, stupidly. "I'd marry you, if you wanted," he said.

The noise I made then was covered by Raney's scornful laugh. "As if I'd ever live in this ridiculous place—I want to leave Rochester for someplace *larger*, not smaller. I come because it's a change from home. And because my father's too busy when he's here to notice what I do. Anyway"—she flicked at one of Jasper's frozen hands—"can't you just have some fun? Enjoy what we have?"

"What makes you think I'm staying here?" he said. "Maybe I want to go someplace larger."

"You won't," she said.

"I will," he insisted.

"We'll see. But for now, let's just..." She moved toward him again, pressing her whole length against him so urgently that I flushed.

"Stop it," Jasper said.

"Why?" My feet had carried me to their side of the path. "It's not like you're the only one."

"I know." His voice caught. "Although I was hoping you might take me a little more seriously, and that maybe I *could* be the only one. I'm not interested in being part of the crowd you flirt with."

I bolted then, feeling too much like Jasper; I wanted to be the only one so badly I was sick. When Raney had first plucked me from the dock I'd thought that meant I was special. Even if only specially good at helping her get what she wanted.

That night I didn't go to the dance; the next day we met at the baseball game but I was too uneasy with what I'd seen to confess that I'd

seen her with Jasper. A few days later I skipped school as she asked and then felt, as we dressed for our outing, like nothing had changed between us. And then she was gone. She was gone, I was in bed, and Jasper was walking around the dining room on his two good legs, the blue book I longed to read useless in his hands. Someone came up the steps; one of my sisters, I thought, until the knock. Jasper opened the door to a little boy, who stepped in when I nodded.

"Charlie," Jasper said. "What in the world?"

"Nana sent me," the boy said importantly. Jasper's nephew. His lovely face, wide at the cheekbones, narrow at the chin, with a perfectly shaped mouth and soft gray eyes, was much like his mother's. I liked it even then, long before I would cherish a different version of it. "She said you're to come home right away, they're holding dinner."

His eyes were fixed on my casts. "I'm Caroline," I offered. "You go to school with my little sisters, I think."

"Alice," he said, his face lighting up. "And Agnes, and Elaine." He inched closer. "Does it hurt? I heard the aeroplane *hit* you."

"An accident," I said, even as Jasper told Charlie not to pry.

Alice and Agnes came to greet their friend and Alice—who would marry Charlie later and would have a little girl I'd love, tying our family to Jasper and his grandmother too—turned in the dust-filled beam of light angled across my bed and said, "Will you come to the pond with us?"

The next time Jasper visited, I confessed to eavesdropping on him and Raney at the gazebo. Instead of being angry, he dropped the book (he was still pretending he came to read to me) and made a short, sharp noise resembling laughter. Hak, hak.

"I should have told you right away," I said. "I'm sorry."

"I might as well have kissed her on my front porch," he said.

"I'm the only one who saw."

"I wish," he said. "But my grandmother was out there, getting some air. She saw us too."

"How did I miss her?"

Jasper shrugged. "She tore me apart when I came back in. Couldn't I see that Raney was just toying with me, and why would I risk our family..."

"She thought of Raney as a risk?"

"Of course." He pinched the tip of his long nose between two fingers. "Too young for me, too flighty, no roots here in Hammondsport, bad enough for my reputation that she might damage my chances with, with—she wants me to marry someone from a family like ours."

Perhaps she'd seen me lurking on the path. "I didn't even know you and Raney were seeing each other, until that night."

He traced a knot in the wooden floor with one foot and said, "She had a flair for keeping secrets. I thought she'd told you about us, though."

I shook my head. If I'd let myself understand, earlier, how much she'd hidden from me, I might not have seen her at all the weekend she met Jasper in the gazebo.

By then it was November and soon, before Thanksgiving but after our first dusting of snow, the doctor unwound the remaining bandages on my head. Agnes and Alice were out, and after Aunt Henrietta made a quick exchange of Samuels (she never let them see), she and I studied what I had left and then began to experiment with the scissors. A fringe seemed like the best way to conceal the hairless patch where my scalp was gone and my aunt cut a neat straight line, just touching my eyebrows. The rest she cut level with my earlobes, the way I've kept it ever since. I looked different, quite modern I thought, like the two women flyers who'd passed through town the previous year and startled everyone with their cropped hair. The ends swung when I leaned forward and hid my cheeks and part of my scar, while the fringe hid the worst part of my scalp.

I decided then that when I could get up, I'd wear what a flyer would wear: men's trousers (my aunt sometimes wore these in private), boots, a big soft shirt and a woolen jacket. My legs, which would be unsightly even when they began to work again, would be hidden. I wouldn't have to worry about which scars would show in a dress, or what a man might someday think as he removed that dress. I would do something different, I thought; I would be busy with other things; I'd learn to be grateful for what had happened to me. I was free in a way none of my sisters or friends would ever be, I was cut free. What would I do?

Jasper was so busy by then at the winery that he had to stop visiting in the afternoons, but he sent Adrien Hendricks to keep me company. He came as a favor to Jasper, not to me; they'd been friends since Adrien got to town and started working with Jasper's cousin Thibaut. He might also have felt a twinge because he'd been one of Palmer's and Elly's teachers. Since the end of the flying season, he'd been sanding propellers part-time at the Curtiss factory, working off the cost of the hydroaeroplane they were building for him and trying not to envy the companions who'd gone to San Diego or Florida for the winter.

Jasper had told him that I was interested in learning more about the flying school, but as he walked up to our house, he was mostly imagining what he'd do when he could ship his hydroaeroplane home to Friesland, where he wouldn't be teasingly labeled the Flying Dutchman (as Mohan Singh was the Flying Hindu, and Motohisa Kondo had been the Flying Jap) but would just be—himself, flying over and into water, moving seamlessly between the elements as he was meant to do. Flying over the marshes to land on the dark violet surface of Lake Sneek. Over the reeds waving in the gray mist and the plains merging with the water, the two distinguishable only by the fat, flat-bottomed boats. He might take off from the Zuyder Zee; in winter he might soar along the frozen canals as the skaters raced below. He was so deep in his daydreams, he'd tell me later, that when Alice and Agnes

opened the door he was surprised, in the corner of the dining room, by a white bier, a white vessel, a bed. A girl in the bed (that girl was me), white-faced with chopped dark hair and hyphenated eyebrows. A white cast on one arm, white nightdress, white sheets.

We've been close for so long now that I can't remember all we talked about that afternoon. Jasper, of course. My aunt, my sisters, what looked to him like a jar of dirt next to me (Samuel was hiding, I remember). Link's earlier adventures, which he knew lots about: during his race with Barney Oldfield, he'd not only tapped his wheels on the roof of Oldfield's car, but actually touched Oldfield's head. And he'd passed over the Maid of the Mist, at Niagara Falls, just before he flew under Honeymoon Bridge.

"Not," Adrien added, "that I'm blaming him for what happened to you. The newspapers were hard on him at first, but he was flying perfectly cautiously that day. The coroner's jury was fair when they ruled it an accident. But I figured you'd want to know more about the person who changed your life."

That he'd thought of that—that he grasped how much I longed to know everything possible—made me like him. So did the fact that, when I asked him why he'd really come, he looked steadily into my eyes and said, "I'd do *anything* for Jasper. Anything," in a way I didn't really understand, then, but did later after I'd worked with so many men. By the end of his visit I knew that although he'd enjoyed the quick fellowship of Mrs. Mackenzie's boardinghouse, the drunken mock duels and rowdy card games that cut through the different languages and occasional jealousies, his life too had been changed by an accident. His friend Kondo, who the previous summer had laughed and placed a lily in his hands when he'd knocked himself unconscious ramming a stone wall, had clipped a windmill while practicing before a crowd of gaping farmers lined up like crows on a fence. Kondo was dead.

"So I know," Adrien said, "a little bit about how you feel."

He dreamed about Kondo, he said. And about how, if things were different, he'd have taught Jasper to fly. After he left, I dreamed about Raney again. No one was hurt, no one was dead, Raney was wearing a blue-sprigged dress with wide sleeves, which, as she walked calmly into the lake, ballooned around her upper arms and kept her afloat, catching the wind like little sails. She scudded across the water, one hand on her chest.

Through the winter Adrien kept visiting, finishing off the Amundsen with me and also telling me things about the flying school and making friends with Aunt Henrietta too. They went to some lectures; he showed her the machine he hoped to buy. She took him to search for fossils at the Glen. Just after Christmas, she arranged with my other teachers a schedule that would let me keep up until I could go back to school, and after that Adrien sometimes helped me study. I read everything I was supposed to and then, as my interests veered, other books that Adrien and Aunt Henrietta brought me.

In March, when I announced what I'd decided at the dinner table, my aunt did what she could to calm my parents. My mother said what she'd said for years, whenever Marion or I wanted to do something: "Who's going to help me with the little girls?"

"I'm not a little girl anymore," Elaine pointed out, reasonably. "I can take care of myself. I *do* take care of myself."

"Well," my mother said, waving one hand vaguely in the direction of the twins. "But them."

As Alice and Agnes looked at each other, exchanging one of their secret messages and then pretending interest in the carrots, my father pointed out that my long convalescence had already been hard on my mother.

"I know," I said. "If I could have done anything differently..."

"But you've been an excellent patient," Aunt Henrietta said calmly.

"Still," my father said.

And although Jasper's family had indeed paid all of my hospital bills, my father went on to note the extra household expenses my accident had caused and then reminded us of the cruel jokes our neighbors had made about Ruth Law, when she'd come to town for flying lessons. "All she did was make herself conspicuous," he said. "Those ridiculous boots, with the laces that took forever, and the puffy bloomers. And you wouldn't see a man painting his name on the front struts of his machine like that."

"She went up for the first time the same day she saw Harriet Quimby crash," Aunt Henrietta said. "Surely you give her credit for being brave."

Marion, who'd enrolled at the teacher-training school but was working at the Durands' winery until the start of classes and still, because of me, doing more than her fair share of the housework, said, "What's so *brave* about showing off like that?"

It was cold that day, the wind leaking through the windows and the stove useless beyond the dining room. Aunt Henrietta pulled her skirt more closely around her legs and pointed out that I'd be done with school in just a few months, and that the best way for me to heal completely was to have some absorbing occupation.

"So she can break the rest of her bones?" my mother said. "So we can spend another half a year looking after her?"

"*Hester*," my father said sharply. From the expressions passing over the faces of my sisters during this exchange, a wise person might have guessed that only one of us would ever marry.

I took advantage of everyone. Where I should have been grateful for all the help I'd already been given, all the hours devoted to me—I took more, I took everything I could. I didn't have the money to enroll in the flying school, but when Adrien volunteered to teach me, I greedily accepted. What had Amundsen felt? I asked myself. Maybe this clarity, which had brought him so far. Although Adrien's machine wasn't

ready yet, he had access to several because of his work. We started late in April, when the strangers streaming in for the new session made us inconspicuous.

Jasper's cousin Thibaut, who'd designed and built the headless pusher that had swept me and Raney to the ground, let us use one of the battered school machines, which was parked in a hangar behind the shop awaiting some updated skids. No one had time to get to it. The men in the shop were frantic, the flying boats they were building for the Italian navy competing with K-boats for the Russians, and early versions of the Jenny, and the first stages of the *America*, which they hoped would cross the Atlantic later that summer. Frames, hulls, belts whirring, drawings pinned to walls and tables. The roar from the motor-testing room made it hard to hear and when it rained we shivered in the unheated hangar.

Adrien, amazingly patient, went over the machine with me: upper plane, lower plane, forward elevating and deflecting planes, left and right stabilizing planes, rear rudder, bamboo frame. He taught me to check the wires running through the fairleads and over the pulleys; check the engine and all of the controls; check and double check. With the lever between my legs and my shoulders in the yoke, we drilled for hours. Turn the wheel attached to the lever and feel the rudder move, pull the wheel forward and watch the elevating planes tilt up, push it away and see them tilt down. Lean right and left to feel the wires controlled by the yoke pull at the stabilizing planes. I'd prepared for this while my legs were healing, reading the same books the young men studied at the flying school. Now we were training my body to grasp what my mind had learned. The motions were more natural than I'd expected.

Jasper came by twice to watch, delighted that I was learning so quickly but also—he admitted this—jealous. A few days after his second visit, Adrien and three companions wheeled the machine down to Kingsley Flats. Henry spun the propeller, Tom and Damon removed

the blocks and let go of the frame. I rattled across the mud, kept on the ground by the wired-down throttle as Adrien called out instructions. Again and again, with the engine racketing behind me, I plowed across the bumpy field. My cheeks froze, my hands stiffened, but soon I got used to the noise and steady vibration behind me, the frame sticking out in front, the rattling all around. Thibaut came by, unwired the throttle, and put on a different, smaller propeller, so I had full power but still couldn't take off. Then I did two more days of what, although the grass was still matted and just beginning to green, the men called grass-cutting. A little dance, training my feet on the throttle and brake; a new dance, easy to learn.

While I worked the men from the shop tidied the shore, repairing the damage caused by the winter's ice and setting out ramps and turntables for the school. The thing, Adrien told me, was to hold the wheel lightly, surprisingly lightly, the way I'd hold my little sisters' hands. I needed to sense the movements of the front planes and the rudder and if I gripped too hard, Adrien said, I wouldn't feel anything. Thibaut left the men taking down the torn canvas hangar (the one that Link had destroyed, the one where Raney and I had perched; she might be alive if I hadn't joined her that day), and replaced my practice propeller with another, which let the wheels lift off when I was at full throttle but didn't have enough thrust to let me rise more than a few feet before I glided down—but still, but still!

Those were the first minutes I was off the ground, actually flying, and I knew right away that I loved it. My first hops were like my first minutes on a bicycle, that same startled reaction to every wobble and gust of wind, overcorrecting but then quieting, balancing easily and almost unconsciously as my body got used to the machine. And when Thibaut and Adrien turned me loose with the regular propeller I was calm—almost calm—as I rose and kept on rising, soared the length of the field and out over the beach and the base of the lake, and then returned.

Each flight I went up higher, stayed up longer. Leaning into the turns happened naturally, it really was like riding a bike, and if I let my shoulders move as they wanted to move then the turn came out perfectly. I made ellipses above the field, stretched them until I was far out over the lake, widened them to include the edge of the village. At last I saw what Link must have seen. No crowds, only a handful of friends—but the ground still sheeted away and the horizon dropped when I nosed-up. I was passing a gull, I was next to a cloud. I was casting a shadow on the train and then over a patch of woods where the next Samuel hung upside down on a leaf. Soon everything would turn upside down, as if the whole world had looped the loop. Flying schools would be training military pilots instead of sportsmen; Adrien would not be at the Zuyder Zee but at the naval aviation school at Pensacola; for a while I'd work in San Antonio. Everything about flying would be different by the end of the war that, as I made my first flights, hadn't yet begun. I can still feel what it was like, though, as I can still see this place as it used to be, and despite all that happened later to me and Jasper and Adrien, Charlie and Alice, all of us, those first flights are what I dream about.

DAN BEACHY-QUICK

Shepherd of—

for Donald Revell

invisible anchors of the bright bright clouds
and the bent over grasses with the unseen sails
the stones that endure without vision
and the swarm's all-mind no-mind patient dance

none else can dance the commandments less-than
more-than-real warnings of the doublemind's deathly
advice // an old woman with old hair sits in a chair
offering vision but then the chair wanders far away

and she's sitting alone in the air braiding into plaits
her hair and the elm also bears fruit by bearing
the fruitful vine and the jar half-empty worries the mind
to vinegar from wine // listen now and understand

these visions build a fence around the vineyard
so trespass becomes the holy guard
keeping none out not child not deer not mouse //
the shepherd makes such sanctuary in a fold

DAN BEACHY-QUICK

Apophatic

for Peter Gizzi

nothing changes nothing
grows wild nothing grows
tame nothing bends weird
the mind-space into shape
of tether and memory of
ankle gone lame the whole
hurt song called irony can-
not know how chaos aches
beneath the facts it wears
for a face the fact of a
blank page being a form
of a map that is a kind of
mask missing a mountain
or a mouth or a marble
pedestal from which the riddle
pours down and you know
a man is the answer *a man*
but nothing changes nothing
bends absence bright into a
silence called paper white
sun circle or solar sail or lonely

wind across vast despair or
blank hope bearing small repair
that this finger I point at
myself answers the question
what is not is everywhere

ELEANOR STANFORD

Long-billed Curlew
(*Numenius longirostris*)

Would it help to know that God
is no relation etymologically
to good?

But closer to pour, to cast,
to funnel?

Dark above,
paler below:

the wing linings visible
in flight.

Closer to the name
invoked, the call
loud and musical, ascending.

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Sky Circling Among Branches

I'm coming, I'm coming, wait up, stones!
—Neruda

Good Pablo told us the stones fell from the sky,
and science backs him up—all our beginnings
blasting out, clustering here or there
among the dark....

Whatever spun,
fell inward, and finally became us, amounts to
four or five like myself walking around
this morning with our ticket stubs
of intuition.

October, a vacancy in the trees,
a couple rags of cloud caught up there, dingy
blossoms floating branch to branch...

and nothing—
not the perfection of the waves or the borderless
dominion of birds, not the Southern Cross,
that shimmering signet of hope—saves anyone
in their sleep....

A night wind gallops
over the swells toward the islands at the end
of the sea.... Hands in my coat pockets,
all I turn up are keepsakes of dust,

the dulled archipelago of air stretching
beyond the tides.

I go on, shuffling
down the path, whistling what was
once thought a lively tune, grateful
to be a satchel of ligaments and bone
still able to transfer enough chemicals,
one synapse to another, to understand
something is missing when I look up
and praise a streak of gray engraving
the hosannas of light, the spindrift
off the rocks, anything sent into the air,
post-dated to a god who,
in his infinite memory, must know
he's abandoned us here ...so many
self-conscious bits of sand
in a starry whirlwind of desire.

BRIAN DOYLE

A Sprawl of Brothers

SOMETIMES WE WOULD all be sprawled on the floor, and for once there would be no grappling and wrassling, and we would be peaceful, with legs here and arms there and one brother using another for a pillow. If you lay flat you could imagine that you were surrounded by mountains and foothills of brothers, ridges and ranges of brothers, a burly wilderness of brothers. One would twitch and the others would rustle and shuffle and then we would recompose for a while. Maybe we were watching television or listening to the murmur of uncles. Our sister would stalk through like a heron sometimes, lifting her feet gingerly. Sometimes you would doze off for a few minutes and startle awake and everything was the same except for the conversation overhead. Their legs were like logs and their arms were like branches. Here and there you could see a grumble of hair. Somewhere in the pile there might be a cousin. Sometimes the fire was lit and we would sprawl by the fire like bears. The fire would warm half a brother and then he would roll away and another brother would slide in and so on and so on. Sometimes the smaller brothers would fall asleep in the pile and our dad would eventually step in and with a mere glance part the waters and reach down

like Zeus and elevate the child so gently that he never awoke until the next morning when he was startled to find himself in bed and not on the raft of his brothers.

Sometimes there would be wrestling and grappling and jockeying and edging and pinning and elbowing, and occasionally there would be fisticuffs, and mom would grow grim about the mouth, but that is not what I want to remember this morning. I want to remember when we were scattered on the floor like stalks and husks, like sticks and poles, like skitter and duff. I want to remember the indolent sandy sneakery scent of my brothers heaped around me like piers and jetties and beams. It didn't happen that much. It needed an occasion. The cousins are visiting in flocks and gaggles. The neighbors are stopping by in sheaves and delegations. Jesus is just born and wrapped in rough cloth or just arisen and bound in the finest linen. It is a late summer afternoon and we have been at the beach all day and we are lazy and weary and salted with sand and we smell like sunlight and mustard and somewhere among us is a moist towel. One of us is telling a story and the others are halflistening and I am trying to listen but the story begins to ripple and fade, and soon we will shower, and then it will be dinner, and soon our sister will stalk through the wrack and drift of her brothers, looking silently for that wet towel, and she will snatch it suddenly like a heron snatches a minnow, the towel wriggling desperately as it is hauled to its doom, but that will not be for a while, and I have my legs flopped over one brother and my head propped against another, and somewhere in the pile a brother is telling a story about something green and liquid-fast, a fish or a car or a bird, and you would think that such seemingly slight moments as these would fade over the years, crowded and jostled as they are by facts and pain and love and loss; but your body remembers what your mind cannot. Your body forgets nothing.

BRIAN DOYLE

The Fourth of March

IN MY FAMILY, when we were growing up in a parish named for a priest who heard confessions sometimes eighteen hours a day, there were Days of Mandatory Mass, such as Sundays and Christmas and Easter, and then there were the days we were allowed to exercise our options, such as All Souls Day and The Feast of the Assumption, and then there was the day that we all went to morning Mass as a proud clan, a grim tribe, a collective silent defiance of empire, an insistence on the right of people to govern their land independent of greater military force or sneering and racist cultural assumptions of superiority, a prayer for our ancestors, a prayer for the millions of people who had been slain, starved, beaten, imprisoned, exiled, transported, degraded, insulted, and worse by arrogant violent empires who never through history have hesitated to steal land, children, dignity, and freedom wherever these things grew native in their place; and so it was that, on the fourth day of March every year, no matter what day of the week it was, my family, from patriarch to youngest mewling child, donned our best church clothes and shoes, drove to early morning Mass, and filled a pew, right up front, proudly, to celebrate Robert Emmet's birthday.

He was only twenty-five years old when he died, as every one of us children knew, having heard of this one particular young man from earliest memory. He was a Protestant who was furious that Catholics suffered so under imperialist rule. He was an Irishman who thought and said that the Americans were right to have shucked off imperialist rule. He was captured by the imperialists because he insisted on saying farewell to his girlfriend in person before he fled the country. The imperialists tortured his housemaid, who would reveal nothing. Repeat that sentence: *they tortured the housemaid*. He led a rebellion that lasted a day and a night and was crushed by the imperialists. He was hanged in the public square and the soldiers who hanged him then cut off his head, afraid of his posthumous eloquence, as my grandfather observed. Each and every one of us children could recite the final lines of his speech in the dock:

Let no man write my epitaph ... let me rest in obscurity and peace,
and my tomb remain uninscribed, and my memory in oblivion, until
other times and other men can do justice to my character. When my
country takes her place among the nations of the earth, *then*, and not
till then, let my epitaph be written. I have done.

I do not know what other families do when a child among them stands before the fireplace, at the end of a long evening of clan ceremony, and recites ringing lines from a brave young man about to be hanged for trying to throw murderous enslaving interlopers out of his country, but my extended family would listen in shivering silence, and then there would be an instant after the words *I have done* when you could hear quiet weeping, and then there would be a roar.

As my mother often said, we are not Irish Catholics. We are American Catholics. Yet we remember the courageous dead in the land from which we came, and we pray for them by remembering, and by that

prayer we also pray for the brave souls all over the world, past and present and to come, who stood up against slavery and invasion, and speak bold and true against such crimes, and for their courage and eloquence are so often tortured and slain and silenced; but we remember.

On the days that the fourth of March was a school day, my parents would walk with us from the church to the school, and deliver us to our classrooms personally, so as to indicate that our brief absence had the parental imprimatur. One year, I remember, we had a new assistant principal, who said to my father, somewhat condescendingly, that Robert Emmet's birthday was *not* a school or church holiday, and that we would all be counted as tardy, and my father, with his usual wry grace, turned to my mother and smiled. We waited outside the office while my mother had a brief discussion with the man, and then my father accompanied the older children to their classrooms, and my mother took us three younger children to ours. My brothers and sister and I used to occasionally speculate about just what our mother had said to the assistant principal, but as our youngest brother observed recently, I think we are all pretty clear about what mom said to the guy, and can you imagine the poor man gaping and withering as it becomes ever more clear that he is swimming in water far too deep for him?

CATHERINE CARBERRY

Salvo for New Spain

THE SCHOOL WAS A CASTLE of sand-scrubbed stone, the former home of Isabella la Católica, who united our glorious nation five hundred years before we arrived at the castle in our identical blue skirts and tightly pulled braids. Six of us came in early August, just months after Madrid surrendered to the Generalissimo; the Civil War was won by the Falange, and the surviving communists, anarchists, socialists, and Republicans were scattered into the mountains until they were found and shot.

As the newest arrivals, we were assigned to a small dormitory named Nation's Dawn. Though it was a warm summer, the room was kept cool by the castle's stone walls; on each of our beds were three folded blankets and a pamphlet describing the proper and righteous manner of turning down our sheets. The mando who brought us to our room looked like all the mandos at the castle, with her wool skirt, lipstick, and lattice-work curls pressed against her forehead. The mando oversaw our introductions, which consisted of our names and our fathers' professions.

"My name is Asunción," I said. "My father is president of our local chapter of the Falange." The mando raised her eyebrow, impressed.

I did not add that after my brother was murdered by communists, my father had torn down the framed portrait of the Generalissimo from his office, crushed the glass beneath his boot.

"Nothing is worth this," my father said. "Not progress. Not New Spain."

My mother said Enrique died like a saint. He had been studying to be a priest when his seminary was burned. When the mandos came to collect me from our house, they had told my mother she was the true martyr, giving both her children to the Falange. My mother and the mandos prayed for peace and progress while my father belched and uncorked another bottle of homemade wine. With the mando in our home, I sat with my hands in my lap and hoped I was passing that first test.

The girl standing beside me stared at her feet and whispered her name. She had cried during the ride to the castle and I had not offered her comfort.

"Speak louder, sister," the mando said. Her voice boomed as if her throat held a megaphone.

"My name is Rosa. My father was a schoolteacher."

Before the war the past tense implied a lost job, an illness, an early retirement. Now there was a logic to grammar we did not question.

The next girl had skin dark as a gypsy's. During the drive to the castle, she had stared out the window for hours instead of reading our rulebook.

"My name is Teresa," she said. "The Falange took my father."

I did not know that the mandos had allowed daughters of the opposition into the castle. The mandos had told us that every unwed Spanish girl would be brought to the castle for six months of training, but we all knew there were exceptions: pregnant girls, whores, communists. I wondered if Teresa's father had been a communist.

"You are welcome here. The Falange has united Spain," the mando said to Teresa, whose arms remained crossed over her chest.

Our first night in Nation's Dawn, Teresa told us a story about the Moorish king of Granada whose name the mandos would have declared

obscene. After his city was conquered by Isabel and Fernando, the king fled on horseback. Then, outside the city walls, he turned to see Granada for the last time. His mother watched as he cried and she told him: “Don’t cry tears of a woman for a city you could not defend like a man.”

The king’s mother, Teresa declared, was a wild boar.

“And you,” she turned to me. “You are a *paloma*.”

It could mean pigeon. It could mean dove. For an instant, I hoped I would be the pure white bird of tapestries, cradled in the hand of St. Francis. But Teresa looked at me as if I were a street bird, as if I had just nipped at her lunch.

Then she turned to the other girls and named all of them. Carmen, with her green eyes and elegant nose, was a lynx. Maria del Mar was a fox. Dolores was a cat. Shy Rosa was a horse. It was a game, as innocent as imagining new names for ourselves, which of course I had once done, because what girl named after the Virgin’s Assumption wouldn’t prefer to be called Veronica or Monserrat? But I knew what my mother would say about this animal game. When, as a child, I had told her I wanted to be called Elisa, a name unencumbered by the Virgin’s miracle, my mother slapped me and called it blasphemy. Still, I wondered what it was about me that reminded Teresa of a bird. My features were large, my hair straight and black.

I asked Teresa, “What are you?”

Teresa came close to me. Studying her broad face, I could imagine what her father must have looked like.

“A bear,” she said.

Right then, I believed her. She cooed at me, a mockery of a dove’s soft call, and then she roared.

During the drive to the castle, I had read *Rules for Future Mandos* three times. I knew that each day was its own series of exams. I knew we were being trained to conquer our personal desires and petty ambitions. I knew these things were forbidden in the school: dirty

fingernails, pessimism, untidy hair, improperly folded clothes, frivolousness. The rulebook said nothing of roaring or giving ourselves animal names, but I thought of the mandos' meticulous hairstyles and pressed uniforms. In their religion of order and progress, this game would be blasphemy.

"You are being frivolous, sister Teresa," I said, but the bear-girl only snarled. I saw all her teeth, and I noted with satisfaction that they were strong and white because of the powdered milk and toothbrushes the mandos had delivered to all our homes.

"We shouldn't play these games," I said to Teresa.

But the girls were already practicing their new animal behaviors, as if they had been guarding wild animals beneath their girl-selves. I wondered if this should have been included in the handbook, which named only homesickness as an expected but unwelcome weakness. I wanted to know if the mandos had ever considered themselves animals, but I could not imagine them engaging in such games. The mandos concealed their instincts with severe perfumes and blue skirts with blade-sharp pleats. The mandos had defied the natural order: they were unmarried, childless, and their skin did not glisten with sweat even in this heat.

"We aren't animals. We're the Nation's Dawn," I insisted, but the girls only giggled. Teresa stretched her mouth into a roar and Rosa began to rub her neck against the bedpost like a horse. Maria del Mar was prowling between the twin beds. Dolores began to purr the Falangist anthem.

During the war, my charred and starving village had been visited by a team of three mandos who arrived in one of the black cars reputed to take away communist fathers and poetry-reading brothers in the night. It was strange to see this car during the day, stranger still when instead of the Guardia Civil, with their tricorne hats and sharp jawlines, the car

opened its doors like the wings of a beetle and three sets of panty-hosed legs slid out over the black leather seats.

The mandos were fearsome. The mandos were beautiful. The mandos brought powdered milk although we had fields spotted with cows. They fingered my braids, eyed my scuffed shoes.

They explained that at the castle, I would be trained to be a leader of New Spain. I would be tested on my manners and abilities, and if I proved pure and righteous, I would be assigned a position in a hospital, orphanage, or Falangist office. The girls who did not excel at the castle would be sent back to their villages and expected to raise large families to whom they would proclaim the testament of the Falange: Order! Obedience! Submission!

“But if she succeeds in your training, when will she be married?” my father had asked the mandos when they came for me. The mandos smiled patiently and showed their bare fingers, their stomachs empty of children.

“Your daughter will lead a life of service,” the mandos explained with great patience. And my parents understood that if I excelled at the castle, I would never give them grandchildren. If somehow I returned to my village, I would come with dictionaries and powdered milk.

I did not want children of my own. I would not return to my village, to my parents, or to the charcoal shadow where my brother’s seminary had stood. I wanted to be like the mandos, in charge of something greater than hungry mouths and bare feet.

Our first morning we marched to the patio at sunrise to join the other students in exercises and formations. There, we saluted the sun. We saluted the fatherland. We kicked out our legs and saluted the Generalissimo.

Between our stretches, I watched Teresa. Her hands swung by her sides as if weighted. Her arm hair bristled. When she noticed me, she swiveled and grinned, but it was not the smile we had been instructed to

practice, the Falangist smile of victory and optimism. It was a bear's odd grimace. Next to her, Maria del Mar cautiously balled her fists into paws.

I broke our formation and took three steps forward to join another line of girls. These girls had been at the castle for months. Their motions were clean; their swivels and kicks were human. These girls were edging toward progress. They were my brother's vengeance. They were the dawn of New Spain!

Behind me, Teresa growled, and then I felt her weight on my back as she pounced. My head knocked the ground and when I looked up, Teresa was over me, snarling against a sky of interrupted blue, pure as the Virgin's robe. A mando wrenched my arm and I was stunned and standing. The other girls continued their formations, staring ahead into the future of New Spain as Teresa and I were led away from the patio into the castle.

We were seated below portraits of the Generalissimo as the mandos told us that child's play was not permitted in the school.

"It isn't play," Teresa insisted. "To overcome our animal instincts, mustn't we first acknowledge them?"

I was stunned by her audacity, impressed by her rhetoric. But the mandos disagreed and said there would be no regression, only progress.

"*Sinvergüenza*," the mandos called her. Shameless. "You are here," a mando added, "to learn to behave as leaders in New Spain. Leaders who understand that we rule with rigor and discipline."

I wanted to become like the mandos, to make my voice part of their pure and righteous chorus, to rise from the wreckage of war with finesse and powdered noses. I wanted to show my father that by aligning with those who had fought against the communists, I was honoring my brother's death. After Enrique's seminary was burned, Falangist officials had visited our home to pay respects to my father. They had promised the communists would be found and brought to justice. They had promised that, soon, Spain would be reborn.

"Yes, yes!" I said to the mandos. I ignored the memory of my father cursing the Falange, saying that no progress could come with the deaths of so many. But the mandos did not recognize me as an ally. To them I was a Nation's Dawn girl, already infected with animal impulses.

"I'd like to switch my dormitory room," I said.

"You will stay where you have been assigned," the mandos said. "And if you cannot control yourself, you will go back to your village."

When I returned to the patio, I stood next to the Nation's Dawn girls and kicked higher than any of them. I learned the routine. I saluted the sky, squinted into the sun. I felt my body illuminated with the brightness of Spain's future. When Rosa swatted her hair like a horse's mane, I pinched her hard.

As punishment, Teresa was dressed in seven wool uniforms and made to stand in the sunlight and sing our anthem from noon until midnight, her arm outstretched toward the sun as it blazed above, and then in front, and then finally below her. By the end of the night, over the speakers from which had boomed our anthem for twelve hours, we heard the blood in her throat as she sang.

When she began her last verse we were in our narrow beds not sleeping. Teresa was shouting the final words of the song. It almost sounded as if she were converted.

"Spain united! Spain the great! Spain the free! Onwards, Spain!"

When Teresa returned to Nation's Dawn, I pretended to sleep, but I watched her peel off her seven uniforms, folding each of them until the chair was a bulky tower of wool. Soon, she was singing in her sleep.

"Facing the sun in the shirt you embroidered for me yesterday," she sang over and over.

Except we were the ones who embroidered the shirts. Our fathers and brothers wore the Falange's shirts and were burned inside churches, shot against prison walls. It was a song for the Falange, not a song for

unreformed communists pretending to be animals. I got up and shook Teresa until she was quiet.

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After morning prayers, the mandos announced that the German girls were returning to congratulate us on the victory of our war. The legacy of these blond girl-soldiers was ferocious. They had spent two weeks at the castle the previous year, and because of them, each Wednesday was *Día Alemán*, during which we dressed in the costumes they had left behind as gifts: starched blouses and black velvet dresses embroidered with foreign flowers. Because of them, the mandos insisted our hair was too dark, our salutes not fervent enough.

At night, we watched films of the girls marching in formation. The German girls smiled as they marched, even their orderly teeth suggested superior morals. They looked like the faces on the cans of powdered milk.

“You must learn from the German girls,” the mandos said. “Especially our sisters in Nation’s Dawn.”

We were arranged in lines, holding hands and marching to songs whose language sounded to us like a man singing with a mouth of potatoes. From our vantage point, we were Teresa and Carmen and Asunción and Rosa and Maria del Mar and Dolores. From above, we were brown-haired swastikas in skirts, marching for Spain, marching for Germany, marching for a united National Syndicalist Europe.

“These German girls,” Teresa said when we learned of their visit. “They must be wolves.”

Maria del Mar laughed and pinched up her fox-nose. Rosa let out a light horse-whinny. Carmen and Dolores were crawling, slinking over the stone floors.

“Do you want to go back to your villages in shame?” I said, and Rosa fell silent. Dolores stood up. But Teresa only smiled at me and recited

the words from the anthem that chilled us all, "That is how death will find me and I won't see you again."

Maria del Mar grinned and began to chew on Teresa's arm.

The truth was that Teresa did want to return to her village, and she did not care about shame.

In the weeks before the German girls returned, we rehearsed the folkloric songs and dances of Spain's great provinces. We learned to play flutes and drums and trumpets. We worked in the castle's tile-walled kitchen, perfecting traditional recipes to feed the German girls so they would see our food was modest but savory. We learned conversational German. Our uniforms, fingernails, hairstyles, and shoes were inspected eight times a day.

The German girls were to arrive in the village by train, and we went to greet them in the plaza, a parade of us in bright dresses, playing our new instruments. Each dormitory was dressed in the traditional clothes of a different province. The Glory of the Patria girls wore long skirts from Asturias and carried tambourines streaming with ribbons. The Onwards Spain girls wore black lace veils and carried fans that opened with tiny whip cracks. We, the Nation's Dawn girls, were still punished for Teresa's misbehavior. We wore the German girls' old dresses, the black velvet absorbing the sunlight and burning our legs.

I stood between Teresa and Maria del Mar and already I could feel the low hum of their animal selves. When they looked at me, they smiled at each other as though I was a zookeeper who couldn't understand their savage communication. I wanted to know if I would be next, if suddenly I would feel the scratch of feathers erupting from my skin.

I closed my eyes against the other girls and thought of Enrique. My brother had not been interested in politics. He'd told me, just once, it was foolish for the Falange to equate the State with God. But God had not sought vengeance for the communists. God made no promises.

When the train arrived, we began to play our anthem. The mandos lined the plaza with their arms in eager salute, as if it were the Führer himself who was visiting. Instead, sixteen blond girls with identical braids disembarked from the train. They were just as the mandos had described them. Their uniforms were pristine and they each carried a single black suitcase. Teresa had been wrong; the German girls were not wolves. The German girls were not animals at all.

They clapped politely when we finished singing, and then the mandos began a series of speeches about the union of our two great countries. The German girls, the mandos, and all of the girls from the castle bowed their heads and prayed.

It was during the fifth speech when Maria del Mar untied her braid, waves of her hair falling crimped and wild. Teresa's voice was still an angry whisper after her punishment, but she muttered *Olé* as if Maria del Mar were a bullfighter. I held onto Maria del Mar's arms. I pulled her hair to keep her from moving, but she tore free and threw her vest to the ground, then began to crawl on her knees, prowling like a fox.

I wanted to show the mandos I was capable of controlling these girls. I slipped from the line and began to walk toward the front. The mando giving the speech was leading a salute and chant: "Spain United! Spain the Great! Spain the Free!"

When I reached Maria del Mar, a group of mandos had already surrounded her. Soon she was red-faced, standing up and buttoning her dress, her hair already smooth and neatly tied as if she had never been a fox. I marched ahead, my flute whistled feebly. One of the mandos turned to me.

"Asunción," the mando said, "are you interested in becoming a mando?"

I stood and nodded. I did not want to be an animal, but I no longer knew if I was worthy of the mandos' uniform if I could so easily dismiss girls like Teresa, whose ferocity was not just an insult to the mandos but a threat.

"The Nation's Dawn students are unacceptable," the mando said, looking to Maria del Mar. "It is your responsibility to oversee their behavior."

As we marched to the castle, the villagers stood in their doorways and watched us pass, raising their arms in salutes. All the other girls walked with their heads bowed in reverence, their hands clasped in prayer for lost fathers and brothers. But the Nation's Dawn girls were not in mourning; they were walking as animals would try to walk, stiff and unbalanced. Maria del Mar walked as though she'd had her tail caught in a trap.

That evening, we prepared dinner as the German girls rested. Because of Maria del Mar's fox performance, the Nation's Dawn girls were assigned to collection duty. We collected the scraps from the other girls in the kitchen, and our aprons became smeared with blood and streaks of lard as the girls threw their scraps at our chests, willfully missing the buckets we held in front of us. The mandos said nothing. We brought out the buckets and fed the dogs that gathered outside the kitchen. I looked down on the village, the mess of tile roofs and plaster houses amid dry hills. I wondered if the villagers were afraid of the mandos, if when they saw our castle atop the hill, they thought of the victory of the Falange, the birth of New Spain. Or if they thought what Teresa must be thinking, that this school was our cage.

Maria del Mar faced the Nation's Dawn girls.

"They told me I was a disgrace to Spain," she said. "They told me the German girls would think we were vulgar. Barbarians."

Maria del Mar's face was red with shame.

"You are not a disgrace," Teresa said, and her face was not the face of a bear but a sister. Maria del Mar began to cry and Teresa held her.

"You're a good fox," she said, and then Maria del Mar began to shake with laughter and bit Teresa's shoulder. Carmen and Rosa and Dolores huddled with them.

"Where are you, *paloma*?" Teresa said.

I stood apart from the pack. I knew if I joined them, I would be the next to be punished, to lose control of animal impulses in front of the German girls. But a hidden, impure part of me hoped that by studying these girls, I would be able to access some wing-beating wilderness of my own. I had begun to think there was more than one avenue of escape.

Flies were gathering around my bucket of scraps. The dogs were nipping at my feet. I crouched and fed them, let them lick my bloodied hands.

That night, a mando entered our room with a German girl. We were already in bed, our covers turned down in the appropriate fashion. I knew that under the sheets, Carmen, Dolores, Teresa, and Rosa were forming their fingers into paws. They were trying to remember a wilderness they had never known.

"These girls," the mando said in practiced German, "must learn from you. They suffer from certain delusions."

The German girl's smile was nervous, but she introduced herself in flawless Spanish.

"Hello, my name is Magda. I am pleased to meet you and to visit your great country."

The mando inspected our dormitory, then thanked Magda for her service and closed the door. We watched Magda as she prepared for bed. Her manners were impeccable. I imagined that all the German girls knew when the others were falling asleep, that they synchronized their sleep-breaths and dreamt identical dreams.

"You Spanish girls are interesting creatures," Magda said, her prim mouth turned down at the corners. She was our age, but she spoke like one of the mandos.

I waited until I thought the other girls were asleep, and then I let myself make a small, coo-whisper. I wanted to see how it felt. The dormitory remained silent for a moment, and then Dolores began to purr

like a cat. Teresa growled, Rosa whinnied. Carmen, I imagine, did not know if a lynx could make sounds, so she began to purr as well. Maria del Mar yelped like a fox caught under a fence. Soon we were an animal chorus, a zoo in twin beds. Our voices were our rifles, our sounds were our salvo. We forgot about Magda. We forgot about the mandos. We pulled the animal sounds from deep in our throats. We grew louder.

When I looked up, Magda had fled our room. Soon she returned with a mando and we fell silent, pretending to sleep.

"She began it," Magda said, and I could feel her pointing at me. The mando beckoned, snapped her wrist sharply for me to follow her. Outside the dormitory, I felt naked in my nightgown.

"You will not make a suitable leader if you behave this way," the mando said. "This time for you is crucial. Do not be left behind."

I thought of my parents in their small house in our village. My brother was left behind, turned to ash and shards of bone. All of Spain was tilting toward something great. I nodded for the mando. I hushed the cooing that still echoed in my chest.

In the morning, my breakfast was an empty bowl. At lunch, I was given a glass of water. At dinner, I sat among the Nation's Dawn girls with my empty plate. I watched the meat bleed under their forks and knives. But that night, I dreamt of flying above a forest, not as a pigeon or dove, but a more powerful animal, something faster.

During their stay, the German girls performed traditional dances, taught us how to wind braids around our heads, spoke of the compassion and vision of their Führer. Each day, we attended Hora Alemán, during which we were permitted to ask the German girls about their lives and superior virtues.

I asked the first question. "What are your villages like?"

The German girls smiled and told us about villages where everyone believed in the Führer's vision for a victorious Germany. They implied

that, unlike the Spaniards, Germans did not turn on their own brothers and fathers. Germany was united in its goals, they said. Germany was a great and magnificent country.

Next to me, Rosa lifted her head and for a moment she did not seem shy. She looked brilliant, gleaming, a horse in the sun.

"In my village we starve. In my village, everything is burnt. All the men are gone."

A mando interrupted her and spoke to the German girls. "These are the sacrifices of war. Spain is moving onward, sisters, to a time of peace."

But what Rosa said was true. The German girls did not understand civil war. The German girls said they were prepared to sacrifice their lives for their Nation, that their brothers and fathers were prepared to fight and die. They spoke of progress and optimism and necessary bloodshed, but these were meaningless words. Magda smiled at the mandos, then turned toward the Nation's Dawn girls.

"Germany is a superior civilization. We can survive war without resorting to animal behavior."

I smiled at Magda because I knew her secret. The German girls asked polite questions about our curious Spanish customs and interesting Spanish lives and seemed to understand all of the mandos' teachings without studying them. But they all must be animals.

I could not turn myself into a bird, but right then, if I could fly from New Spain, from the German girls lusting for war, begging for bloodshed and bombing to test their resolve, I would have risen from the pews and flown into the rafters. I would have found a small open space in the ceiling and shuddered free from the castle.

On the drive to the orphanage, the mandos told the German girls, "These are children like our students, children whose parents were killed by the Republicans, by hoards of communists who have since been extinguished."

“Our task is to bring them peace,” the mandos said. And then we prayed in German and Spanish as the bus lurched over the road.

The orphanage was a concrete block emblazoned with the yoke and arrows of the Falange. Inside, it looked like our castle, white plaster walls and gleaming floors, the same portraits of exemplary mandos arranged in neat lines beneath a crucifix.

A team of mandos lived at the orphanage, serving as its nurses and cooks and teachers. These mandos looked like angels, with their white coats covering their uniforms. Teresa began to scratch my arm as if she could draw blood with her short nails. Maria del Mar giggled and Dolores made a soft mewling sound.

We went into a classroom where children played sweetly in matching smocks. When we entered, the children turned to us and saluted. One of the angel-mandos lifted a toddler onto her hip.

“You see, sisters, the nation feeds these children. The nation nurtures them. The nation is their mother and when they are grown they will serve her.”

Suddenly, Teresa spoke.

“Where are the children whose parents were taken by the Falange?”

Our mandos turned to her, all white faces and black hair and red lipstick. But the angel-mandos only smiled as if Teresa was one of their children.

“We welcome them all,” a white-coated mando said. “And when they leave, they are pure.”

Teresa’s hands clenched in bear-fists before she slowly lowered to the tile floor, walking on her knuckles. Her braid swung low and swept the ground. The mandos of the orphanage laughed nervously and looked to our mandos to control her. And then Teresa bolted at the mando who had spoken, and sunk her teeth into the blond woman’s white-stockinged calf. It took four mandos to pull her back. When she stood, a mando slapped her across the cheek. Teresa did not flinch.

When we returned to our coach, Teresa's seat was empty.

"Teresa has offered to stay and serve the children of the orphanage," the mandos explained.

That night, the Nation's Dawn girls whispered once Magda had gone to sleep. Teresa's bed was stripped of its sheets, the mattress still sagging from her weight.

"Who will be the bear now?" Rosa said.

Maria del Mar was crying into her pillow.

I wondered what would happen to Teresa at the orphanage, if she would become pure as the mandos claimed, or if she would grow fur and a snout, if she would unwind herself from the spool of New Spain, racing away from progress, to a Spain before victory, before war, before the burning churches and black cars and before even the Generalissimo was born. If she would escape from the orphanage and live in the mountains, her own wild, devolved self.

I thought of Enrique burning in the church. I wondered if my brother was thinking of New Spain, if he was already naming himself a martyr to the cause as his robes caught fire, as the jeers of communists rose with the flames. Or, as the pages of his Bible burned, as the candles melted and the preserved fingers of forgotten saints clenched with the heat and then turned to ash in their reliquaries, if he was calling my name, Asunción. If he was thinking of flight.

This wilderness was a betrayal of the Nation, of the mandos, of my brother and all of New Spain's martyrs. But under the sheets, I spread my fingers as far as they would go. I imagined myself as a dove-pigeon, flying over the castle, over burned and ruined New Spain. I would fly to my village, watch my mother kissing the portrait of the Generalissimo before bed, hear my father shout that she could not kiss him with those same lips. I would fly over the ashes of Enrique's seminary, over the capital where the Generalissimo was envisioning New Spain, and I would not stop until I reached the ocean.

I began to hum our anthem, the song of Teresa's first punishment. The other girls joined, and this time their voices were human. We sang in whispers, repeating our anthem until the words became empty of their meaning.



Alison Rossiter, Eastman Kodak Velox, expired May 1945,
processed in 2013, (C.), *unique gelatin silver print*, 5 in. x 7 in.

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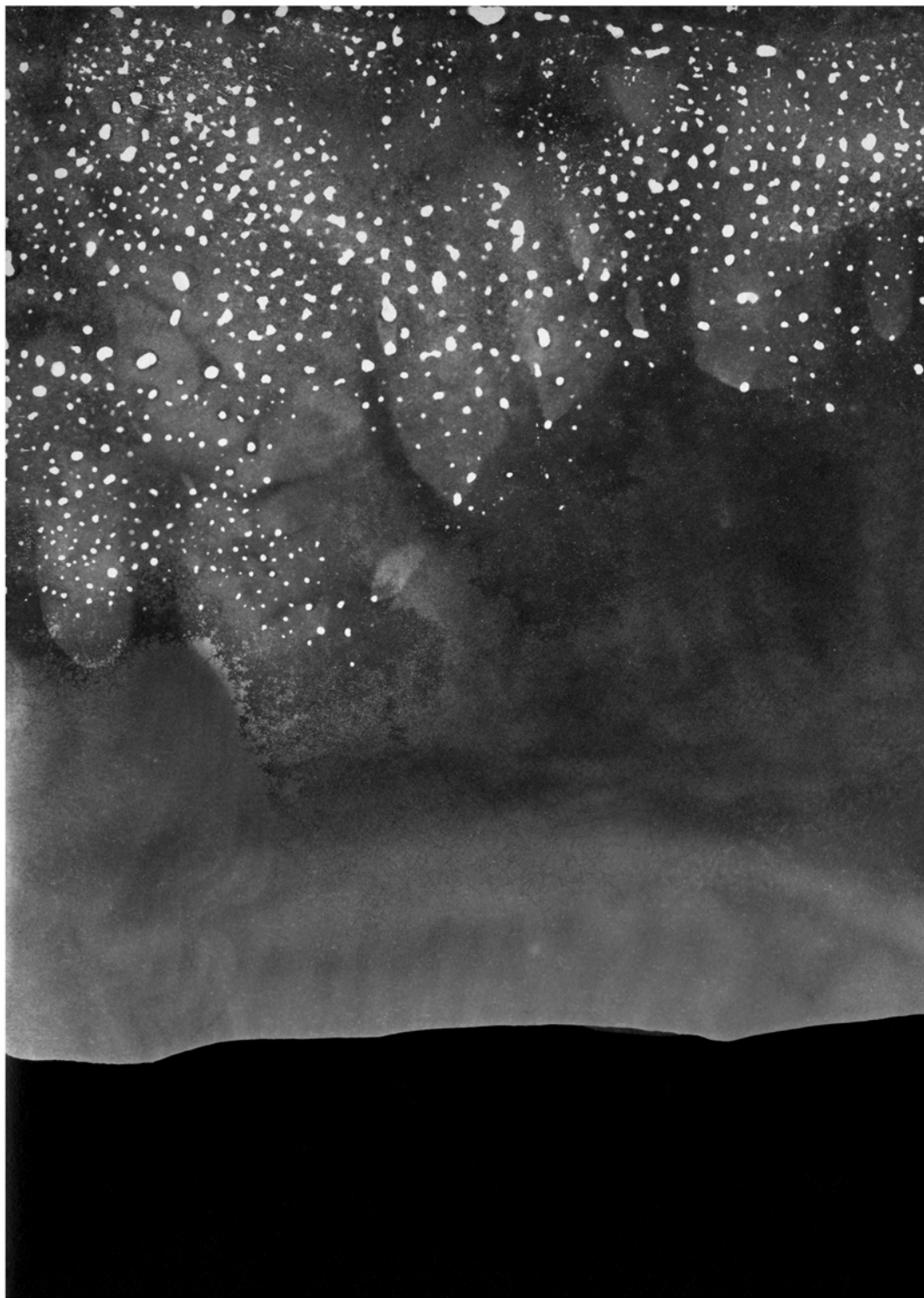
Alison Rossiter, Eastman Kodak Velox, expired May 1945,
processed in 2013, (B.), *unique gelatin silver print*, 5 in. x 7 in.



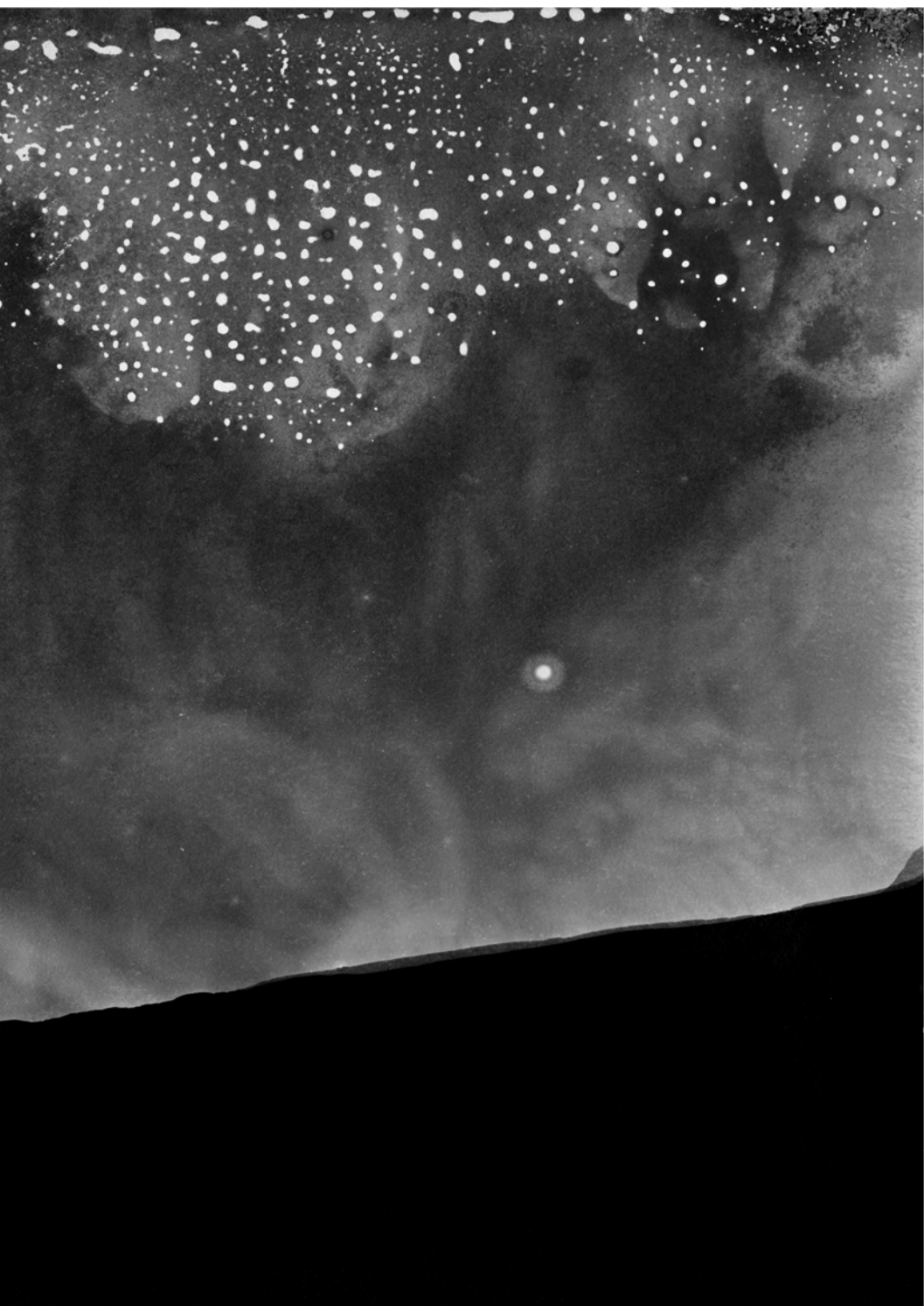
Alison Rossiter, from the series *Air*, Eastman Kodak Kodabromide G3,
expired August 1948, processed 2014, unique gelatin silver print, 10 in. x 8 in.



Alison Rossiter, *from the series Blurs*, Eastman Kodak Polycontrast G, expired July 1962, processed in 2014, unique gelatin silver print, 20 in. x 16 in.



Alison Rossiter, *from the series Landscapes, Defender Argo, expired September 1911, processed 2014, unique gelatin silver print, 5 in. x 7 in.*



MATT MORTON

The Expedition

It's not a tragedy. We knew this
but were always forgetting. It was comforting
to imagine an audience for our predicament,
which somehow made the problem seem
smaller, a peripheral smudge in a grand panorama
observed by a solemn sentry
perched on a cloud. It is tempting—
sitting on a red plush seat in a rattling train compartment,
watching the windowed countryside rush in
and out of view—to conceive of yourself
as an actress. A windup soldier. A prisoner
on the verge of peripeteia. But this, too,
was confusing: how we swore to ourselves
we wanted to be selfless. Wasn't it always our own interests
that interested us? The weeks we spent
writing noble epitaphs. The way the harpist's arpeggio
in the marbled concert hall drowned out
the bombs driven into lobbies overseas.
Perhaps we shouldn't be so hard on ourselves.
After all, each nascent day nudges the sun
toward another superficial conclusion.
We got older when we weren't looking.
We woke up in a foreign city, wringing our hands.

It is true that *acceptance* sometimes feels like
standing on a shoestring strung across a gorge,
but isn't the balancing act itself the game plan
we've been looking for, a strategy for ignoring the subtext
of afternoon? Sometimes, it helps
to have a reminder. Maybe you were drinking
espresso with a friend in a retro café,
discussing the implications of an ancient dialogue
when suddenly the solution crystallized, the brilliance
of the irony struck you again: this big project
of self-making we embarked on years ago,
without quite understanding what it was.
Countless dress rehearsals, hours
spent buttressing our mirrored egos,
frantically rechecking the inventoried rations, only to learn
the very thing called for was not a skyward climb,
but a stripping away.
Because, for our purposes, the view *is* there
to be taken in—neon arboretums, ghost town
theater marquees, dust devils, prairie squalls
and all the mountains hurtling up into pink
and blue clouds. It's okay to enjoy
the shifting kaleidoscope of scenery,
to sit still and be quiet
for a while, settling into our roles once more
on this, our journey west, toward the sea.

JILL MCDONOUGH

*Susan and the Mountains
of Aristarchus*

for Susan Mikula

Calotype: from the Greek for *beauty*, then
for *impression*, *type*. Googling *calotype*, I find
the letters of William Henry Fox Talbot, the guy
who made it up. In 1844 he aimed his camera at
a little broom leaning on a doorjamb. Online,
it's digital sepia, pixelated rust: "The Open Door."

Flash forward: Susan strikes an image, exposes
her square of film in Mexico. Dry twigs,
a stick, some twine combine to make a broom
to sweep a garden with. She soaks cold pressed
paper with ferric salts; wet paper, brush
the salts into its fibers, press negative
to paper in a box for printing-out;
A nice tight sandwich. Glass, a negative
with paper, rubylith, hinged wood that's lined
in felt.

When the image appears, it's a rusty, soft
color, color of age spots, the dirt where I
grew up. Not Mexico, not Massachusetts:
North Carolina, where Mexicans pick

mountains of red peppers, then ride on top
of them in back of open trucks.

*How charming it would be to cause
these natural images to imprint themselves
durably, remain fixed upon the paper.*
Fixed now in the ether, Fox has always
almost got it, his friend is always writing,
always asking Fox *As I am about printing off a sheet
upon the moon, can you offer an opinion upon
the mountains of Aristarchus?*

SHEROD SANTOS

I Went for a Walk in Winter

The snow didn't fall so much as blow past horizontally.

People heading east leaned into it, people heading west
leaned back, then one after another they disappeared,
as in the fadeout of a movie screen. As if the world

were reduced to the simplest natural law—that of erasure—
a hotel doorman struggled to clear a sidewalk path
that quickly filled in behind him. So, too,
the hollow left behind on a bus stop bench.

Headlights appeared to pass through foam, taillights
through wet gauze. Above the entry to a corridor,
a blue and yellow neon sign lit my side of the street.
I felt my body pass through it, and I felt the colors

pass through me, as though a mood had suddenly come
and gone leaving only a tremor behind.
After I returned to my apartment, I found it difficult
to focus on anything, and when I switched on

the television, it took me a moment to realize that
a movie in a foreign language was on,
though what language that was I couldn't tell.
The uniforms of soldiers locked in battle

were likewise unfamiliar to me, and the frozen
landscape provided no clue. Muskets were fired,
swords were drawn, orders were shouted and,
I assumed, carried out, for bodies continued

to drop in numbers carnage alone explained.
Somewhere off-screen, wagons were already
being readied to haul away the dead, and this, too,
I took in, less to witness than experience the world

as the world continued to vanish into the silence
of a moment ago, a slow amassing mounting
like the snow that, even as I drew the shades,
shuddered in gusts against the windowpane.

KATHERINE HENGEL FRANKOWSKI

Blasphemy

I AM ON A GREAT HILL in San Francisco, some 900 feet above sea level, in a third-story apartment. It's quiet up here. There's no traffic on the street below yet. No sun in the sky either. Above me is a thin roof, then black sky; the night is hanging on, as we all tend to do. The Pacific Ocean is so near and to my left. My childhood—somewhere off to the right. My husband sleeps soundly, safely connected to our bed down the hall, and I am at the kitchen sink prepping ten pounds of fresh peaches.

I bought these peaches yesterday. I drove down this hill, down along the edge of a deep gorge, until I reached that place on the south side of the city where the two freeways converge. That's where the fruit vendors set up their booths. A present-day temple. Noisy and crowded. Cash only. It's stone-fruit season, so the market was full of apricots, cherries, and plums. But I like the peaches best—from the skin to the pit. I elbowed my way toward them yesterday, fingering all the yellow and pink beauties available for sale. I chose many of the older, softer peaches. The riper the better. They need preservation the most, don't they? But I picked some young, firm peaches too. Out of boredom or haste, I am not sure.

Now, at the kitchen sink, I am quite pleased with each of the peaches I picked. I wash each one carefully, a slow stream of cold water running constantly as I work. Each peach is lovely in its own right and worth preserving, though not a one of them compares to a certain peach—the single, solitary peach given to me for my twenty-sixth birthday by a younger version of the man now sleeping down the hall. Oh, that peach. It was so soft and fuzzy! It was perfectly ripe, too, and without blemish. “Your favorite fruit,” he had said as I accepted his delicate gift. Then he touched the blond fuzz on my arm and said, “You have the skin of a peach, you know.” I ate that peach, fresh and perfect, right after he gave it to me. Funny: I didn’t even think about preserving it. That was nearly five years ago now.

But I can still see the two of us, at that German beer hall, with all of our friends from that time, laughing and clanging heavy steins together, toasting the coming year of my life, my twenty-sixth. It was a good day. Was it a perfect day?

I look east, out the window to my right. The sun is threatening to rise, but my mind is not. It wants to go down, to dig up bones. It often does. I run my hands under the cool water. No, that was not a perfect day. The perfect day took place more than twenty years ago in rural Minnesota, a couple hundred yards off a two-lane highway.

The highway runs straight west and east through flat but wooded country. My family lives in a home at the end of a long driveway on a plot of land where the trees have been cleared away. Our home is a good deal off the highway; we never hear the trucks flying by. But when a train passes along the railroad tracks that run parallel to the highway, we hear its whistle. Not too loud, just lonesome and lovely, powerful and perfect. You can measure time against each whistle.

On the perfect day, my brother and I are playing baseball in our backyard. We are protected by woods so thick we can’t see through

them. It is summer, early August, and a handful of neighbor boys have made their way through the thick woods to our baseball diamond. They are all about eleven years old, and I am nine. We aren't expecting them. They just show up. The boys are just enough older this summer; their mothers are just willing enough to let them go off on their own without having made any formal arrangements with my mother. It is summer's end—a time for transitions. Or maybe it's the light—the perfect daylight shining in our backyard that has drawn them.

Our baseball diamond is humble but accurately measured. A particular spruce tree marks first base (just get your foot as close to the base of the tree as you can, my brother says when I complain about the sharp blue needles of the spruce poking my arms and legs). The edge of the garden's boundary where the huge nail sticks out of the wood beam is second. The smaller of the two crab apple trees marks third. Home base and the pitcher's mound are obvious; grass never grows on them. My brother and I have been stomping on those two areas, day after day, taking turns at bat, one of us pitching to the other, all summer long.

But now here are the neighbor boys, over to our diamond! We are able to rotate, each taking a turn fielding, pitching, catching, and hitting. The variety is sheer joy, but so is the exhibition of the whole thing. I'm a lot better at baseball than I used to be. I am a year older. My limbs are stronger. I am growing. I have improved since they last saw me.

I have my brother to thank for this. All summer long he's thrown endless ground balls at me. Pop flies. He's watched me run bases, and he's thrown up his arms in disgust when my outside foot hits the base at the wrong point in my stride. We've fought a good amount, of course, and I've gone inside to tell on him many times. My mother ignores this, and I never stay inside long before swinging the kitchen door open and going back out so my brother can hold the end of the bat while I stand, pretending to prepare for a pitch, until he is certain that I understand that I must initiate my swing with my lower body.

“Your sister’s not bad,” one of the neighbor boys says after I hit a hard line drive in between second and third. It lands just before the garden and runs well past it on the perfect day. I am flourishing. I’ve never been so happy. I could play baseball with these boys for the rest of my life.

We play together for hours, right into the evening, right up until the sky is pink and yellow, like peach skin stretched over the tops of the tall trees that surround us and almost contain the perfect day.

I step away from our perfect diamond to steal a quick drink from the hose. As the cool water hits my lips, I hear my father’s truck pulling up the drive. I look at my brother, I look toward the house. Through the kitchen window I see my mother peeling potatoes—this is usually my job. It’s time for dinner, and there is nothing we can do about it. My brother and I say good-bye to the neighbor boys. We put our bats and our gloves in the garage, and head into the house.

I see my mother at the sink—all legs and young and lovely—looking us over to see how dirty we are. I see my father, sitting on the stool near the garage door, muscled and strong, undoing the crisscross of the laces that run up the high top portion of his work boots.

We eat fish for dinner—Northern Pike that my brother and I caught out of a nearby lake and that my mother fried in a cast-iron pan. We say a prayer before we eat. *Bless us, oh Lord, and these Thy gifts.* The fish is served alongside the potatoes that I hadn’t had to peel, and my brother says, “She hit one past the garden today,” and my mother smiles at him for being kind to me, and my father says, “Is that so?” and my brother says, “Yes, past the strawberry patch even,” and it is all, as I said, nothing short of perfect as forks hit plates and fingers pick small bones off the delicious white fish.

I don’t like peeling peaches. I shift my feet, try to relieve the pressure that builds in a spine curled over a sink. Shoes would help. Canning

involves so much standing, so much time on one's feet. I should put on my slippers. But they are in the bedroom, and fetching them might wake my husband. I decide to let him sleep. These peaches aren't his problem; they are mine.

The peach skins are sticking to everything. They are wet and blanket-ing my hands and forearms. I'll turn into a peach before I'm done peeling all this fruit. There are other means of removing peach skins, but I prefer the control of the peeler. I stand over the sink as I peel, and as I discover any imperfections in the fruit, I can just cut them out. How simple! The peach is bruised here? Hurt there? Just cut the problem away.

I turn on the water in the kitchen sink and rinse the hundreds of pieces of peach skin off my fingers and arms. Time to cut the skinless peaches to size. Little crescent moons—that's the shape I'm going for. I cut thousands, letting each little moon fall into a large saucepan. To these crescents I add an impossible amount of sugar and sour lemon juice. Such extremes. Onto the burner the saucepan goes.

I've piled all the pits on the counter next to me. Someone could plant them. Someone could take a run at raising them up. What will I do with all of them? Throw them out the window, that's what I'd like to do. Throw them out the window and let them roll down this hill. Let them roll like hell until they come to a stop in some concrete gutter where they will never grow up or flourish or have a chance to become strong, fruit-bearing trees. The trees surrounding the plot of land where I grew up used to be so thick when I was a kid. Now they are thin. Last time I was home, I could make out other houses in the distance through the trees. What's worse, home base and the pitcher's mound are green with grass, the only fish my mother fries come randomly as gifts from the neighbors, my father looks more of bone than muscle, and my brother has been dead some twenty years.

My hundreds of crescent peach pieces are fragrant now. They are simmering along with the sugar and lemon on the stovetop. I stir them

slowly. My brother wouldn't recognize the blue spruce now. It's grown so tall since he last saw it. I bet I could walk right up to the base of that tree without slouching even. Somehow, the blue spruce flourished.

I put my largest pot in the sink and turn on the water. I watch it fill, the water level rising slowly up the pot's steel sides. To the east I see the sun has taken over the sky; I can see San Francisco Bay. I am 900 feet above that water, up here on this hill. Funny to think that Minnesota is even higher—at a higher altitude—than where I am now.

My huge pot is now full. I transfer it quickly to the stovetop. A cup or so of the water sloshes over the top onto my straining arms. Good thing the water is not yet scalding hot. I turn the burner to high and put the cover on the huge pot. I stir my peaches. I look back toward the bay.

I know the water in the bay moves constantly, that it sloshes in and out to sea every day. But from up here, the bay seems as still as the clear little lakes we used to fish in back home. I draw a line in my mind to that lake—the lake where we caught those Northern Pike. The line starts where I am now on this earth, on this hill. The line stays right at 900 feet above sea level, and it blasts its way east. It blasts through the Rockies, the Dakotas. It blasts through the last twenty years. The line keeps going, staying right at 900 feet, until it reaches a certain lake in Minnesota, on a certain day, late in that one last summer. The line stops underwater, in the middle of the lake. About 300 feet above the line's stopping point is a little fishing boat. My brother and I are in it, our lines hanging down into the clear water. "Let's leave 'em in a little while longer," my brother says. "Okay," I say.

To have that again.

The lid on my huge pot is rattling now. The water has reached a boil.

I lower each of the empty jars into the boiling water carefully. They clink together as the hot water scalds them clean. I bought these jars yesterday. I bought them fair and drove them up this hill. Pop! went the unsealed lids as I drove. The higher up the hill I went, the less the

atmosphere weighed on them—each pop a hymn of release. What if I could drive even higher? Up out of this world, up into the atmosphere. I do not know if things rot in space, but I know what happens here. You can't preserve anything here, not in this dirty container of blue and green. Not even the blue spruce will make it out alive. It will be different for my peaches though. My peaches will go into clean jars. I'll see to that.

Out of the scalding hot water I pull each of the jars and lovingly pour my warm peaches into them. You'll stay just as you are, I tell them. I top each jar with a lid and screw on the bands. Not too tight though—there is still something unclean in these jars.

It's the space between the fruit and the lid that matters. I push the air out of that space and I stop time. I create a vacuum—a sacred space, a protective layer. I dip each jar down into the scalding hot water and watch the surface expectantly. Yes. It is happening now. Bubbles are rising. Air bubbles are leaving the insides of the jars.

Sure, the Pacific Ocean is impressive. But look what I can do with this pot of scalding hot water! One by one, I pull the jars of peaches out of the water and set them down carefully on a clean white cloth near the sink. They are safe now. They are preserved.

My mother says we cannot keep what belongs to God. My brother belonged to God, and God retrieved what was his. God will retrieve my mother and my father too, I know. All will go the way of the perfect day. But I can keep these ten pounds of peaches. Look at them, cooling there on that white cloth. They are mine now. Don't I have the skin of a peach?

The handle on the bedroom door turns. I hear my husband coming slowly down the hall, taking his first few steps of this brand new day. "You're up early," he says kindly. I could turn toward him, toward my future. I could accept the terms and bear good fruit on this hill. But I can't. Not yet, because I am not yet done throwing stones.

NANCY TAKACS

The Worrier
body

What is the body?

The hush of cars on melting snow.

A blue Infiniti.

An ancient Skylark.

The vibrating drum of a coal truck.

What is the body really?

The train that howls
going to Denver.

The Rio Grande rattling our bed
as we sleep.

Again, What is the body?

The chilled beech leaves are so orange.

I love a clean window with an imperfect oval of ice.

A gray feather barely frozen in.

A yellow cat lives in our field.
My husband told me he came
to our railroad-tie shed
when I was away,
now sleeps behind
the broken window.

Whom have you lost?

I lost my mother
on an April day.

Here the red-wings had just come
and their songs were
the sound of water.

I lost my father
who told me I was just like him.

I lost my brother
who called once from New Hope,
over the river from where he lived,
finally some words between us.

What was the first thing you saw this morning?

Light snow on the arms of my black coat.
I was rushing out to clear the steps
before the dogs ran out.

There was a pheasant call.

Two deer were under the crabapple
for anything
that had not been eaten.

The younger one had more snow
feathering her back.

VICTORIA CHANG

Barbie Chang's Father Calls

Barbie Chang's father calls again calls
her again again he

calls her still knows how to dial a cell
phone Barbie Chang's

father has another problem always
has a problem doesn't

know he is the problem he says Barbie
Chang's mother

criticizes him all is wrong today he
calls the TV a tree today

he said he pell off the tree they say bad
luck comes in threes

the doctor's bad news is not free the
doctor thinks three

months but says six once Barbie Chang's
mother had good hearing

could hear anything see everything
smell everything

was sharp too sharp too dark too harsh
always harping on

everyone what was wrong with everyone
too dumb too short

too tall not enough college collar too
white moon too

fraction moon too waxing when she is
not yelling at him or

asking about the taxes has Barbie Chang
finished her taxes again

asking about the taxes the same taxes or
whether she can fix his

brain she lies on her side thin body shaped
like a large ear

WALTER M. ROBINSON

White Cloth Ribbons

HER FACE IS GRAY in the darkening room. She rises up off the bed, clutching at the sheet, bending forward with the climbing pitch of a gasp, throwing herself back with each cough. Her half-empty eyes scan down the bed. Now her head is back, her torso arched, and now she's limp, head rolled over, jaw down, with long pauses between breaths, short and sharp hiccoughs of breath, noisy exhales. Sweat runs down her thin cheeks past cracked lips. She keeps on breathing.

When she went into intensive care, everyone believed she would come out again; after two weeks, everyone began to doubt. The whole team listened to her chest and worked on her body. We increased every dose of every antibiotic, every mucolytic, every steroid, everything we could think of that might work. The most experienced clinicians came to her bedside in the last few nights and days. Everything was tried. Nothing was working. This was it.

She must have known, when she was clear-headed, though I hadn't brought up dying to her. I wouldn't have known what to say. I was a first-year fellow in pulmonary medicine, and hers was going to be my first death.

*

Her family is here, two brothers, two sisters, and both parents. They are dressed in what they were wearing when they got the call to come: blue jeans, sweatpants, T-shirts or work clothes, a suit and tie. They've come from work or from school or from home; I don't ask. They've come because they got the call that now is the time. They want to be here, but they do not know what to do. They have expected that her life would end, but she has survived so many other times in her thirty-five years, an eternity for someone with cystic fibrosis. They are used to the idea of the end, but surprised that it has come. No one knows where to stand, what to say, whether or not to whisper at the bedside.

The room is dim and cold. The antiseptic blues and greens of the hospital room have shifted into gray or white. We have littered the floor under the bed with the plastic caps of syringes, and the white and clear packaging of tubes and IV connectors. Alcohol swabs cut the stale smell of a close room filled with people. There are no flowers. Coats and sweaters and scarves cover the ledge of the radiator, and the trash baskets brim with translucent yellow isolation gowns, wadded and twisted into lumps and shoved down hard in the basket to make more room. The drapes between the bed and the glass doors are closed. A yellow plastic bowl filled with wet tissues sits askew on the bedside table. An IV pole bolted to the head of the bed holds three tan boxes each blinking different drip rates in yellow calculator numbers. Another two boxes, black and gray, cover the bottom of the bed below her feet, slowly pushing thick syringes full of clear fluids into the tangled IV tubing tracking up the bed toward the crook of her right arm.

She is dressed in a pink cotton T-shirt, one of the many from her collection of clothes brought from home so that she won't have to wear the scratchy hospital gowns; as they get dirty with snot or blood, the nurses gently slide off the old one and pull a new one on over her head; the nurses have been washing them every shift so that she always has something comfortable to wear. The white side of a blue plastic pad lies

under her waist. She is in a diaper because she has not been able to get out of bed for days. The nurses make everyone leave the room when they change it, and when everyone returns the bed is always smooth and clean, her hands resting quietly on the white cotton comforter, but she has not needed it changed for a few hours because her kidneys have shut down, and now the sheets and blanket are twisted and tangled with her struggle to breathe. Things won't be tidy again until the end.

We are all around the bed, the parents and the brother and the sisters and the nurses and me. I am alive to all the sounds of her cough, grading it against all the coughs I have heard in my first year of cystic fibrosis. All of us here know about coughs. Everyone in this room is used to the gurgle of the clearing throat, the low chesty rumble, the tight throaty growl other people can hear across two grocery aisles, the cough that keeps you from enjoying the last half of the play, the looser cough that signals success after a nebulizer, the short, sharp throat-clear that gets you through the phone call. Her cough is the kind that makes a civilian look away and grimace, but no one here is a civilian anymore.

It is the sound of this cough we follow more than the sights or smells. The sound of her cough is not the satisfying familiar cough, not the one that just needs a few more hacks to get things out, not the one that finally clears with an extra push, not the one that waters the eyes but promises relief. This new cough, her cough since midnight, is cut short: a gurgling churning noise that catches in her throat and slides back down into her swollen lungs, followed by a lower chugging rasp that is just the sound of air and mucus.

This is the sound that drives the watchers mad.

An hour ago she woke up, she saw her family around the bed, all in the room. She saw her brothers and her sisters. She said, It's bad, it's bad. She said, I love you, I love you all. They said, We love you, too. They all kissed her. They all held her. They all looked right into her eyes and said it again, we love you, we all love you, precious darling, we love you. And

then she drifted back down, sliding past them downstream into the bed, her body slipping into the pillows and sheets. Now she stiffens with each breath, her jaw out, neck muscles tight, shoulders shrugged forward. Each breath finishes with a little gasp. The cough no longer grips her body. Her breath is a shallow splashing sound, not yet a choke. Her mouth is open, lips cracking, gray. Broken capillaries and not enough oxygen blue-black her face and yellow her eyes.

We leave the room, the parents and I. They say, Can't you help? I list the things we are doing, the medicines. I say we are already on ceftaz, tobra, and vanco. And we are already on colistin. And the levels of tobramycin and vancomycin in the blood are good. And we already added more pulmozyme. And we can't use imipenem; remember, she's allergic. We are doing everything but nothing we are doing is working. The CO₂ marches up. It is the highest I have ever seen, I tell them. I say, I do not think she is going to survive.

They ask me, Can she feel it? Does she know?

I say, I do not know what she is feeling, but I think she can hear you, I think she knows you are here and that you love her, but she is not really here, she is somewhere in-between. And I do not know how long that will last.

This is what I need to say: There's no point in giving more morphine. She is already on so much morphine to calm her cough that adding more is pointless, and the last few doses have made no difference anyway; everything that morphine can do has been done. I can use something different, a different drug that doesn't fight coughing or pain but would make her relax. But if she relaxes, if she stops fighting so hard, she might die sooner.

I do not want to say that I am afraid the medication to make her relax might kill her. I want to speak in a low voice that will sound calm, lay out all the facts, be the doctor, the one who knows. But I don't

know. Anybody who says they know what she is feeling or what her life is like right now is making it up. I know that I want her struggle to be over. I want her to be calm, but I do not want her to die because I give her more sedation. I want it to be over for her but I do not want her to die because of what I decide. I want to make her calm, floating along and away, not clawing and scratching for what is left of life. I want her body to stop its animal struggle to stay in the living world and go to wherever people go, somewhere without coughing and hospitals and IV lines and lung graphs, somewhere where she never has to meet me, some place where we are just strangers standing in line for a movie, somewhere where I am not in charge of her suffering.

This is true as well: I want it to be over for me. I want it to be over, one way or the other. Not in-between. I want it to be like on TV: the soft forgiving shudder of a life slipping out the door, the slow angelic fade to a commercial, the quiet bloodless exit of a soul to some better place so that afterwards the family and the doctor can live with themselves, knowing they did all the right things and her life was worth it. I want to cue the montage of her happier times in a sunny park as the camera slowly pans up the hill to the cemetery. I do not want to stand here and watch her fight and claw and gasp her way into the next scene. I do not want to be the doctor who heads for the elevator, like the others do, but I also don't want to be the one who stands by doing nothing. I want to be the doctor everyone remembers for being kind and courageous, not the one who wrung his hands at the bedside. I do not want to kill her, but I want her to go ahead and die, for it to be over, for me and for her and for her family. I do not want her to struggle and suffer. In a lifetime she has suffered enough. There is no point in any more, but who am I to say so?

Her parents are stronger and clearer than I am. Her parents have more practice at life than I do. They ask me, isn't there something, some medicine that will make her relax? Give her the medicine to make her

relax. We can't let her be like this. We know it is the end. We love her, with all our hearts. We have known this was coming.

They are holding hands. They are stronger than I am. They say, give her the medicine. We know what the medicine might do, we know what you can do, doctor.

And so I give the smallest dose I can give, the smallest one in the smallest syringe slowly flushed in through her IV. Over ten long minutes, her face relaxes. Her mouth still hangs open but the gurgling sound is softer. Her breathing is softer. Her face is still. Her hands relax. Her eyes do not change; they are half open, staring down the room. She does not rise off the bed. Everything seems softer in the room: the light, the smells, the sounds. We are all breathing slower and quieter. We are all watching.

The family hold her hands and kiss her forehead. They say good-bye over and over. They say, We love you, honey. They say, Go on, it's OK. It's all OK, honey. We are here. You can go. We love you.

She slows down and the room slows down with her. Her body sags. She stays settled into the bed's wrinkled spaces. For a while she still twitches with each breath, but as the minutes pass the twitch becomes a shrug and then a sigh and then even less. Her head falls to the side, mouth still open. Her eyelids are dull white, her hair dry, her hands cooler. The sun is coming up behind the curtain. The family is watching now, not listening. We have shut off the monitors.

She does not breathe for over a minute by my watch, and then little upward gasps, all neck muscles. And then no breath for two minutes, and then none for four. Her face is pearl gray, dull with no more hint of blue. Her hands are cold. I lean over and place my stethoscope on her thin chest, pressing hard on her cool skin and feeling the round head of the scope rock back and forth against her thin ribs; I listen, feeling heavy with the effort, closing my eyes so I can hear the smallest sound of the briefest heartbeat. Everyone in the room is quiet. I open my eyes and look at my watch and keep listening. Slowly, knowing everyone's eyes

follow me, I stand back, take the earpieces out with both hands, and flip the scope over my shoulders.

I think it's over, I say. One more look at her still eyes, my hand on her thin shoulder. Yes, it's over. She's gone. My voice is low and sure, my eyes are dry, and my chest is empty.

I back away from the bed, and the family flows in to take my place. There is no need for me here now. I have spoken my last lines. But my job is not over—there is paperwork to do, I am sure. And I need to tell the nurses upstairs, though they have been in and out of the room all night, their minds in that room with us all night while they tend to the needs of the living on the regular ward, and now the nurses must tell the in-patients, the ones who share the same disease, that she is gone, that this was the last admission. I don't know if any of them will be surprised, or if they will ask how it went, or who was the fellow in charge. I imagine that the patients will look at me differently when I see them later today, wondering what I did for her, what I will do for them, when the time comes, and I don't yet know what I might say. Everyone will look at me differently now, I think, though no one in the ICU notices me at all. People die there all the time.

The ward clerk hands me the paperwork from the file labeled "Death Kits" and I get to work. I send the paperwork down but then I have to speak to the administrator on duty because I have done the death certificate wrong: I have used black ink and it has to be blue or I have used blue and it has to be black, I can't remember, and I have listed the wrong cause of death, because cystic fibrosis cannot kill you on a death certificate, she says; only respiratory failure can kill you on a death certificate. I fill out the form again. I write the last note in her chart, describing what happened, and what I did.

I go back in the room once the family has gone. The drapes to the hallway are closed but the shades are open, and the room lights are on.

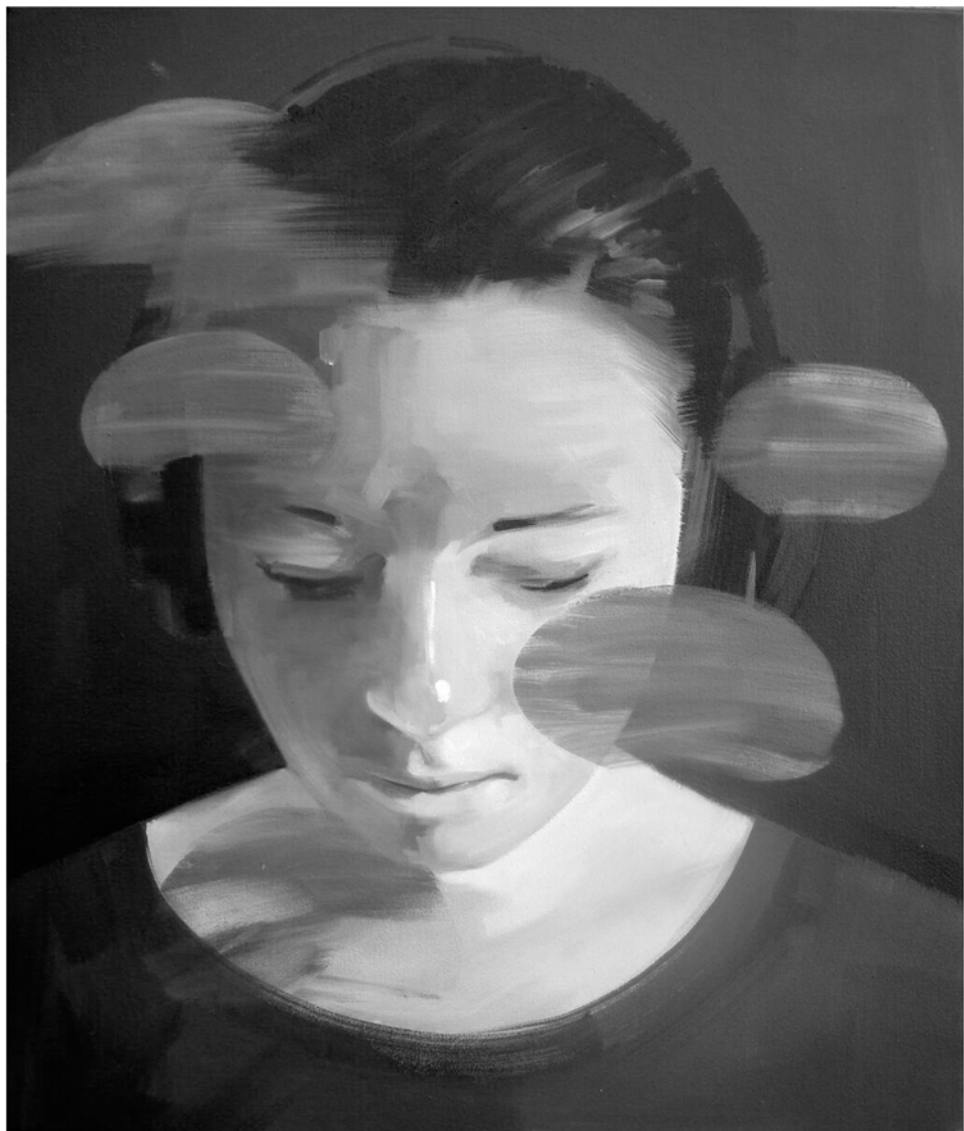
Quiet but not whispering, we move the chairs out of the room back into the hall. The sun is coming into the room through the dirty window, and the dull winter morning sun makes us squint, but no one closes the blinds.

The nurses have already taken off her T-shirt and the diaper and pushed the sheets and blankets down into a pile at the foot of the bed. Her naked body seems too small in the middle of the length and width of the bed, and she is sunken down into a divot in the white field of the bottom sheet. Her head is rolled over to the left. The end of the IV lines are still taped into her arms and chest, because, the nurse tells me, we are not supposed to remove them in case of an autopsy. I know there will be no autopsy. Her torso and legs are solid marble white, blank and dense and floppy, but her arms are marked with the yellow and blue bruises of previous IVs; I am surprised that the bruises look the same against the gray skin, that they do not need a pumping heart to keep their color. Her fingers are awkwardly curled under her hand and her left wrist is flexed in a way I think must hurt until I remember, but still I reach out to straighten them. The nurses have gotten warm water and washcloths and I help clean off her legs, feeling useless but wanting to be there to help if I can. The senior nurse teaches me how to open the death kit to get out the plastic draping, a slippery white wrap that fits around the body. Using the blue plastic pad, I roll her body sideways toward me while the nurse bunches the plastic wrap under the body. As I let her body roll back toward the nurse's side of the bed, I pull out the blue pad and grab the edge of the white plastic, pulling her whole body toward me at the same time. Then, with me at her feet and the nurse at her head, we pick her up and line up her body back on the middle of the bed, with equal flaps of the white plastic on either side of the body. She isn't heavy but she is hard to move, since her body now has none of the expected solidity of all the other bodies I have lifted and moved: it's like trying to push an uncoiled rope.

The nurses begin to wash her face with a white washrag and brush her hair with a blue plastic brush that comes in the death kit. We arrange her in just the right way, silently making little adjustments to her body and to the slippery draping. I tie the white cloth ribbons around her feet to hold them together and around her wrists to hold them across her chest. We fold the bottom edge of the plastic sheet up over her feet and the top edge down over her head so that the hem rests at her collarbones. We fold the right side of the white plastic over her, covering her whole body and head, and make tiny adjustments until the edge is straight and tucked just so under the left side of her torso. Then the left side, and we hold the edge of the slippery plastic tight against the weight of her body, rolling it to the left and we pull the sheet taut and tuck it under her. We fold and wrap and straighten some more, and tie the longer cloth ribbons tightly to the outside of her body to make a sealed package. We work until we have got it right, until her body is safe and secure in the wrapping.

We strip off all the sheets and the blankets and stuff them down into the red bin. We pull the filled bins out of the room into the hallway, and put all the monitors and IV machines on a rolling cart to be sent down for cleaning.

The nurse calls the morgue technician, and he comes up the back elevator with the key, bypassing all the floors so no one else can get on. He brings the stretcher with the green canvas top, the one with the frame inside to hold the cloth in a rectangle so you cannot see the shape of the body. We pick her up and move her over to the stretcher, holding the white plastic wrap tight. The technician puts on the frame and cover and wheels her away. A woman in a blue-striped housekeeping shirt comes in pushing a wide yellow broom under the bed to sweep away the debris, getting the room ready for the next patient, and I head downstairs for morning rounds.



Richard Butler, *whenisaidiloveyouilied*, 2012, oil on linen,
24 in. x 20 in. Courtesy Freight + Volume Gallery, New York.



Richard Butler, *thelastauguriesofjuanitadelacruz*, 2013, oil on linen, 20 in. x 30 in. Courtesy Freight + Volume Gallery, New York.



Richard Butler, *naturalhistory*, 2014, oil on linen, 40 in. x 32 in.
Courtesy Freight + Volume Gallery, New York.

JOSHUA MARIE WILKINSON

The Easement

I think it's the locked doors that have made me drunk
& that have made the satellites linger under my tongue
to test me?

To bring up backwards from the pool floor
to scaffolding, halyard, to oceanic tectonics
where the long-flying birds drift
together at the top of the earth & back to
what's most scorched, freezing, again lost.

JOSHUA MARIE WILKINSON

The Easement

I'm the friend of night, the assassin of day
& the rabbits want a piece of the garden
I'm in search of, listening to what voice
the grass's ghosts might saunter with or
solder with. A death at the treetops
brought up to knock the wind
out of us each once stunned one
at a time in succession—the way
a story loses its words in the bodies
of the listeners—so to remind us
of our proximity to the underworld above.

ELIZABETH T. GRAY JR.

Construction of Trench Systems: Explanation of Diagram #1

In the first line two companies:

one company in support line,

one company in reserve.

Double line of trenches

in the first or firing line;

double line

of trenches in support;

communication and cover trenches

behind the firing trenches

of first line,

support lines,

and in strong points.

Also, in places, dummy trenches.

Two distinct lines

of wire entanglement

in front of first line.

The whole supporting point divided

into two longitudinal

sections, each protected in flank

by wire;

each longitudinal section divided

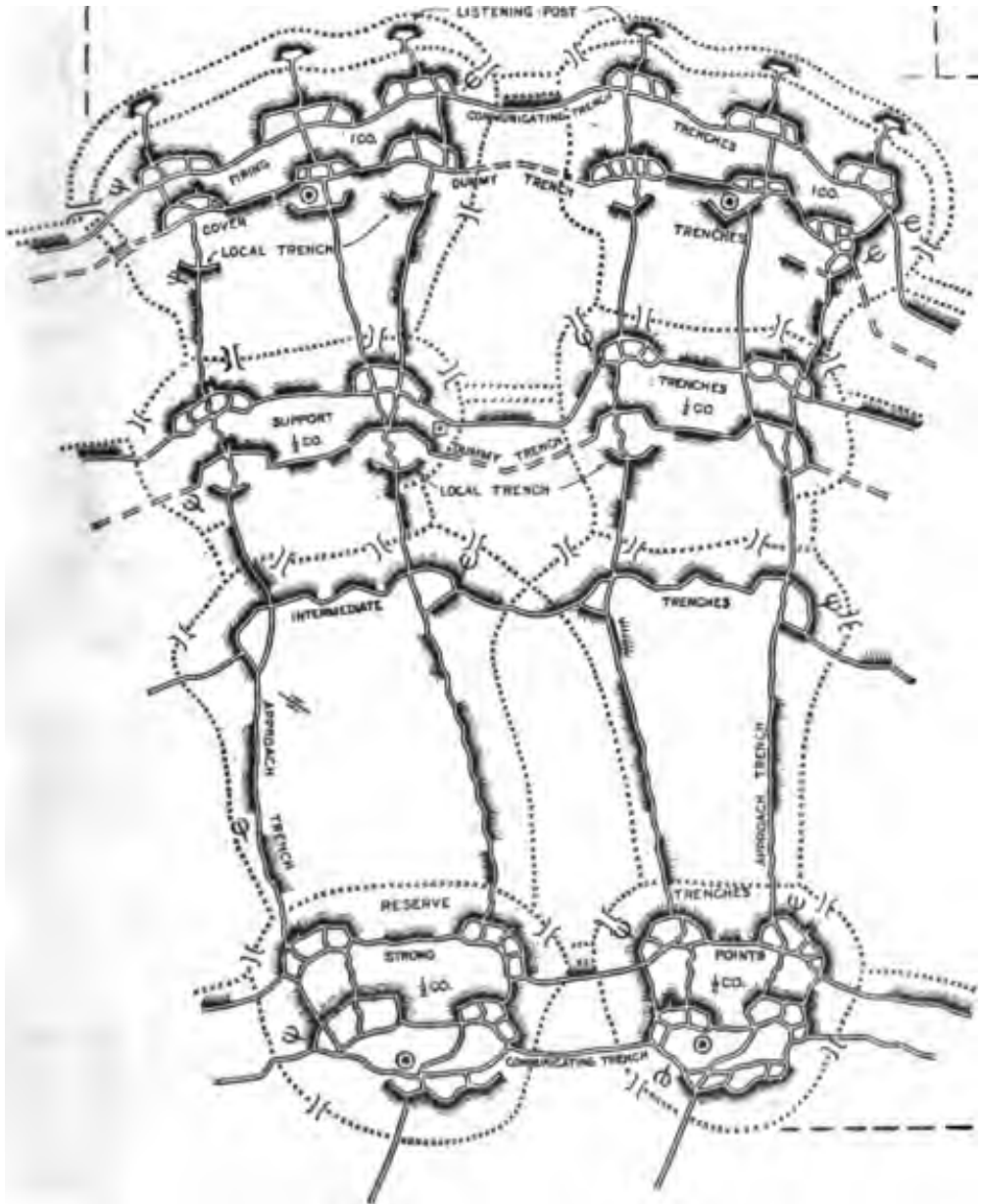
transversely

into three parts:
the fire trenches,
the support trenches,
the reserve trenches,
each in turn completely surrounded
by wire
and each protected
with firing trenches
faced to the rear
as well as to front
and flanks.
Passages through the wire
of the first line
made continuous through the two lines,
but always in the reentrants.
Listening posts
in front of each firing trench
of the first line,
placed between the two systems
of wire.
Machine guns of the first line
in reentrants,
those on the flanks
to sweep the intervals
between this center of resistance
and those adjacent.
Communication and approach trenches
provided with firing parapets
mostly facing outward toward the wire
of each section

of the supporting point. Now try
to find your
way back through
all this in
the dark.

.....

NOTE: From *Notes on the Construction and Equipment of Trenches* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917).



Construction of Trench Systems: Diagram #1

ARACELIS GIRMAY

from *The Black Maria*

After Neil deGrasse Tyson, black astrophysicist & director of the Hayden Planetarium, born in 1958, New York City. In his youth, deGrasse Tyson was confronted by police on more than one occasion when he was on his way to study stars.

I've known that I've wanted to do astrophysics since I was nine years old, a first visit to the Hayden Planetarium... So I got to see how the world around me reacted to my expression of these ambitions. & all I can say is, the fact that I wanted to be a scientist, an astrophysicist, was, hands down, the path of most resistance... Anytime I expressed this interest teachers would say, Don't you want to be an athlete? Or, Don't you wanna... I wanted to become something that was outside of the paradigms of expectation of the people in power. And I look behind me and say, Well, where are the others who might have been this? And they're not there. And I wonder, What is [the thing] along the tracks that I happened to survive and others did not? Simply because of the forces that prevented it. At every turn. At every turn.

—Neil deGrasse Tyson, *The Center for Inquiry*, 2007

Body of space. Body of dark.
Body of light.

The Skyview apartments
 circa 1973, a boy is
 kneeling on the rooftop, a boy who
 (it is important
 to mention here his skin
 is brown) prepares his telescope,
 the weights & rods,
 to better see the moon. His neighbor
 (it is important to mention here
 that she is white) calls the police
 because she suspects the brown boy
 of something, she does not know
 what at first, then turns,
 with her looking,
 his telescope into a gun,
 his duffel into a bag of objects
 thieved from the neighbors' houses
 (maybe even hers) & the police
 (it is important to mention
 that statistically they
 are also white) arrive to find
 the boy who has been turned, by now,
 into "the suspect," on the roof
 with a long, black lens, which is,
 in the neighbor's mind, a weapon &
 depending on who you are, reading this,
 you know that the boy is in grave danger,
 & you might have known
 somewhere quiet in your gut,
 you might have worried for him
 in the white space between lines 5 & 6,

or maybe even earlier, & you might be holding
 your breath for him right now
 because you know this story,
 it's a true story, though,
 miraculously, in this version
 of the story anyway,
 the boy on the roof of the Skyview lives
 to tell the police that he is studying
 the night & moon & lives
 long enough to offer them (the cops) a view
 through his telescope's long, black eye, which,
 if I am spelling it out anyway,
 is the instrument he borrowed
 & the beautiful "trouble" he went through
 lugging it up to the roof
 to better see the leopard body of
 space speckled with stars & the moon far off,
 much farther than (since I am spelling *The Thing*
 out) the distance between
 the white neighbor who cannot see the boy
 who is her neighbor, who,
 in fact, is much nearer
 to her than to the moon, the boy who
 wants to understand the large
 & gloriously un-human mysteries of
 the galaxy, the boy who, despite "America,"
 has not been killed by the murderous jury of
 his neighbor's imagination & wound. This poem
 wants only the moon in its hair & the boy on the roof.
 This boy on the roof of this poem
 with a moon in his heart. Inside my own body

as I write this poem my body
 is making a boy even as the radio
 calls out the Missouri coroner's news,
 the Ohio coroner's news.

2015. My boy will nod
 for his milk & close his mouth around
 the black eye of my nipple.

We will survive. How did it happen?
 The boy. The cops. My body in this poem.
 My milk pulling down into droplets of light
 as the baby drinks & drinks them down
 into the body that is his own, see it,
 splayed & sighing as a star in my arms.

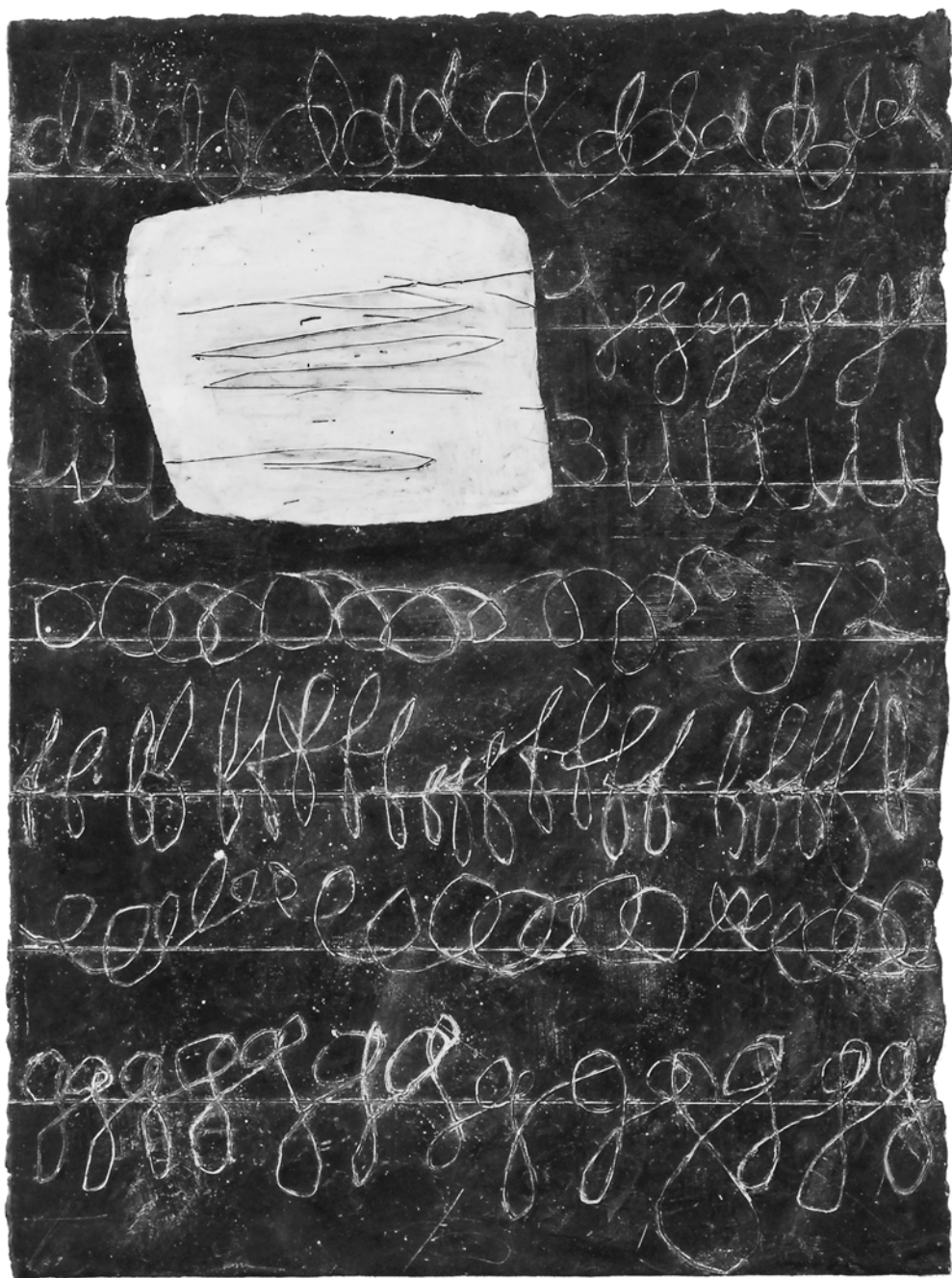
Maybe he will be the boy who studies stars.
 Maybe he will be (say it)
 the boy on the coroner's table
 splayed & spangled
 by an officer's lead as if he, too, weren't made
 of a trillion glorious cells & sentences. Trying to last.

Leadless, remember? The body's beginning,
 splended with breaths, turned,
 by time, into, at least, this song.
 This moment-made & the mackerel-"soul"
 caught flashing inside the brief moment of the body's net,
 then, whoosh, back into the sea of space.

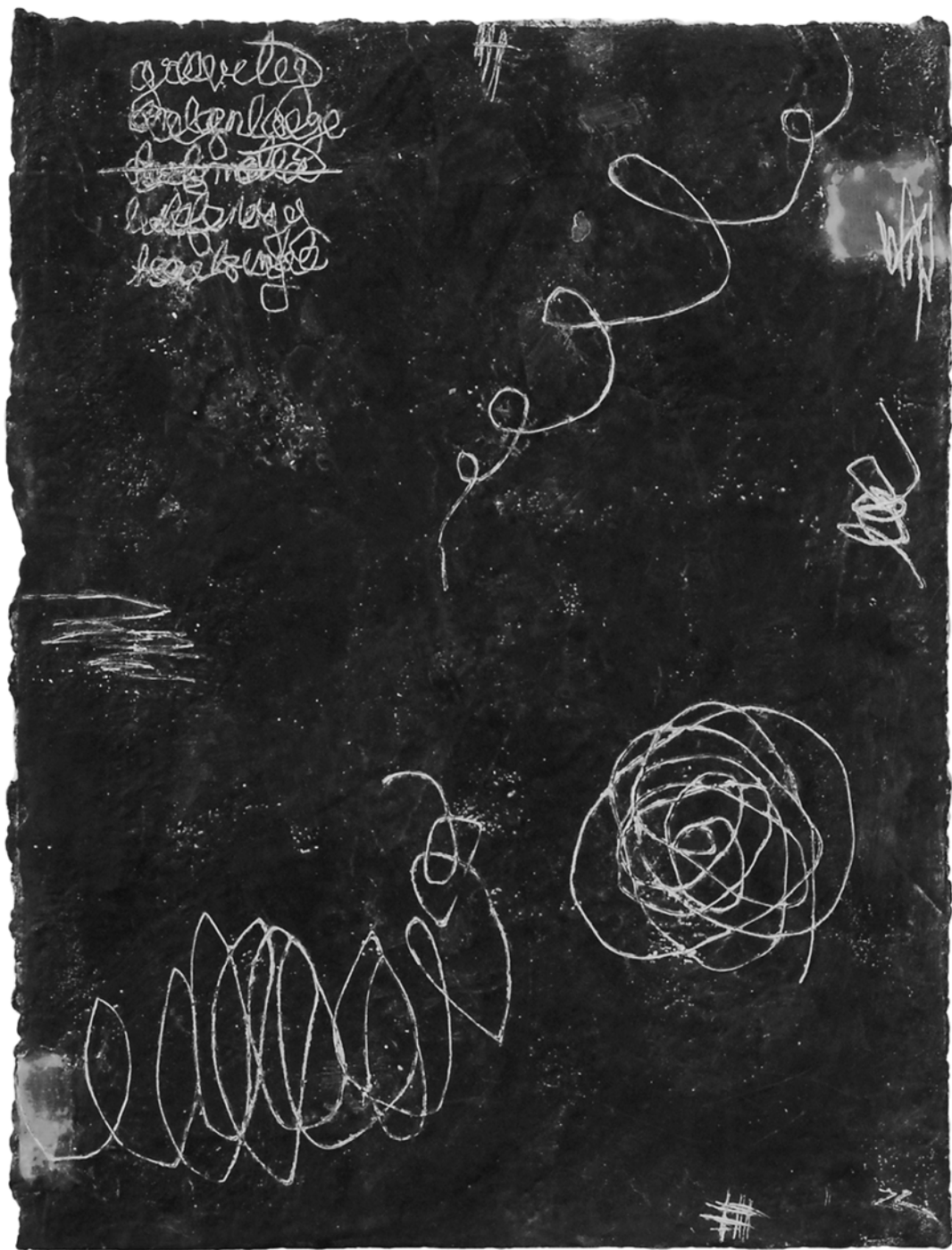
The poem dreams of bodies always leadless, bearing
 only things ordinary
 as water & light.



Elizabeth Harris, *Gravity 3*, 2015, encaustic,
marble dust and graphite on paper, 9 in. x 7 1/2 in.

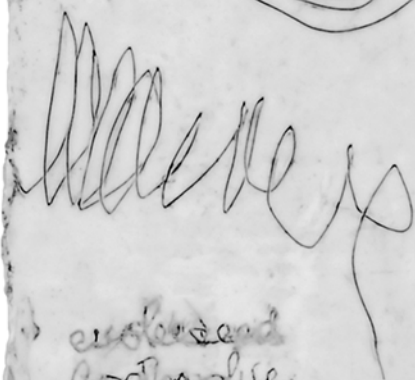
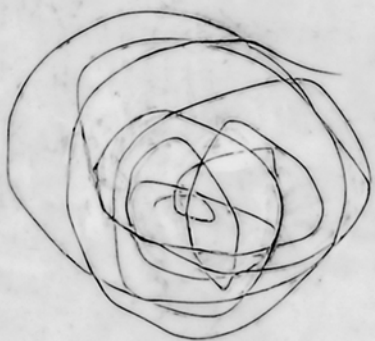


Elizabeth Harris, *Gravity 14*, 2015, encaustic,
marble dust and graphite on paper, 15 in. x 12 in.

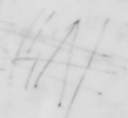


Elizabeth Harris, *Gravity 13*, 2015, (spread) encaustic,
marble dust and graphite on paper, 15 in. x 24 in.

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22

TONY HOAGLAND

Four Beginnings for an Apocalyptic Novel of Manners

1.

Gabriel knew the end of the world would hurt business and might very well mean his personal death, but he also wondered how the family company might take advantage of the circumstances.

His dad had taught him well. Invest in oxygen?
Inflatable rafts? Funeral parlors?

2.

“I’m sorry to say this,” said the computerized voice
“but we need you to kill yourself, now.” I was standing
in a public elevator by myself, so I was understandably startled.
Yet it was a woman’s voice, so warm and considerate, so motherly,
that I quickly understood that this was the voice of the earth,
and also comprehended that her request was entirely reasonable,
from every point of view except mine.

3.

You looked so great in your end-of-the-world housedress and boots,
With your lead zinc sunscreen and radiation vest;

I was in love with you all over again.
After the fire and wrath, in spite of the destruction
and the widespread sense of shame and betrayal,
you still turned me on. I was attracted, as if you were the bomb
shelter and I was the bomb.

4.

Because of the virus, shaking hands and kissing
was forbidden in public, a punishable offense.
We had to decide if we were for fraternity and love,
or loyal to our government.
Doesn't that sound familiar?

5.

In circumstances like this, I've learned to close my eyes and listen
for my deepest, innermost voice; it begins with a hum and rises,
the voice that says that the outer world,
even on a blue and sunny day, the unreal outer world
is already on its way, like a comet from outer space,

to completely destroy the inner.

LYNNE SHARON SCHWARTZ

Renee Returned

It happened with Renee, that uncanny likeness,
you see someone on the street from long ago,
you almost rush over—wait, impossible,
she'd have aged thirty years, the same as you.

Yet there she is miraculously striding
down Lexington Avenue, reborn, *renée*,
young, blond, translucent-seeming skin,
her dancer's lithe gait, and you can't help thinking

maybe she never turned on the gas after all,
and maybe her mother never telephoned
to tell you the news, sounding more angry than stricken,
and maybe you needn't have felt so guilty

because you hadn't a clue about how to help
thirty years ago, though you did take her in
when she called at midnight with no place to go,
but even in your ignorance of madness,

you knew enough not to leave the children
alone with her. You stayed up nights
in the dim kitchen, hearing her weird stories,
ravings—she'd always talked disjointedly—

uncertain what was true and what imagined,
while she lit matches one by one and tossed them,
burning, into the overflowing ashtray,
sometimes missing. When at last you slept

you dreamed of fire and feared for your husband and children,
so you sent her away despite your long friendship
and her luminescent smile and how
she danced like a levitating white-limbed nymph,

and never heard a word of her for years
until her mother's call. You'd like to approach
that beautiful stranger, her look-alike, and say ...
But you could never find the proper words.

T. Y. LEE

My Name Is Manuel Vargas

I MET LUCIA at the Big Apple Laundromat. I was there to do my monthly wash. She was looking for a room. Carlos saw her first. Serge whistled. Hector yanked my head out of the dryer. “That one,” he said, pointing.

She had dark hair and peach skin and perfect round nostrils. Browsed the flyers on the bulletin board, rubbing a pink panty to her chin. I noticed her calves, their shape, not thick like the white girls or spindly like the Latinas. And the smooth notches in her shoulders where the bra straps sit. And those tetas, just enough. Round and tender, the kind you want to test for firmness like a fruit, feel the weight of them settle in your fingers.

She said, “*Eres Ecuatoriano.*”

“*Sí,*” I said. “How did you know?”

She said, “I love Ecuador.”

She worked for a newspaper in Quito once, tutored school kids in Guayaquil. “Happy times,” she said. Smiled wide and her teeth were white and lined up straight so I knew she was an American. “Six more minutes.” She licked her lips and I went rock hard. She pointed to a

dryer. I liked her pretty Chinita eyes, all shiny with surprise, like the world was still new or maybe she just bumped into something.

I scrubbed my hands, washed my face. Patted my hair with baby oil. We walked down Main Street, past Pizza Palace and the barbershop and the Korean grocery, to the Dominican bar where they serve two-dollar beers and play *bachata*, and I saw she could move her hips.

I brought her to my house. We lived eleven of us in four rooms. Not all related, but we called ourselves Vargas. We said we were cousins. It made us feel safe. A week later, she moved in to the fifth room, the largest, with sloped ceilings, on the third floor at the top of the stairs. She paid one month's rent. We Scotch-taped her name to the mailbox. She put her rice cooker in the kitchen. The thing was shaped like an egg but opened up like a toilet, cooked twelve cups of rice at a time. She made tofu stir-fry with rice, fried rice with shrimp, sticky rice with pork. Shared with us, though Serge and Carlos didn't eat tofu and Susi didn't eat shrimp and Hector ate mostly beans. We made rice and beans with plantains, rice and beans with steak, *sopa de pollo* with cilantro and rice. We sat in the kitchen, eating. Watched the small TV on the counter next to the microwave. Carlos said, "No wonder we get along, Chinas and Latinos—inside we are the same, full of rice!"

First time we made love was up in her room, under her banana plants. She was good with her hands. Liked to give head. Then our bodies pressed together and it was like falling into warm, soft bread. After, we looked up, fronds above us like a lush green canopy. She said, "Imagine Esmeraldas." We would climb coconut trees, spear squid, lie in hammocks listening to waves. Never been to Esmeraldas, but I saw my youngest brother Fredy, born retarded, and Mami chasing chickens, and Papi knee-deep in mud from the wet season.

One day Lucia said, "Come with me to Ecuador."

"I don't have papers," I said. I'd never told an American before. But this girl was *Chinita Americana*, different somehow. I trusted her. Anyway, it was no big surprise.

"Do you miss your family?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "I love my family."

Two days later, the phone rang in the kitchen. I answered it. She said, "I am in Ecuador."

"Ha, ha, sure you are," I said. She was joking for sure. Figured she was visiting friends down in the city, but then she didn't come home that night.

Two days later the phone rang again. "I am in Esmeraldas," she said, and this time I believed her. "Manny, I am blindingly happy," she said. "I will stay in Ecuador forever."

One day a woman knocked on our door. She wore a dark blue suit. I was afraid. I thought she could be with police. She tapped her foot, stared at our mailbox, all the names ending in Vargas. She said, "I am Lucia's sister. Is Lucia here? Where is Lucia?"

She stood straight, hair scraped back so tight it stretched out her face. She looked too old and too serious to be Lucia's sister. But I knew she wasn't lying because she had Lucia's low, melodic voice.

I said, "Lucia is in Ecuador." I could tell she didn't believe it.

"Is she all right?" she asked.

"I think so."

"Has she been acting strange?"

"I don't think so."

"How long has she been away?" she asked.

"Maybe two weeks?"

Then she looked me up and down, squinting, like my body hid a clue. She dug around in her purse. Tore a sheet of paper from her notebook and wrote something down, pushed it into my hand.

"If she is acting strange, please call me," she said.

*

A week later two men knocked on our door. They said, “We are police.” They held up their badges. I was the only one home. “Mind if we look around?” said one. I knew it wasn’t a question so I didn’t answer. Didn’t say a word. They came inside, stamping dirt on the floor with their heavy black shoes. I stood like a stone, next to a mop, in the corner of the kitchen by the pantry where it smelled like mildew and rice. I tried to pretend I wasn’t there, that I didn’t care, as I listened to them move from room to room. They opened every door, every cabinet, every drawer in the house. Then they left. I didn’t understand—unless it was drugs, not Lucia or illegals, they were looking for.

After, I stayed standing, frozen in the corner by the mop, for almost two hours more. Only when Carlos came back, I forced my ass to sit down. Then my whole body shook.

My Vargas cousins worried. Worried about *migras*. Worried about INS. Worried about rent. They hung blankets over the windows so the house was like night even when the sun was out. Every day it was time to put Lucia’s things in boxes, put the boxes on the street. “Manny, she is not one of us,” they said. I said, “Please, let’s wait till the end of the month.” But I understood, they were afraid of being sent back to their countries, the ones *Americanos* liked to visit so much.

One day we found an envelope in the mailbox. It was full of cash. I counted two months’ rent, exact. “From Lucia’s sister,” said Mrs. Gutiérrez, who lived in the basement apartment of the house next door. Mrs. G. always wore the same terry cloth bathrobe and dark glasses and smelled like vitamins. She kept eyes on everyone in the neighborhood. We shared the same landlord—a Jewish guy named Barry who owned a bunch of houses on our street. He knew we weren’t cousins, but didn’t care, as long as we paid rent on time. Mrs. G. was the only one of us who dared complain to him, about the busted heat or clanging pipes or heaps of garbage piled up in the back alley, which never seemed to get taken away. Every morning she swept the sidewalk in

front of our houses, chased the cockroaches and mice with a broom. “*Qué vergüenza*,” she said. Disgrace. She coughed, tapped her chest with two fingers, complained of black mold in the walls, like a poison, making her sick. But she always waved to me when I left for work. She liked me because I worked construction for her son-in-law, Maurice, typical Americano with a buzz cut and thrash metal perpetually blasting from an old boom box in his truck. “I gonna get things fixed around here,” she said. “Don’t you worry, Manny.” For some reason that made me feel good.

One month later, Lucia returned. Chinita’s skin was brown. She had a small belly. Rubbed it all the time. “At first I thought it was the water, I wasn’t used to the water. But then I knew,” she said. “Of course, I knew.”

She’d vomited every day, she said. In the cafés of Quito, at the markets in Otavalo, on the bus to Atacames, in the sands of Sua, on the sides of the streets of Esmeraldas.

“What will she look like?” she said.

“How do you know it’s a girl?” I said.

“She told me,” she said, giggling.

I pushed my ear to her belly button. Didn’t hear anything, so I licked it. She slapped me, but we laughed.

I didn’t really believe it. There was no sign of this human supposedly growing inside her. No proof it belonged to me. And Lucia was different from the other girls I’d been with before, confident she could get whatever she wanted. I supposed this was part of being American. I wondered if I loved her, but it didn’t seem like the kind of thing that should take so much thinking. I always imagined I’d just feel it, and know.

“You are happy?” she said.

I nodded. “Are you?”

“Yes.”

I squeezed her hand. But I was nervous. Afraid. I worried I could not be a proper father without papers.

*

As far as I was concerned, pregnancy was a woman's business. I didn't need to know the details. Babies been born since the beginning of time, in caves and fields and taxi cabs, I figured they know what to do. "Stop joking, Manny," said Lucia. She punched my arm. Chinita was determined to prepare. She took special vitamins, drank herbal teas, joined chat rooms on the Internet, weighed herself every day. Every week she'd report something new she just learned. "The baby is the size of a grape today." "The baby has fingernails now." "Soon the baby will make pee." "Later, her body will be covered with fur."

She asked if I would come with her to see the doctor. I said I didn't like hospitals. "It's a doctor's *office*, Manny," she said. "No police, no guards." But I was afraid the doctor would ask me questions. Personal questions. "Trust me," she said, "it will be okay." I held her hand in the waiting room. She was right. It was not what I'd expected. The room was painted a bright, cheerful yellow with vertical white stripes, and two monkeys, a zebra and a giraffe. I liked the animals, the way the room felt like a cage. "It's not a cage," said Lucia. "What do you mean?" I said. She pointed out that the stripes rose only partway up the wall. "It's a crib, you silly," she said.

A nurse named Darlene brought us to another room. Made Lucia lie down, squirted gel on her belly, pointed to a screen. "I can't see anything," I whispered. "Wait," said Lucia. The screen flickered like the static on TV, then some grayish blobs rolled back and forth. And then suddenly it was a baby. With a head, nose, toes. It floated and squirmed, bounced and kicked. Then it lay still for a minute, like it was resting in a hammock. I felt joy. It was real.

Darlene showed us its fingers, its spine, its fast-beating heart. “Do you want to know the sex?” she asked.

I looked at Lucia.

“Yes,” we said.

“It’s a girl!”

“You see?” said Lucia, grinning.

A girl. My chest swelled. Suddenly it seemed very real, very serious. With or without papers, I was bound to this chica by this being inside her. I tried to stand up straight.

“Will we need papers?” I said. The words slipped out.

“Are you being romantic?” she teased.

“For the baby,” I said.

“For the baby we need a piece of paper?” she said. But I knew she understood what I meant. She knew I was always grinding my teeth at night, chewed on the inside of my cheek when I got nervous.

By her eighth month of pregnancy, Lucia walked like a duck, feet pointed out. One hand on her back like an old lady. She took special care to sleep on her left side, one pillow between her legs, three tucked around her like a nest. I was allowed only a sliver of mattress so I rolled to the floor every night. She walked to the butcher to buy special meats, rode the train into Chinatown to buy special herbs, boiled everything in a special clay pot with a curved wooden handle and spout.

My Vargas cousins complained about the smell.

“Ay chica, let me guess...today’s specialty is dead dog,” said Susi, holding her nose.

“Wet, dead dog,” said Hector.

“Chinese people eat cats,” said Carlos. “I saw it on TV.”

“That’s disgusting,” said Hector.

“Is it true?” said Susi.

“Oh yes,” said Lucia. “Dog penis is a great delicacy.”

"You mean, you've tried it?" Susi shrieked, stuck out her tongue.

"No," said Lucia. "But I would. This . . .," she said, "is pig's feet." She pulled a bloody hoof from its brown paper wrapping, waved it in the air. "It takes six weeks to prepare this soup." She put the pig's feet in her clay pot, along with a tub of black vinegar and a huge pile of ginger. She would boil this sludge once every morning and let it sit on the stove all day.

"In China, all mothers make this for their daughters," she said. "To drink after the baby's birth."

"But you are American," I said.

"*Cabrón*," said Susi. "Smart ass. Don't listen to him."

Susi was eighteen, the youngest in the house, a kid. She took an English class at the community center. Most nights she washed dishes at the Peruvian restaurant by the train station. Some days she cleaned houses with her sister. Lucia had started helping her with her English assignments. The two of them would sit at the kitchen table after dinner, Lucia kneeling on her chair, head bent over Susi's notebook, laughing and snorting like donkeys.

One night Susi came back from work, panting, hardly able to breathe. She said a man had followed her all the way up the hill from the station to Main Street, tried to grab her by her hair. "I bit his hand," she said, staring at her own like it was a foreign object. "Good," said Lucia. I said maybe she shouldn't wear those shoes with the ridiculous skinny heels. Lucia told me to go away. She made Susi sit, hang her head between her legs. "Breathe," she said, patting Susi's back. She made her rinse her mouth out with warm beer.

The next night Susi said to me, "Does Lucia have family?"

"Why do you ask?" I said.

"It's a secret," she said.

"No secrets," I said.

She frowned. "Does she have any friends? You know, girlfriends?"

"Is this a game?" I said.

Susi pouted. She was pretty, even though her eyes were slightly too small and too far apart, her nose slightly too wide and too flat. But her body was tight, with those curvy hips, a perfect heart-shaped ass. And when she walked in those heels, it was like her body was trying to catch up to her head. Like a giraffe, said Lucia. Still, I could see why guys were hot for her.

"Can you keep a secret?" she said.

Susi had decided to throw a baby shower for Lucia. She made a cake with pink frosting, spread confetti on the table, strung up crepe paper streamers and hung balloons from the ceiling fan. Invited Celia and Ruth, our Vargas cousins who were hardly ever around, and Betty, her sister, and Mrs. Gutiérrez, who put on a red and white striped house-dress for the occasion.

Lucia was surprised. She blinked her eyes. Rubbed her belly with both hands. She pulled ribbons off presents. The clothes were so small. Onesies and bibs. Yellow pajamas with duck feet. A set of plastic bottles. From Mrs. Gutiérrez, a bouncy chair that played music. "Mozart!" said Lucia. From Susi, a teddy bear and a pink hooded fleece jacket with ears. "*Gracias hermanita!*" said Lucia. They hugged, cheek to cheek.

*

Our baby was born with a round face and dark curls and two eyes like lying down tear drops. Wrinkled, red and angry, she arched her back and shook her fists, screeched like this world was bloody torture. "Is she all right?" said Lucia, alarmed. The nurse bundled the baby in a blanket, put her in Lucia's arms, and immediately the body went limp. Her head rolled to one side, eyelids fluttered. She yawned, like a cat. Lucia and I laughed. I inspected her ears, her hands, her fingers, her toes, each tiny

part perfectly formed. We named our daughter Esperanza Rose Bok. *Esperanza*. Hope. Bok, Lucia's name. I was afraid to have her name connected to mine. We called her Essy for short.

We spent two days together in the hospital room. Protected like a cocoon. "We are a family now," I said. "A beautiful family." The nurses brought us everything—blankets and water and juices and ice, and meals we ordered from a menu, like at a restaurant. They changed Esperanza's diapers, checked her weight and pulse, handed us a warm bottle when she cried. When Lucia slept, I held the baby, watched soccer on a television suspended from the ceiling. Never thought a hospital could be like this. I wanted to stay forever.

When Essy was one week old, we took her to see a doctor at the family practice on Main Street, between the barbershop and the Ecuadorean buffet. In the waiting room Lucia filled out forms with the baby's name, and our names, and her birthday, and our birthdays, and landlords and employers and important contact information. She could see all the papers made me nervous.

Dr. Wang made me nervous too, the way she cooed and spoke with exaggerated gestures. She weighed our baby on the scale, measured her length, listened to her heart and lungs, checked her hips, counted ten fingers and ten toes.

"She's perfect. Congratulations," she said.

When we returned home that day, Lucia swept and mopped the entire house, top to bottom, while carrying our baby in a sling. My Vargas cousins were happy that the house smelled like lemons instead of wet dog. The next morning I found her on her knees in the kitchen, swatting under the refrigerator with the mop handle. "I found this," she said. "See?" She placed two small husks in my palm. They were brown, brittle, waxy, semitransparent. Weighed almost nothing. "Roach skins," she said. "What the hell," I shouted. I tossed them to the floor. "They shed," she said. "They spread disease." She wet a sponge in the sink, bent down,

carefully started to wipe the floor. "I'm going out," I said. It was Sunday. She didn't look up.

When I returned, she was in the bathroom, scrubbing the tub with a toothbrush. "Bleach," she said. "We need more bleach."

"Looks clean to me," I said.

She didn't answer. Continued to scrub like she was on a mission.

"Come on. Let's go for a walk," I said. "It's nice out."

I dressed Essy in her pink fleece hoody with ears, snapped her in her stroller. We walked past the Laundromat, the barbershop, the Korean grocery, turned the corner by the Dominican bar. Walked down the hill, past the train station, through the empty parking lots usually filled with commuters' cars, on to the path alongside the rocky pier. It was windy, warm, one of those freak days in January when the air is comfortable but the banks of the Hudson are still frozen. I put my arm around Lucia. I felt good. Instead of my usual slouch, I stood a little taller. We walked toward the playing fields where I saw my friends Mike and José and Santiago. Everyone was out today. "Hey Manny," they called. "How come we never see you anymore?" They ran over, thumping the icy ground with their cleats. I used to play soccer every Sunday after church, some Saturdays, some evenings too. Suddenly I felt self-conscious. I sucked in my gut. In spite of the work I did with Maurice, I knew I was getting fat.

"I've been busy," I pointed to Essy. She was sleeping.

"*Felicitaciones!*" they said. "That's great, man. Hey, you gotta come back out soon."

"Sure," I said.

"You hear about Jimmy Prieto?" said Mike. Jimmy Prieto was a friend of ours. A Mexican and popular because he always volunteered to play goalkeeper.

"Busted," said José.

"What do you mean?" I said.

"Taken away. *Deportado*. Back to the beach."

I felt a pit in my stomach. Mrs. Gutiérrez was always telling us these stories. Down by the Texas border, they dumped Mexicanos in the desert without food or water. They took away the little scraps of paper scrawled with their relatives' phone numbers. Left them with nothing.

"What happened?" I said.

"Broken taillight," said Mike.

"*Éstúpido*," said José, waving his hands.

"Pay stubs. Double stupid," said Santiago. "They wanted five grand just to post bond." I wasn't sure what that meant.

"He's got a kid, a boy," said José.

My throat hurt. "How do you know?"

They shrugged. "Everybody knows," said Mike.

Icy pricks streaked up my spine.

Lucia and I continued on the winding path until we reached a playground. We sat on a metal bench. Our *bebida* napped in her stroller. The sun warmed my face. The waves of the Hudson bounced and sparkled, quietly lapped the shore. I watched the bigger babies in bucket swings and the even bigger babies climbing steps, and then the ones who were not babies anymore, they were boys and girls jumping off slides. Our baby couldn't sit up, couldn't bring her hand to her mouth, couldn't steady the weight of her own head. She couldn't even focus her eyes. But she peed, she drooled, she sucked, she breathed. She was alive, and she was mine. I felt like I belonged.

One night, Lucia dropped the kettle and burned herself. Next morning the skin on her fingers turned black. She cried for more than an hour.

"It's OK. *Tranquila*," I said.

"Do you see this?" She held out her hand.

"Put ice on it."

"It's dead skin. Dead. It will never grow back." She cried again. Wrapped her hand in a wet face cloth, wrapped the wet cloth in Saran wrap.

That afternoon Hector suggested a barbecue. It was Sunday, NFL playoffs, and all our Vargas cousins were home. We threw steak tips and onions and peppers on the charcoal grill. It was freezing out on the back porch, but I warmed my hands on the fire. It felt kind of American.

I took a plate of food up to Lucia. She shook her head.

"You're not hungry?"

She poked at the meat with a fork. "It's all burnt," she said.

I went back to the kitchen. Everyone was already huddled around the TV. A referee threw a yellow flag. "What's encroachment?" said Serge. "When they don't throw the ball fast enough," said Carlos. "That's delay of game," said Hector. None of us really knew. A few minutes later Lucia walked in. Her eyes were red. She didn't look at us. She switched off the television.

"What are you doing?" I said.

"Electromagnetic waves are bad for the baby," she said. The baby was sleeping upstairs.

I could feel my Vargas cousins staring in disbelief, waiting to see my reaction. My hands shook as I switched the game back on.

"Don't do that," she said.

"You're tired," I said. I herded her out of the kitchen. Had to drag her up the stairs.

That night she cried herself to sleep. When I woke in the middle of the night, she was still crying. She wore socks over her hands like mittens.

"Are you cold? Why are you crying?" But she wouldn't answer. She looked pale. I thought she might be sick. I offered to change diapers. To get up at night and make milk from powder.

"There are bugs crawling on my body when I sleep," she said. She lay on her back, staring up at her banana plants. "I can't stand the crying."

"No one is crying," I said. Essy was swaddled, asleep in her bassinet.

"They are coming to take my baby away," she said.

"No one is coming," I said. But I didn't like the sound of her words.

One day I came home and our baby had tiny cuts on her face. I rubbed Vaseline on her cheeks, clipped her tiny fingernails. Lucia sat on her knees in the middle of the mattress.

"Why aren't you happy? Why are you crying?" I asked.

"They're talking," she said. "Manny, I miss Ecuador."

"Please, Lucia," I said. "Come have some breakfast. Hector is making pancakes."

"I'm not hungry," she said.

Later, I brought her a plate of pancakes. "Lucia," I said, "Essy would like to see you." I set the plate on the floor, held out the baby, whose face was puffy from crying.

"Not now," said Lucia. She shook her head. Sat cross-legged on top of her hands.

"She needs a diaper," I said.

"You do it," she said. "Television is not good for her."

That weekend, she stayed in our room at the top of the stairs, watching informercials, the volume all the way loud. She came out only to go downstairs to the kitchen, filled a small bowl with pigs' feet soup, brought the bowl back up to the room.

I didn't know what to do.

Susi said this happened to women sometimes.

"*Postpartum depression*," she said. She was proud to use these words.

"How would you know?" I asked.

"She has a hole inside her. *Gigante*. Where the baby used to be. You

think a body can take this, like it's nothing? How can a woman be fine like this?"

I'd never given it a thought. Like being pregnant, it was what women did.

"I don't know how to fix such a hole," I said.

"First, you need to be *kind*," she said. I was being scolded by a child.

Her sister, Betty, lived in Pleasantville, had two daughters of her own. Susi asked her to come. Together, they scoured and scrubbed every corner of the bathroom, filled the tub with smelly water, bathed Lucia in herbs. "Calendula, plantain leaf, sea salt," Betty explained. Patted her with a towel warmed with a hair dryer, tied a wide, stiff band of cloth around her waist. "This is custom for new mothers, to wear the *faja*." They combed her long black hair.

Lucia looked fresh. We sat in the kitchen drinking tea.

"Do you feel better now?" I said.

She nodded.

Betty patted her hand. "What is that smell?" she said. She wrinkled her nose, looked at me like I was the offensive one.

"What?" I said.

"Oh, that," said Susi. "You mean the wet dog?"

"Why are you looking at me?" I said.

"It's the soup," said Susi. "Right, Lucia?" She smiled. Showed a crooked front tooth and dimples I'd never noticed before. Susi, she could be a sweet girl sometimes. She wanted to make things right.

"Esperanza talks to me," said Lucia.

"Yeah? She only screams at me," I said. I was trying to make her laugh.

"A mother knows her baby's cries," said Betty. "From the womb."

Like on cue, we heard Essy crying. I stood to go upstairs.

"Oh, Manny," said Lucia, grabbing my arm. "She's tricky. She says she's just fooling around."

"Tricky?" I said.

Her eyes made me uncomfortable.

"Yes," said Lucia. "She communicates telepathically."

We heard Essy resume her screaming. Betty brought her down. "Her pajama is completely wet," she said.

I felt sick. Ashamed. My throat was dry. The room started to spin. I took my daughter from Betty, grabbed tight on the railing as I brought her upstairs. I wiped her. Changed her. Wedged her floppy limbs into a clean pajama, fumbled with the too-many small snaps. When I returned to the kitchen, Susi and Betty were busy peeling potatoes to make soup. I sat, holding my daughter in my lap. Glanced sideways at Lucia, who was still sipping her tea quietly. Chinita scared me now. I couldn't understand what was happening inside her head.

"Don't do that," she said. "Don't try to control me."

I felt in control of nothing. I didn't know what to say. Finally I said, "Babies are not tricky."

One day I came home and our baby was lying on the floor, naked and covered in shit. Lucia sat at the kitchen table, dressed in her bathrobe, socks on her hands. She sipped her pig's feet soup.

"Jesus Christ," I whispered. I ran to my daughter, took her up in my arms, sprayed her down in the kitchen sink. I cleaned her with wet napkins. Her face, her hands, her feet, her body. I wrapped her in a yellow dish towel.

Lucia sat, motionless. "What?" she said.

I felt dizzy. Hot rage shot up my throat. I walked over to the stove.

"What are you doing?" she said.

I didn't know. My throat tightened. Then I picked up Lucia's precious clay pot by its curved handle. I smashed it on the floor. The baby wailed. I felt clammy, hot and cold. Lucia stayed sitting, watching me with her hollow eyes. I knelt by her chair, grabbed her shoulders, leaned in so she could feel my breath on her face.

"*Basta*. Enough of this shit." My voice cracked. "What in hell kind of mother are you?"

I moved back into my old room, the small one I used to share with Carlos. Carlos moved in with Celia on the second floor. I brought down Essy's bassinet, stuck it the only place it would fit, between the head of the mattress and the wall. I boiled water to make milk from powder. I woke every three hours to feed her and burp her and rock her back to sleep. In the morning, the skin on the inside of my cheek was swollen. My jaw hurt when I spoke. I prayed to God. I asked Him to explain to me what was happening to Lucia.

And then I remembered: the piece of paper. The one Lucia's sister had placed in my hand. I dug through my wallet. Pulled it out. I studied it a long time, until I'd memorized the numbers. I thought of migras, their heavy black shoes. I couldn't bring myself to call.

Susi asked her sister to help. Betty agreed to look after the baby during the days.

"Betty is responsible," I said. "She is very good with babies."

"No one takes my baby," said Lucia. She planted herself on the kitchen floor, next to Essy, who gurgled in her Mozart chair.

"You don't take care of her," I said.

"No one."

"Please be reasonable." My throat felt hoarse.

"I am her mother." Lucia folded her arms.

"*Óyeme mujer*," I said, loudly. "You can't even take care of yourself."

"I gave birth to her. Did you give birth to her? Did you carry her and grow her for nine months?"

"You sit all day with the TV on. TV isn't good for her."

"I am her mother," she repeated. "No one will take my baby."

I punched the wall.

"Manny!" cried Susi.

My knuckles hurt. I bit my cheek. I reached down for Essy. Lucia slapped my arm away. She scowled, lips tight, body stiff like an angry animal. "I will call the police," she said.

I hated her.

Susi knelt. She held Lucia's hand. "Until you feel better," she said. "Only until you feel better. Until you get some rest, Mama. Right now it is too much, you need to rest. You will feel better soon."

Lucia's face softened. Finally, she agreed.

*

Every morning Essy was dropped off at Betty's house, picked up in the late afternoon. Lucia kept her clean until I got home from work. It was all I asked.

One Sunday, she disappeared late morning and didn't come back until nine o'clock at night.

"Where have you been?" I asked.

"Gardening," she said. She often wore her padded green gardening gloves, even at home. "Where have you been?"

"Working," I said.

"Oh yes," she said. "Gardening is a lot of work. I'm tired now."

It was snowing out.

Every evening, I gave Essy her bottle. I rocked her, sang to her, lay her in her bassinet. When she was asleep, I went to the bathroom to take my shower. One night, Susi was there, wearing two towels. One around her waist, the other on her head. Her breasts were full, her nipples wet and stiff. "Oh," was all she said. She blushed. But she didn't move. I couldn't resist. I unraveled the towels. She was soft and smooth and smelled like cocoa and rose perfume. I brought her to my room, closed the door. I combed her wet hair with my fingers.

She put her mouth around my penis, dug her fingernails into my thighs. I struggled to keep quiet. I rocked my hips, thrusting harder and harder, waiting for her to stop me—but she didn't, not even when she gagged. And then I no longer worried about Lucia, lying with her banana plants just two floors above, or Esperanza, sleeping miraculously through my cries. After, Susi massaged my back, my shoulders. She kissed my lips and blew life into my lungs. "Someone needs to take care of you, *mi amor*," she said. I immediately straddled her from behind.

Next day I couldn't look at her. When she spoke to me shyly I grunted, or pretended not to hear. But I lay awake late, listened for her footsteps, heels clicking on the kitchen floor. She got in after midnight. Smelled like sweat and soap, deep-fry oil and rose perfume. "Come," I said. I knew it was wrong, but I undressed her quickly. I locked my bedroom door.

One morning, a week later, Lucia came down from her room. Her hair was combed. She wore pink lipstick, silver earrings, a red sweater, and white lace gloves.

"Smells good in here!" she said. She smiled, her eyes dark and shiny. Hector was making pancakes.

"I'm taking Essy to the doctor," she said.

"Why?" I said.

"Three-month checkup," she said. "Don't you remember?"

She scooped Esperanza from her bouncy chair, carried her upstairs. The chair continued to chime, "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." Suddenly I wanted to kick it. Mozart was frying my nerves. When she came back into the kitchen, Essy was dressed in a yellow sweater, black and white striped leggings, a yellow bow tied in her hair. "My bumblebee!" Lucia threw a burp cloth over her eyes. "Where's my bumblebee?" she cooed. Essy pulled it off. And then she smiled. My baby's first real smile. She looked so much like her mother.

"Do you want to come?" said Lucia.

"I have to work," I said. But I smiled at her as encouragingly as I could, remembered the first time we went to the family practice. Now I was just glad to see Lucia dressed. Maybe she was feeling better at last. I reached over to squeeze her shoulders. She slipped away, hummed.

I stepped outside to wait for Maurice to pick me up. Pressed on my eyelids with my fingers. While I waited, I prayed to God. I prayed for Lucia. I prayed for forgiveness. I swore I would never touch Susi again.

That day we had a bathroom demo up in Scarsdale. I was pounding away at a tub with a sledgehammer, feeling pretty damn good, when Maurice came to find me.

"It's for you," he said. He held out his cell phone.

"What?" I couldn't imagine who would find me on Maurice's number. I took the phone from his hand.

"Mr. Vargas?" It was a woman's voice. American.

"This is Mr. Vargas." I felt strange addressing myself by that name.

"This is Dr. Wang, from Family Pediatrics."

"My baby," I said. My heart beat faster. "Esperanza."

"Esperanza is fine. Perfect. But it's your wife, Lucia."

"She is not my wife." I could hear the doctor cough.

"Lucia needs help," she said.

"Our family helps us. Our cousins." I thought of Susi. Her dimpled moon face. The curve of her hips. Her heart-shaped ass.

"Mr. Vargas, I don't think you understand," said the doctor. "Lucia is not well. She needs medical attention. Serious attention. The baby is not to be left alone with her."

I was silent. The phone like a brick, my tongue like stone. "But where?" I finally said.

"The emergency room," she said. "If Lucia does not get proper help I will have to call CPS."

“CPS?” I did not understand.

“Child Protective Services. I’m sorry. It’s the law.” She hung up.

I still didn’t understand. Couldn’t think straight. I wanted to ask what just happened, where Essy was now, what Lucia had said or done. I knew Child Protective Services could take children away. I didn’t know if they involved police.

Maurice was outside, checking the debris chute set up at the back of the house. “You look like shit,” he said. My entire body felt rubbery and damp. I sat down on the pavement. “Come on,” he said. “Let’s get you home.”

He drove fast. I asked him to slow down. When I stepped out of his truck, I knew right away that something was wrong at the house. Even from the street, I could see lights on inside. This was never the case, since the windows were kept covered with blankets. I walked up the gravel path to the front entrance. Tapped the door, which we always kept locked. It wasn’t. The door swung open. “Hello?” I said. I peeked my head in.

Las cucarachas.

Cockroaches. They lay everywhere. Scattered by the refrigerator, ringing the sink, clogging the drain, dead on their bellies or flipped onto their backs, spiny legs squirming uselessly in the air. Must’ve been hundreds, all sizes, shiny and fat like beetles, narrow and spindly with long antennae still moving, just barely, so the linoleum floor seemed to writhe. I tiptoed and hopped to avoid their dark, oval bodies; they crunched like crackers under my boots. They’d come out of cupboards, closets, floorboards, walls, come out from hiding to die. From the hallway I peered into the first-floor bathroom. A handful floated in the toilet. Six lay lifeless under the sink. “Jesus,” I said. Essy. I ran to my room. The bassinet was empty, except for the green pacifier we’d brought home from the hospital, lying in one corner. I ran three flights of stairs to Lucia’s room. Two of the bugs lay at angles on top

of the polka-dotted comforter neatly covering her mattress, as motionless as if they had never lived. I ran downstairs, outside, puked.

Mrs. Gutiérrez had appeared on her front stoop. She sat, broad and bulky from all the layers she wore under her terry cloth robe. When she saw me she smiled and waved excitedly. I walked to her. Saw she held a baby in her arms. My baby. Esperanza, bundled in a yellow blanket, asleep. “You see, I told you I would take care of things,” she said. “I called the health department and that asshole Barry finally got the place fumigated. Finally!”

“Where is Lucia?” I said.

“*No sé*?” She shrugged. “She brought Esperanza to me and she left. You want to wait for her? I can make you a cup of tea.”

“No, thank you,” I said.

I grabbed Esperanza. I would not have my baby staying in that disgusting house. I walked three miles to Betty. Walked three miles back. By then Hector and Susi had come home. Together we swept and mopped and sprayed and wiped. We opened every door, every closet, every drawer in the house. We hunted dead roaches until every last bug had been disposed.

Then I remembered about CPS.

I went upstairs to wait for Lucia. She had covered her television with a batik cloth. I lay on her mattress, looked up at her banana plants. When I woke it was three a.m. I went downstairs. Climbed into bed with Susi. Lucia didn’t come back that night. Or the next night. Or the next.

I worried. I took out the folded-up piece of notebook paper. It was dirty, creased. I didn’t know what to do. Still, I was reluctant to call.

“But what if something terrible has happened?” said Susi.

“She’s an American,” I said.

“She could be hurt,” said Susi.

“Maybe she is in Ecuador,” I said, and for a moment I was filled with hope. It was possible. It could be true.

“Or murdered,” said Susi. Her eyes widened.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” I said. “You watch too much TV.” She could be such a child. But I was afraid. Anything was possible.

“You must call. If you don’t call, I will call,” said Susi. She grabbed the piece of paper out of my hands, pulled out her brand new flip phone. And then she was no longer a child. She was serious.

She went downstairs. I sat down on the mattress. It sagged. I thought about how it had been in this room before I moved in, and before me, Carlos, and before Carlos, Juno, and before Juno, Tina, and Roby, and before them, who knew who else. Who knew how long it had been sitting here, with its tired springs and stains, its sad life of its own. Just as I lay down, I heard Susi’s footsteps, marching up the stairs.

“It’s Lucia’s sister,” she said, handing me the phone. “Lucia is in the hospital.”

The words came at me in a stream that hardly made sense. *Postpartum* and *schizo* and history—history of this, history of that. “*She’s sick.*” And then, “*None of us want to involve Child Protective Services.*”

CPS. I understood that.

“Should I go to see her?” I asked.

There was a long silence.

“Please take care of Esperanza,” said Lucia’s sister. “I’m sorry. I know this is a difficult situation. I promise I will call when there is more news.”

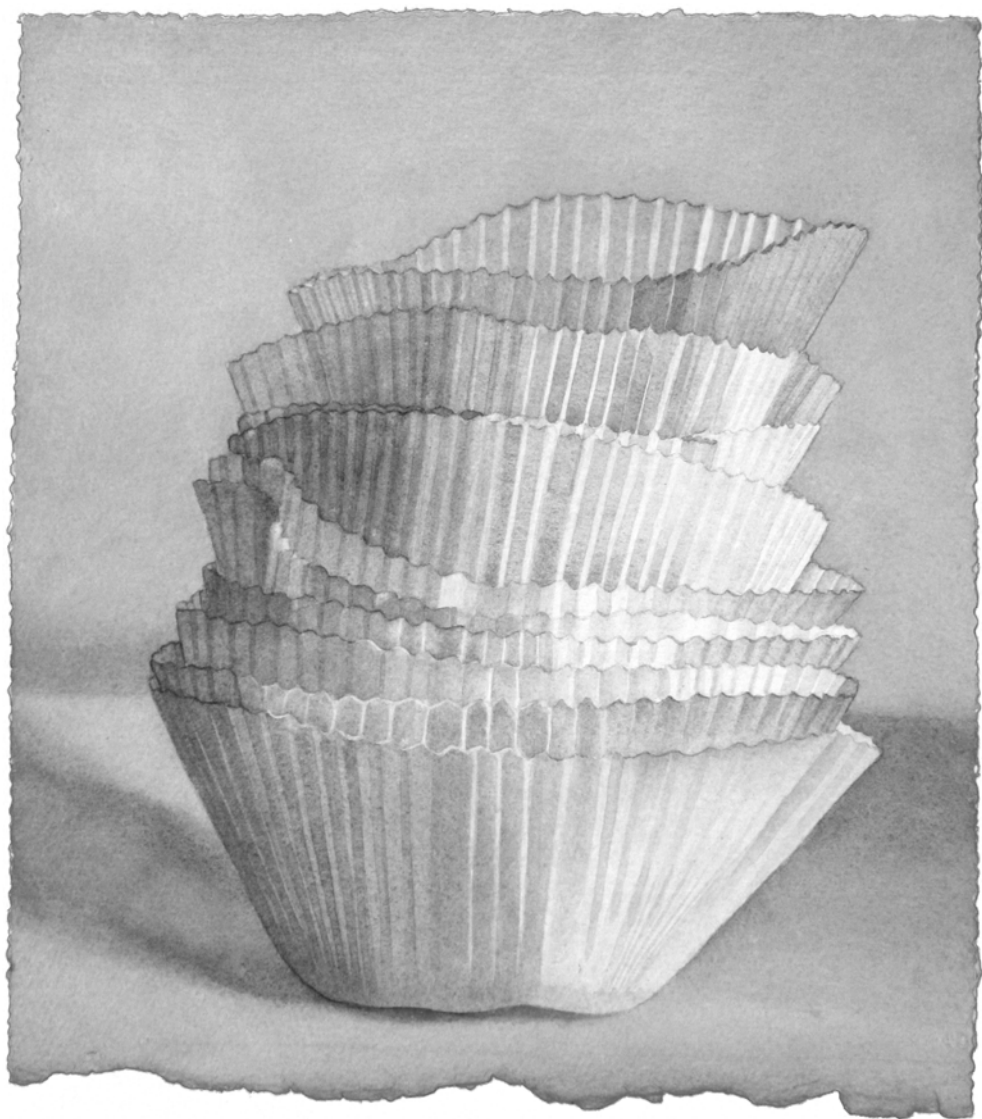
The words swirled in my head. All night. All day. Lucia’s past, this history, these behaviors that had complicated names. Night came again, but I couldn’t sleep. I wrapped Essy in a fleece blanket, strapped her to my body in a sling, stepped outside. The wind howled but I felt strangely calm, welcomed the snow on my face. Most of Main Street was closed, dark behind metal gates. Only the Laundromat churned with its bright yellow glare. I stood by the glass door, propped open to let in air, even in the dead of night. I stared for a while, hypnotized by the sounds of

thumps and bumps and scrapes, the sizzling hum of fluorescent lights. As I turned to leave, I slipped on a clear patch of ice. I could see cigarette butts frozen inside the ice. The sight made my stomach lurch. I walked past the barbershop, the Korean grocery, the Dominican bar playing *bachata*. Thought to go in, but I liked how the cold air was clearing my head. I felt light, almost empty. Then I felt sad, then guilty, then dizzy with strange relief: I realized I was no longer worrying about Lucia. She had others to take care of her now.

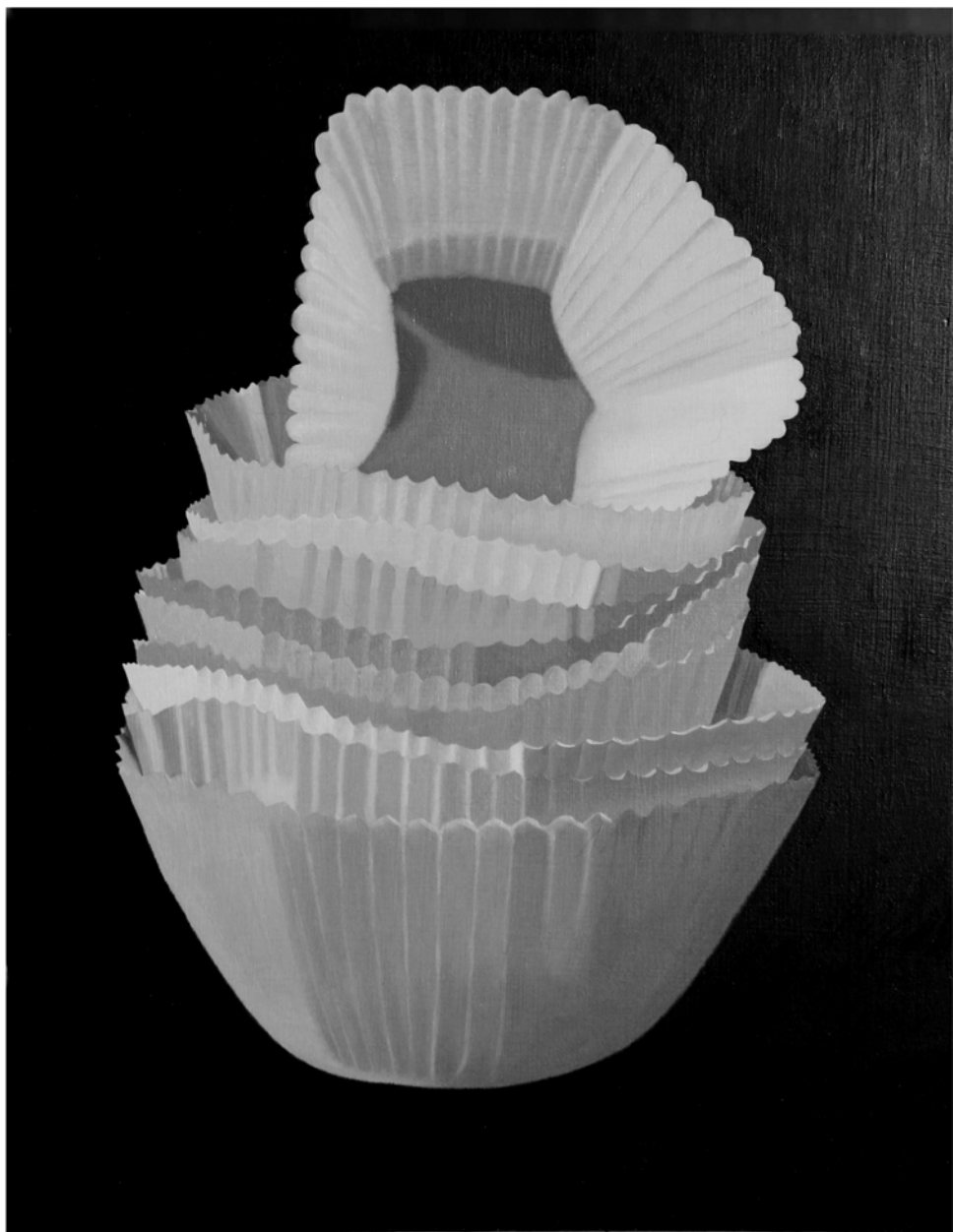
“*Hijita*, I will take care of you,” I whispered to Essy. Felt the heat of her cheek on my chest. Her long, dark lashes caught the snow. I zipped up my jacket, shielded her from the wind. I wanted to believe it, that I could be a good father. That together we could go on.



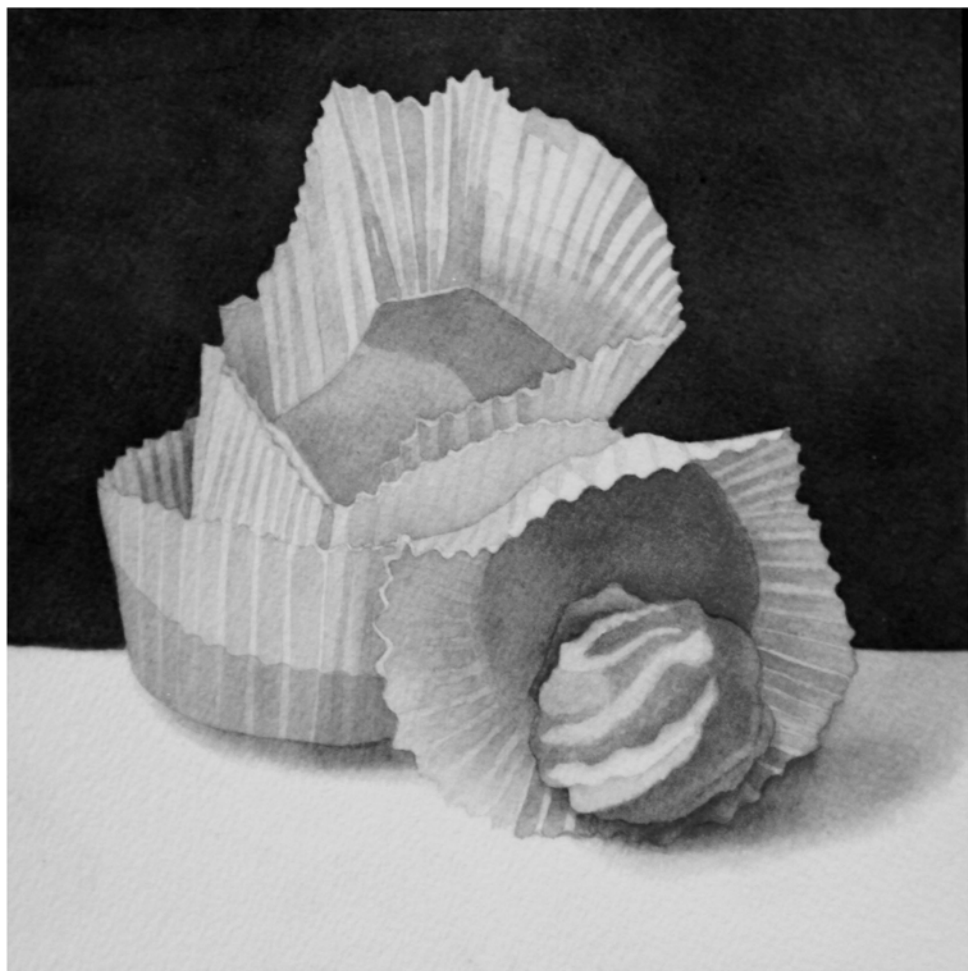
Amy Schuyler Clarkson, *Shelter*, 2010, watercolor
on paper, 19 1/2 in. x 17 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist.



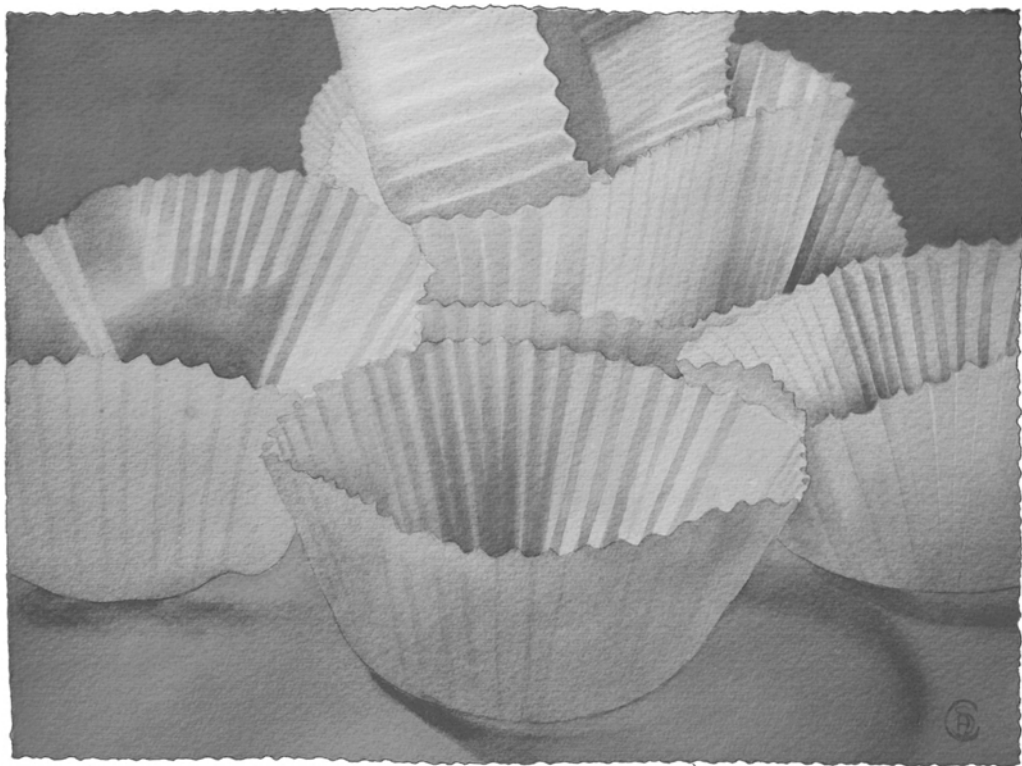
Amy Schuyler Clarkson, *Transparency*, 2010, watercolor
on paper, 10 1/4 in. x 11 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist.



Amy Schuyler Clarkson, *Perched*, 2010, oil on panel, 12 in. x 16 in. Courtesy the artist.



Amy Schuyler Clarkson, *Stacked*, 2009, watercolor
on paper, 6 1/4 in. x 6 1/4 in. Courtesy the artist.



Amy Schuyler Clarkson, *Crowd*, 2012, watercolor
on paper, 8 1/2 in. x 11 1/4 in. Courtesy the artist.



Amy Schuyler Clarkson, *Tumble*, 2010, watercolor
on paper, 11 1/2 in. x 7 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist.

COLE SWENSEN

More pearl:

In the gilt mirror at the back of a shop, everything suddenly
changes; it's two or three in the morning, and in the streets

at this hour Mayfair teeters between pearl and silver. The iridescent
air underscoring the emptiness which is emptied by silence, which

is in turn emptied by an alabaster bowl echoes each step
in a separate world someone opens a set of french windows

and, watching from the balcony, triangulates walker, watcher, and
street, extending each in time and thus unseen a cat slips

along the top of a wall that the night draws and then erases.

COLE SWENSEN

More pearl again:

Passing in a fit of grace as the tall mast of a tall ship its own
masterpiece of balcony or as she says, “the colors have run.”

She’s still out to find her pencil, but other incursions, the consistent
insistence, for instance, in Princess Mary’s Garden, of wearing pearls

in June. As she herself says, “How absurd!” That grows over a wall,
its fragrance holding and in your stopped step, all madeleine, though

even though alone on the street, there is a scent that is itself the past
that asks and thus from which you run.

SUZANNE MATSON

Convention Center

HE IS COMING BACK from a stroll through the Common, walking up Newbury to the Convention Center for the afternoon panel session on Correcting Bite Relationships, when he stops short in front of the shop window. Heat rises in waves off the sidewalk and it's not smart to stand there baking, but he's caught up by the display. This whole street is a catalog of the unaffordable and the unnecessary, but as he looks at the purse on its Lucite stand, he thinks, okay, that sends a message.

He'd asked Irene to come along, begged even. How often do they get out of Davenport? When was the last time they'd stayed in a fancy downtown hotel anywhere? The purse is glove leather—not in practical brown or black, but cherry red. It's the purse of a woman who would take a ride in a convertible, who would jump at the chance to go along if her husband had a paid trip to Boston and four nights in a room with a king bed and a pillow menu.

She'd scoffed when he told her on the phone about the pillow choices just as she would most likely deride a red purse. Which makes him want to buy it—to force her hand—see her unwrap a gift that he'd bought for no other reason than that it was beautiful, and watch her hesitate, holding it aloft, before failing to disguise her disappointment.

When the shot goes off he almost drops flat to the pavement, a reflex he'd forgotten he had. In Davenport he might think it was an early fire-cracker, but here, even in the pricey part of town, he knows it's a shot. This is a real city, where things go wrong in serious ways. He ducks into the shop and is met by chilled air, the scent of floral and leather. The young woman behind the counter has hair so black it's almost violet.

"I heard it too," she says, motioning him in. "Quick."

Sirens rise behind him on the block.

"Back here." She points to the curved wood counter, maybe teak. Along the walls, purses are arrayed on pedestals, lit from behind. She tugs on his arm. They kneel together behind the barrier of the counter, and he has the funny feeling they might pray. Irene plays the electric organ every Sunday at Valley Methodist, and her eyes close when the tones swell so loudly they vibrate in your cells. Irene also closes her eyes when they have relations, but not in the same way as when she plays the organ, her eyebrows lifting and falling with the chords.

"Wait," the girl says, dashing in a crouch over to the glass door, pulling a key on a plastic coil from her pocket and locking them in, then crouch-running back to join him behind the counter. Gook, he thinks, the word instantly shaming him; hadn't he banished it forever to a dark corner of his brain? But she's running as if she's being shelled, as if they are back together in Hue, her straight, violet-black hair swinging and her delicate wrists, delicate bones, protruding from the little-girl dress ballooning white behind her. She's not in flames. She slips into place, squatting behind the counter with him, her eyes wide, clavicle sharp and jutting under the pale pink cardigan hanging open, her bare knees knobby with bone.

Another shot, more sirens, a bullhorn voice, then a volley of gunfire, and he thinks, Holy shit, Irene. How do you know what you know? When did you figure out that no good comes out of wanting more than you have? This girl next to him who smells of something confusing—neither spice nor flower—is gripping his wrist with her white fingers,

so he puts his arm around her, the sweat-soaked back of his shirt going cold now from the air conditioning.

The counter they are cowering behind curves around them like a little half room, making privacy and dark, and when someone tries the door, the bell above it jingling, they don't move. They don't move, and they don't say stupid, obvious things. It's as if they've practiced this. His sweat is the sweat of Hue under artillery fire, when he's down to short time, forty days and counting, and he's just trying to make it back to Irene with her long bare legs that wrap around him in the backseat of his dad's Caprice. The ring she wears is rose gold with a quarter-carat diamond, and even though they've been married forty-three years now, she won't let him buy her a bigger one.

The urge to crush this young woman to him—her light, birdlike bones—is almost overpowering, whether in passion or violence or apology he doesn't know. That's how crazy his nerves are jumping. Then, outside, silence falls. They hear a shout, then, more silence, then—inexplicably—clapping.

They look at each other, at a loss.

"Oh!" she says, understanding dawning as she draws away from him and covers her laugh with her palm. "It's the movie! The film crew!"

The thought has made her merry, her laugh like small chimes. She keeps her mouth covered. He's seen some women do this when they eat, their palms providing a screen for every bite, and it's always made him wonder, what's so dirty about food?

"I totally forgot! They gave us a flyer saying there would be a movie filmed on the street today, but then when it started, and you came in looking so scared, everything seemed real, and I didn't think."

Behind the counter with her he is suddenly out of bounds—where a thief or assailant would be imposing himself—so he maneuvers to his rightful place, customer-side, where they face each other as what they are: she a salesgirl probably attending college somewhere in this city of

colleges, and he an aging orthodontist from Iowa at a conference. They were never anything else. There is nothing to do about this lacuna between them but for him to buy Irene the purse she will not know what to do with, though he doesn't mean it anymore as an accusation.

They exchange the customer and clerk words and he points to the red one in the window, and she agrees that it's lovely, but she wonders: "Would your wife want it in that color? Is she a person who collects a lot of bags?"

He admits that she is not. She has a black one that she uses after Labor Day and a wicker one that she begins using Easter Sunday. It's wicker season now, and she complains that it catches sometimes on what she's wearing, but she doesn't ditch it because it's still good. She's loyal that way.

"Well," the girl muses, scanning her merchandise—"maybe this one, in dove gray? She could use it all year long, and the great thing is"—here she removes the dove gray from its stand and unzips the top, plucking out some tissue—"this flash of color inside"—showing him the rose lining, "But I don't want to talk you out of the red if you've got your heart set on that."

For a second he wonders what it means to have his "heart set" on anything—his teenaged wife, then the wife of forty-three years later; the country that he left behind, or the one that he returned to. But he does, of course, know. It means to hold something steady in his sights, like a target.

He is amazed that the young woman has intuited Irene's exact sensibility: she who has never squandered anything, who tithes every Sunday and also writes a monthly check in her Palmer Method penmanship to their son teaching college part-time in Ames, so he can take his family out to eat once in a while.

The red purse would have killed her, plain and simple, having no way to return it. She would have thrust it deep in a drawer where it

would have pulsed like a wound growing septic, until something would have burst. He is only beginning to have an inkling of the close call they had.

The cost of the unassumingly elegant dove gray, when the salesgirl fishes the tag from one of the inner pockets, is almost as much as his hotel stay will be, but that will be covered by his practice, and he'll find a way to keep this bill from Irene. After what he and the girl have shared, he sees no possibility of refusing any transaction she suggests.

Irene will understand that he was thinking of her, who she really is—now that the young woman has pointed it out to him—his wife's need to make sense, do what is sensible. She waited for him two years while he was away. She sent him all those letters that he kept in date order and read over and over before buttoning them back into his pockets, crouched in the long grass or leaning against a rock or lying awake in a mildewed tent. He never doubted that she was waiting, keeping her long legs to herself. Her hair then was midway down her back, the color of wheat, and she wore it loose. He was leanly muscled and brown from the sun and back then had a full head of hair. The way they tangled themselves up in each other when he returned! And after all that love-making—in the Caprice, in the honeymoon cottage at Sheboygan, in their married student dorm when he was in dental school, then their first ranch house in Davenport—there came just the one son, following half a dozen lost pregnancies, but what a son, what a gift from God, smart and searching, born with Irene's straw-colored hair and her tendency toward caution.

The girl slides the purse into a linen sheath, then into an embossed shopping bag with ribbon handles.

He will leave it in his hotel room, which is connected to the Convention Center, a short elevator ride above the sessions on implants and veneers, then make it to the last half of the panel on bite correction, go do what he's getting paid to. He'll have a scotch at the reception

afterward and then probably go back up the elevator to order a steak from room service. There is supposedly some kind of party on this last night with a deejay and a whole lot of hygienists wobbling around with their Appletinis, but he's not cut out for that sort of thing. He'll watch a Clint Eastwood movie on pay per view from bed, in his boxers, and be relieved to be clear of it.

The salesgirl touches his hand impersonally as she passes him the bag. She seems to have no recollection that she'd pulled him by the arm into their bunker of semidarkness, that they'd been pressed together against the chaos of the world for a few hundred seconds.

"Thanks for your help," he tells her.

"No problem," she says. Then adds, "You stay safe," which doesn't really apply, not anymore, but he appreciates whatever impulse is behind it. She is the one who needs to stay safe, who is so obviously fragile, who could blow away in a strong wind or disappear in a hail of fire. She is the one he couldn't save and might even have harmed.

"You too," he says.

The heat is waiting for him like a wall, and now he sees everything that would have been so obvious before had he scanned what lay ahead—the filming location taped off a block away, the milling crowd restless and eager, ready to applaud more simulated mayhem. He spends a minute wondering whose gun goes off in the movie—but decides it's better not knowing. When it finally shows in Davenport he'll buy himself a ticket, and watch for the ghost of himself on the screen. He won't be visible, of course, he wasn't in the shot, but that doesn't matter: he'll be mapped onto the street itself, its permanent transient, and the girl, floating in white just over his shoulder, will be looking out, looking after him, urging him home.

DANNIEL SCHOONEBEEK

No Key

Argument

He saw himself as he was then • a young man • delinquent • drinking his gunpowder tea at the World's End Estate • A voice on American radio said "the great disillusionment" • What was life like on the Thames that winter • the bread workers strike • the dead pile up, said the paper • He saw himself scratch the date in the table • Nineteen seventy-nine • another black and white year for history • He said nothing to eat in the cupboard • nothing to loot, believe me • His face like a chipped tooth in the mirror • all the nerves flailing out • And what will they call me, he wondered • Come sunrise what will my name be

A mess on the 19 bus to Wessex, and watching himself in the window, Joe Strummer wrote: It's a penny for Margaret. It's a penny for President Carter. A penny for the Gunpowder Plot, and one for British Petroleum. It's a penny for your crow-skin face T. S. Eliot, I'll tell you how the world ends. You pray the ceiling collapses because it doesn't. You throw your coins in the river. You pray for the bells on Wall Street, and men dressed in soot with diamonds for teeth, they come for your

brothers with pitchforks. You're awake with the same torch in your hand, the one you didn't know you were burning yourselves alive in the morning with, citizens. That's a penny for the debt collector. And a penny for the world's end.

•

Well the moon and stars

a-cause everything's wrong

and nothing ain't right

no longer shine

were the lyrics he couldn't stop singing that morning. He couldn't remember the name of the song now what was the bleeding name. He knew it was Arkansas-born balladeer Melvin Endsley who wrote it. And Melvin's only friend as a young man was American radio. *I've never felt so much a-like*. Wind in dry grass he thought no. Sunlight on a broken column no. I've never felt so much a-like

sunlight

on death's twilit kingdom

•

His trouble wasn't the instrument Joe Strummer he taught himself with his nerve: when you can't strike down the president in his black limousine, you strike your guitar. His trouble wasn't the voice he had tooth decay to thank for his voice. It sounded some mornings like this in the mirror: *alknsfndkyah*. Or it sounded like a bale of straw in an ice storm. No his trouble he told Mick Jones when the two sat down to tea (pennyroyal) was the lyric. His trouble was striking with a word the bone inside the hand that holds the truncheon it doesn't know it's beating itself with.

I want to be flypaper Michael

he said with the leaves in his teeth. I want to hang from the ceiling at the World's End estate and everything that touches me collides with me and clings, but not before my people they hear the collision and tremble.

•

And hearing the seagulls caw over the Thames that night he remembered:

I've never felt so much a-like

a-like

singing the blues he yelled at the river. "Singing The Blues," it was written by Melvin Endsley in nineteen fifty-six I heard it on American radio. It

followed the voice of Orson Welles doing his war bit.
“People strode about this earth in their affairs,” he said.
“Men were back to work. The war scare was over.”

And then came the great disillusionment.

Like it came for you T. S. Eliot. Your skull stuffed with
straw and your mouth hanging open. Like it came for
the hollow men too.

Nineteen twenty-five no eyes

there are no eyes here this broken

jaw of our kingdom our cactus land

He arrived Joe Strummer
the next day in Wessex and recorded the lyric in front
of Mick Jones. He said: here are my hands forgotten by
pennies. Bring on the angels they collide here like flies.

I've never felt so much a-like

death's twilit kingdom

now sing Michael sing with our penny for the world's end.

PATRICIA VIGDERMAN

Out of the Shadows

AT THE GETTY MUSEUM in Los Angeles, I sat on a bench in front of a remarkable sculpture of a goddess. It was larger than life-size, with head and arms of marble and lively limestone drapery: beauty and power in stilled motion. A miraculous survivor from the fifth century BC, it had arrived as a traveler without documents, its journey into the present unmapped. When she'd proposed its purchase, the museum's antiquities curator had argued that it was the most important work of Greek sculpture outside of Greece and Great Britain and should come for study and display to the Getty Museum rather than disappear into private hands. Art investigators had been unable to track down any reliable information about its provenance. In 1988, eighteen million Getty dollars brought it to California.

Even as I was falling under its spell almost two decades later, though, a small town in central Sicily, a town near an archeological excavation at the ancient city of Morgantina, was claiming it as part of the inhabitants' heritage. It still wasn't exactly clear where the goddess had been found, but the site was plausible. When I first read about this

importunate place, I pictured dust and poverty and delusion. In the summer of 2007 an Italian news broadcast had simply rumored the return of this sculpture, and hundreds of the town's thrilled residents had marched to the doors of the small local museum in response, but I didn't see why. Getting the statue back would "give an identity to the people of Aidone," declared a Sicilian art superintendent; it would "in some way compensate for a collective loss to their society." I was skeptical, though I did of course see that it might improve the local tourist economy. I thought the statue looked great right where it was.

That same year, however, I met a different curator at the Getty, and I asked her about it. She had once done archeological work at Morgantina, and she supported the proposed return of the goddess. Excavated artifacts are very meaningful to the places where they are found, she argued, no matter which modern nation currently occupies that soil. She meant that the culture of Sicily is in some sense continuous with its Greek past, even though the island became absorbed into modern Italy. Objects found in Sicily may be Greek, but the Greeks who made or used them evolved into the Sicilians of today—as the British who founded the Jamestown colony are part of American heritage.

We were having this conversation because—in an effort to be less possessive—I'd decided to try to understand such noisy recent claims to the artworks of the classical world. Why did the Metropolitan Museum send back to Italy a vase painted 2,500 years ago by the ancient Greek artist Euphronios? And the marble torso called "Weary Herakles" that used to be in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts? Now it's gone back to Turkey. As for the most famous quarrel, over the beautiful marbles Lord Elgin boosted from the Parthenon two hundred years ago, it's a continuing national trauma in Greece—an absence that damages the collective soul. Even now an enormous project was under way in Athens to build a glorious new museum to display all the art that once adorned

the temples on the Acropolis—a museum perhaps powerful enough to draw the Elgin Marbles home from the British Museum, to reclaim their heritage from the English.

I had not actually given much thought to Greek colonies like Sicily, once-Greek places beyond the borders of Greece itself, or to what they might imply about the borders of national heritage. My curator friend's affection for the place was contagious, though, and I got curious about how Greek culture spread into southern Italy and what that could possibly mean all these centuries later. And I wanted to see that new museum. So, I got on a plane with a month to follow the worn track to Naples, Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Sicily.

In the museum in Naples I wandered among sculptures excavated from the lava Vesuvius had poured over the seaside town of Herculaneum in the first century. They were set in a large hall where visitors moved among them as at a time-traveling cocktail party. At Herculaneum itself I descended into the excavated city, aware simultaneously of the modern city built atop the lava, its lines of laundry flapping against the sky. At Pompeii I explored only a fraction of the sprawling city, with its broken house fronts, the abundant vegetation rioting in its roofless rooms, and always the volcano in the distance, hovering in sight of the Forum.

In Sicily, though, I was a little overwhelmed by the way past and present seemed alive and dead at the same time. There was so much past there: a foursquare Doric temple, never finished, standing at the head of an abyss; a series of smashed temples on a foggy headland; another fleet of temples running down through an olive-studded valley, where a guide carrying a small sun umbrella covered with little images of Mickey Mouse talked of Zeus and Hera and also of the current economic downturn. I wrote down the particular pleasures of her polyglot syntax and her ease with the ritual of viewing ancient monuments. Even in ordinary human transactions in Sicily I saw a quality I thought

I recognized as what the Greeks call *philotimo*: a subtle self-assurance, an irreverence, a quality of helpfulness to strangers that was differently shaded from the friendliness of Italians.

By the time I got on the ferry to Naples I had a notebook filled with observations and local details, a camera with photographs of monuments and street life, excavations, vegetation, graffiti. The following evening, poised to fly to Athens the next morning, I was enjoying the view over the city from a quiet corner on the Capodimonte hill when I was mugged. It all happened in a flash, but my notebook and my camera were gone forever.

Badly shaken I flew to Athens the next day. Still ahead of me, at least, was the splendid new museum: the ambitious new architectural argument for the return of the Parthenon's marbles from London. I bought a new notebook. Then I discovered that the grand opening, scheduled to occur weeks before I got there, had been pushed into the future. So there I was in Athens, checked into a hotel across from a grand museum I couldn't get into. The next day I took a bus to a different neighborhood, to see an exhibit called "In Praise of Shadows."

Stripped of my purposes, I was an empty canvas on which every new mark seemed meaningful. Everything I saw seemed to refer to something that was missing: cinema without actors, shadow puppets and silhouettes, empty landscapes. I stared for a long time at the slide-projected paintings in an installation called "Do You Know What You Saw?" because, of course, I didn't. What did my journey mean, if all my carefully noted details were gone? If I was unable to see how the new museum was folding its triumphant display of the glorious past over the indigenous present?

One of the artists in the show was the South African William Kentridge, who likes to work with shadows; he says they make us conscious of what we don't know—and yet they also show us what we do know. We can see projected on the wall, he says, "a shadow of two hands with

the thumbs crossed wagging, and a shadow of a bird or butterfly crossing its wings." We know it is both and, furthermore, that there are real hands we do not see. Such mediating knowledge, he says, is fundamental to our pleasure. And not only that: for Kentridge, the mediation is an empowerment of vision, the way forward.

In this moment, could I pull anything out of the shadows? What shadow could I cast on the places I'd just been, or they on me? I was carrying the new notebook, but I had no idea what to put in it. And the inaccessibility of the new Acropolis Museum seemed to emphasize my cluelessness. From the street below I could see shadowy images of the broken procession from the Parthenon frieze just inside the glass walls of the museum's top floor. Filtered sunlight made the marbles hazy, indistinct. Not knowing what else to do, I took the metro to the National Archaeological Museum.

I had come to Athens in order to see the Parthenon frieze by Aegean light. I had come to see a new twenty-first century museum, a lively mediation between past and present, an elegant response to the battle over the missing marbles. Instead, I was in this nineteenth-century museum telling the same old story of Hellenic descent from a golden age. A map of Sicily on one wall was marked with vanished names now resonant for me: Eloro, Akragas, Selinous.

Almost at random I examined the miraculously preserved marble statue of an Archaic maiden, the Kore Phrasikleia. How beautifully finished were the folds of her chiton both front and back, the clasp of her belt, the shape of her young arms below the elbow-length sleeves. Beside her is a marble youth found in the same grave pit. Naked, he has one broken arm and one hand reattached. His feet are missing so it looks like those strongly muscled calves end in little hooves. I looked closely at the one hand, at how beautiful it was, so carefully made, with perfect square fingernails; a marvel to see, like those of a newborn baby: the human hand in all its parts.

Effigies from the middle of the sixth century BC, they were presented here as part of the march toward democracy, toward intellectual curiosity and human partnership with the gods—an aesthetic consolidation of what it was to be Greek. At that moment their intense stillness felt like more than historical narrative; they seemed to have absorbed my own psychological state, offering me some clarity I didn't understand. Loss had given me some new knowledge, but I felt very far away from the person I'd been in Sicily—I wasn't even sure of what I'd thought before I'd begun traveling.

When I returned home the task of excavating my memory, like the question about where the Elgin marbles belonged, seemed impacted and intractable. As time went on, though, the small trauma of the mugging seemed to loosen up my vision of the ancient world. Without my details to cling to, the lost places came alive in a different way, drawing me back to their ancient shore. I set out again, not to Sicily this time, but to another part of the Greek empire, the lost city of Paestum, on the Italian coast south of Salerno, just north across the Tyrrhenian Sea from Sicily.

Paestum's history is full of losses, but it's not like Pompeii or even Morgantina, the last Greek city in Sicily to fall to the Romans. No exciting disaster wiped it out. It stands where it always was, its walls still unbreached. Near the city's northern edge, the Temple of Ceres is a four-sided Greek temple, with the blue sky over its rooflessness. Current research says it's not actually honoring Ceres; it's a temple to Athena, goddess of conquest, goddess of Achaean victories. On a spring day, surrounded by agricultural lands and with a pleasant scent of dung drifting across the ruins, the mellow fruitfulness of Ceres, goddess of Sicily, seems nearer.

I was paying attention differently now. In the agora I was drawn to an ancient rectangular cenotaph, mostly buried. Its big terra-cotta

roof tiles were covered with lichen in a pattern resembling an aerial photograph of a strange and distant landscape: the past seen from the air of the present. I was not in shadow here, but hovering between the sunlight and the past.

Paestum's history is in fact one traumatic theft after another. In 600 BC it was a Greek city known for its wealth and art. Two hundred years later it was taken by the local Lucanians. Retaken by the Greeks, it was lost to Rome after fifty years. When Roman politics turned eastward, toward Constantinople, the whole area collapsed into a huddled Christian community. Through it all, the city's Greek language and culture persisted.

In its little archeological museum are some of the riches taken from Paestum's tombs and sanctuaries: bronzes and ceramics, many decorated vessels, and, most famously, the tombs the Lucanians painted with their particular images mediating death. The most admired of them is the Tomb of the Diver. Its five stone slabs once fitted together as a coffin, but a coffin in which the occupant would be surrounded by images of his transition into a delightful future. Most striking was the lid, where a naked diver in the very moment of transition from life to death was suspended over the blue water below. He's shown as he passes a guard tower set at the crossing point between this world and the next, moving gracefully between elements, poised forever on the lip of loss.

On the museum's ground floor, the rooms are full of shapely vessels and plates of terra-cotta food: pomegranates, grapes, figs, almonds, sweets, and cheeses for the dead to enjoy when they've passed into the next life. There are even a couple of globs of actual ancient honey, found in jugs buried in the cenotaph monument.

Last of all, I came to a space built to resemble a Greek temple's interior chamber. I passed through a sort of entry area into a carefully lit inner space, where, set dramatically on a pedestal and surrounded by

a circle of small lights, was a large two-handled amphora showing the Rape of Europa. A white bull is making off with the maiden; a siren and a triton flank the abduction. This object was the work of Asteas, a Greek painter who had lived in Paestum in the fourth century BC.

It was a handsome object, but why was a terra-cotta jar displayed here like a temple goddess? It turned out the amphora represented a triumph of recovery. Found in 1970 by a local tomb robber, it was sold for a million lire and a piglet (about \$1,500 at the time, not counting the piglet), after which it made its way through the antiques market to a conveniently unidentified private Swiss collection. The Getty Museum had acquired it for \$380,000 in 1981 but in 2005 agreed to return it. In Sicily I'd seen the once and future home of a reclaimed goddess; in Athens I had tried to see a brilliant new claim to the marble heritage of Greece. Now here in Paestum was this quiet echo of my lost researches, an unexpected excavation of memory.

When the colossal Getty goddess was finally brought to the little museum in Aidone, it would be a major local event, with a marching band and speeches, an opportunity for pride, characterized by Sicilian officials as hope for the future. Here in Paestum, the elaborate display of this recovered link to the past was a celebration of loss overcome. To have removed the object from the Getty Museum was presented as a victory for this place and its people, for their sense of themselves. Desire for similar celebratory display is a huge part of Greek hope for reinstalling the Parthenon marbles in Athens.

It's easy to see the logical fault lines here, fault lines that run through any claims on antiquity because the objects suggest simultaneously who we are and aren't. What connection do the current residents of the plain surrounding Paestum have with Asteas, who lived and painted twenty-five centuries ago, or for that matter with the myth of Europa?

In modern Athens the brilliant landscape and the noble ruins encourage the local population to assume a gratifying notion of Greek

identity. In England the British Museum creates a local cultural identity of reason and conversation, enshrining curiosity about what it is to be human, and also pride in being the kind of people who can rescue threatened objects and preserve them. At Paestum, however, the archaeological site has remained small because the majority of the city has deliberately *not* been excavated. The surrounding land has remained in private hands, and in agricultural use by succeeding generations up to the present.

In Paestum I thought, if Greek temples and marbles can belong to an international heritage, as striking evidence of wide human achievement, they can also belong to the surrounding landscape and to the modern world that currently shares it. The local and the distant attachments create a shadow play with time and myth. Like the Lucanian diver, the meaning of the Parthenon marbles and the Asteas amphora is poised between two worlds, even as historical change flickers across them. This was my answer then, about Paestum and Aidone, and about Greece as well.

It is not their direct line to the past, or the economic boost of tourism, that makes the claims of these communities meaningful, but that they are part of a world of real pomegranates, almonds, figs, and cheeses—and those who eat them. However much or little the modern Greek nation is the inheritor of Periclean Athens, the place itself and its fruits surely are. This second trip, and the shadows that shaped it, showed me that it is not only those who study ancient objects and monuments or who travel to see them who illuminate them with meaning.

What I saw at Paestum is that modern connections to the classical past, and modern pleasure in its various beauties, owe a debt to those who live and have lived in the shadows of the temples, statues, and vessels all this time. When I was at Paestum I was not only aware of its successive traumas of history and geology and art; I was aware of its

peaceful present, the ongoing human and animal presence, its everydayness. Finding links to the excavated past would be a dry business without the lived experience of local people.

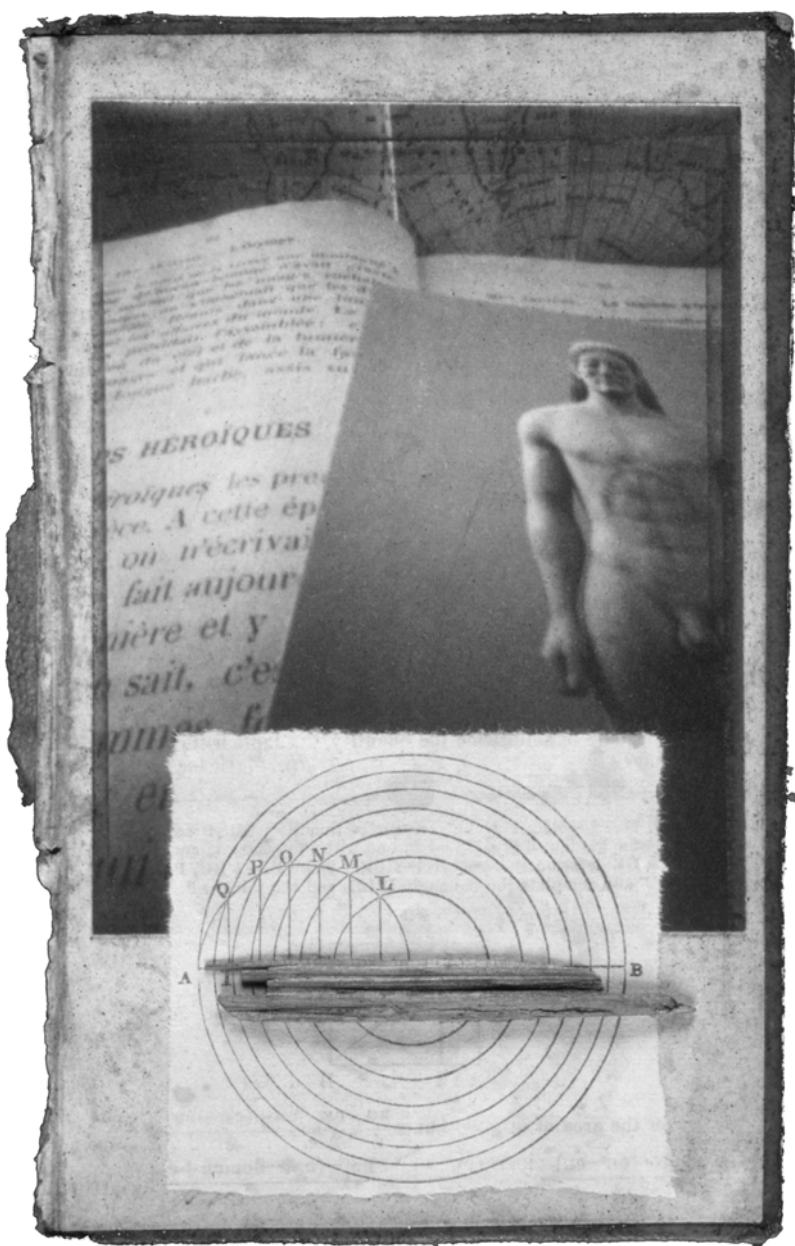
For the farmers on the Cilento plain, wealth is in buffalo mozzarella as well as ancient vessels. They are still making the sweets and cheeses once offered to the dead. We make up our impermanent living selves out of what is around us, and perhaps the temples and museums and the long historical reality of Greece or Sicily can be scaled to my alien presence precisely thanks to those for whom they are part of daily ongoing life. The continuous presence of humanity lightens the ancient world and keeps its remains from turning into a pile of terrifying rubbish, into the colossal trunkless legs of Ozymandias.

The art that has come to us from that world is, of course, not rubbish. It remains necessary, appealing, and well-cared-for beyond its places of origin. Its movable objects have been nomadic, finding new communities, untethered to particular historical disasters or triumphs. But the places from which they come persist, even as the art wanders in to our own time. The skillful painting on the tomb lid at Paestum is part of a tender shadow world whose details and boundaries we cannot see. Such art keeps us poised, like the diver, between life and death, here and elsewhere, present and past.

Our connection to antiquities is not about possession, or even the right to knowledge of our human heritage. It has some of the gravity of going to the underworld to speak to the dead, to those loved ones who nevertheless fade from actual embrace. If from the shadows of that adventure comes all the claptrap about national identity and self-esteem, I remember that such claptrap was essential to Achilles's sense of himself. Yet also in Homer, as in the living places of the past, are unexpected expressions of a quieter reality for lost antiquity. ὄγχνας μοι δῶκας τρισκαίδεκα καὶ δέκα μηλέας,συνέας τεσσαράκοντ': "You gave me pear trees thirteen, and ten apple trees, forty fig trees," Odysseus says,

proving his identity to his aged father, remembering the abundance in their relationship before the war.

The little museum at Paestum has made of its recovered Asteas amphora a shrine to local identity; outside in the early spring the temples of the broken city drip with living moisture. On the mozzarella farms outside the city the buffalo range the seemingly borderless, unexcavated plain. The life of the past is projected onto the present by the present's own light. In Paestum and in the wagging shadow of my lost notes, I see also the shape of what is not lost. And I understand there were once real hands there that I will never see.



Jesseca Ferguson, Kouros (constructed),
 2001, pinhole cyanotype, wood, found paper,
 19th-century book board, 7 in. x 4 1/2 in. x 1/8 in.



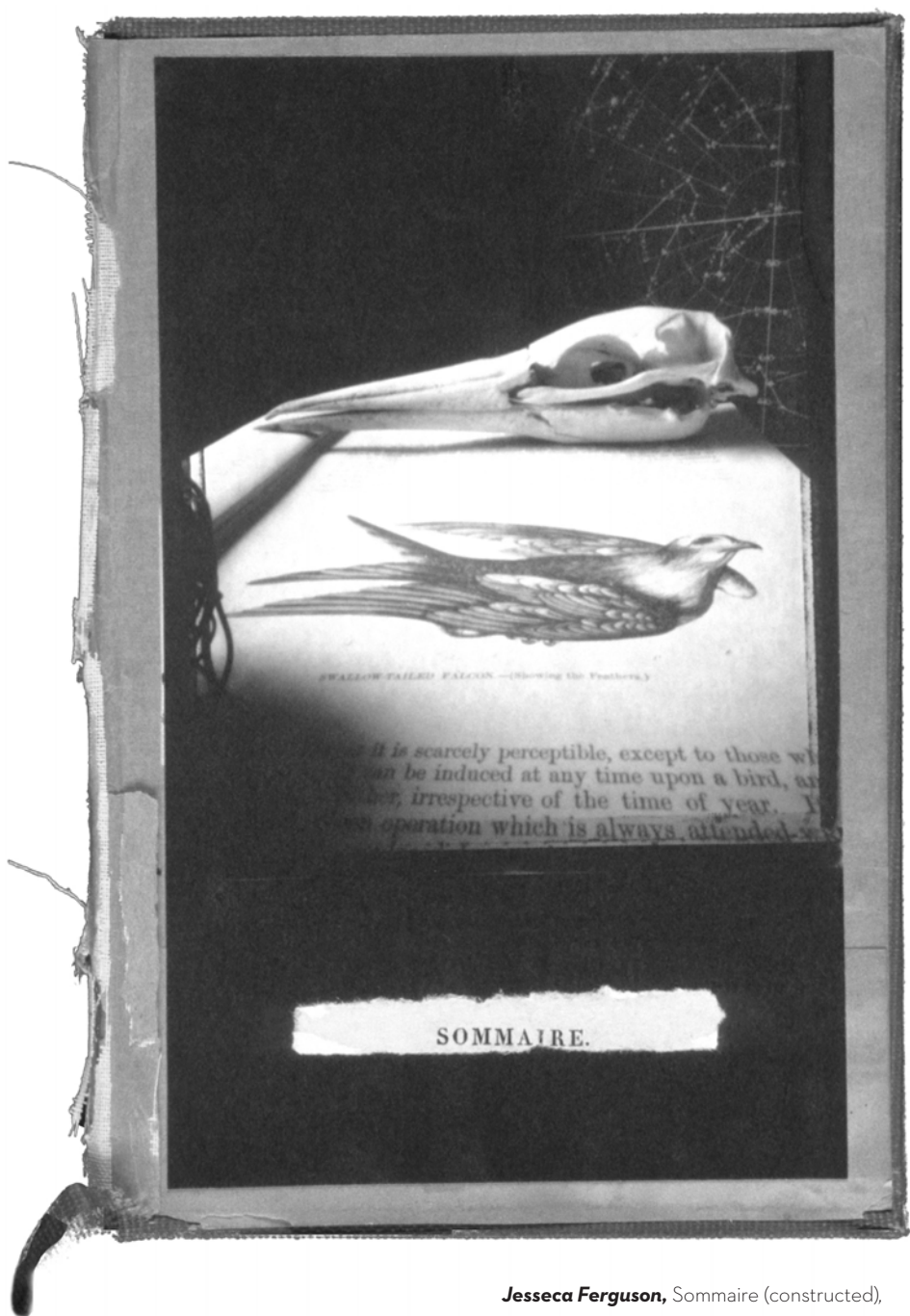
Jesseca Ferguson, Tome XXIV (constructed), 2010, pinhole
Argyrotype, found papers, plant materials (bird's nest), 19th-
century book boards, ink, 12 1/2 in. x 9 3/4 in. x 1/8 in. Courtesy
Fox Talbot Museum, Lacock Abbey, Chippenham, England.



Jesseca Ferguson, Poznan bird/2
(constructed), 2014, pinhole cyanotype, 19th-
century book parts, 9 1/2 in. x 11 3/4 in. x 1/8 in.



Jesseca Ferguson, *The Moon/vertical (constructed)*,
 2010, pinhole cyanotype, found paper, old book
 board, found gilded wood, 7 1/2 in. x 5 in. x 1/4 in.



Jesseca Ferguson, *Sommaire* (constructed), 2000, pinhole ziatype, wood, 19th-century book board, 7 1/4 in. x 9 3/4 in. Private collection.

GEORGE CHOUNDAS

The Vengeances

PARIS STEALS HELEN. Pries her out of her husband's bed, seasons her lips with his own, spirits her to Troy. Of course that's how it starts. Love is the seed of every perfidy, every cataclysm. Even the chaste kind has its spawn. Paris's, hardly chaste, sires the world's longest feud.

(1) 1184 BC, GREEKS: The Greeks take first vengeance. They burn Troy to the ground. There is talk in Homer of babies thrown from walls. The Greeks probably shouldn't have done that.

(2) 753 BC, ITALIANS: Round two. Aeneas, the vaunted Trojan, escapes destruction. He flees to the Italian peninsula. His descendants found Rome. If the best revenge is living well, there is no defter comeuppance than founding an empire.

(3) 325 BC, GREEKS: Except founding an empire that nuzzles India. Alexander the Great makes both traditional conceptions of conquest and Romans look ridiculous. Point, Greeks.

(4) 27 BC–476 AD, ITALIANS: And in that, I confess, I take a little delight. Because—full disclosure—I am Greek. Half-Greek, actually. My Greek father ran a sandwich shop in an office park. I helped (notionally) with phone orders and food prep, sometimes cash register. I did

not wear anything close to the smile my father insisted be presented to customers. Once, a manager from the medical supply outfit on the other side of the building ordered a meatball sub. While waiting he spied a titanic can of the Neptune brand tuna my father used. He knew my father was Greek.

“If Poseidon is god of the sea, who is Neptune?” he asked.

“Neptune,” my father replied quietly, with the substrate conviction of one trafficking in axioms, “is Poseidon’s helper.”

For centuries after Alexander’s corpse turns to livid soil, Rome burgeons and conquers and prospers. Neptune is decidedly not anyone’s helper. Neptune leaves Poseidon polled and clipped and moaning in a watery corner. Never are tears more futile than when shed directly into ocean.

Point, Italians.

(5) 326–1000 AD, GREEKS: The Byzantine empire displaces the Roman. It also reigns as the world’s mightiest religious institution. Empress Helena herself discovers the True Cross after being led by the scent of basil to the patch of ground where it lies buried.

To honor the miracle, basil is thereafter revered by the Greeks. Many refuse to ingest it as food because of its spiritual significance. I once pressed my father as to why he did not eat basil. He is an avid churchgoer in the sense that the post-liturgy coffee hour is held in a church building.

“For the same reason you don’t eat horse,” he said.

“I don’t eat horse because Kash ’n’ Karry doesn’t sell horse,” I said.

He gave me the same look as when I wasn’t smiling enough at customers.

(6) 1054 AD, ITALIANS: The Pope sends an obstreperous cleric to Constantinople. Cardinal Humbert’s mission: to finally reconcile the Latin and Greek churches. The Cardinal instead antagonizes the Greek Patriarch. The two bicker about whether communion bread should be leavened.

Humbert has a fit and leaves. But not without a flourish. First he lays down a papal Bull on the altar of the Greek cathedral. The Greeks are excommunicated.

Later, the Pope repudiates Humbert's tantrum. He claims the Bull was never authorized. He does not, however, withdraw it. Nor does he explain the entrusting of diplomacy to a cantankerous sorehead. It is like sending a tarantella band to soothe a baby.

(7) 1182 AD, GREEKS: The new Byzantine Emperor sanctions a massacre of the Latins in Constantinople. He is deposed and murdered three years later. Some are sure his fate is repayment for wholesale murder in a holy city. They have no idea.

(8) 1204 AD, ITALIANS: The Venetians commandeer the Fourth Crusade. They forgo Muslim targets and sack Constantinople instead. *This* is repayment. Thousands are slaughtered. Masses of holy relics are looted. A fragment of the True Cross, stolen from the Emperor's private chapel, returns west with the victors.

All this transpires after Pope Innocent III's blessing of the crusade. He had hoped to install a Rome-friendly emperor. But the bloodbath must be disavowed. The Pope recycles an excuse from 1054: none of it was authorized. Thus he transubstantiates himself into a rebus—the "III" representing the lashes of a winking eye just after the word "innocent" is pronounced.

Occhio per occhio.

(9) 1261 AD, GREEKS: The Greeks retake Constantinople. The Latins are expelled. The original relics, of course, cannot be restored. But exact duplicates begin to resurface in all the same places. These "reappearances" are explained as miracles. It is a net positive: relics no longer lost, a rich new body of devotional narrative into the bargain.

What the Greek does not have, he wills.

Odónta antí odóntos.

(10) 1453 AD, ITALIANS: Of all the world's feuds, few rival that between Greek and Latin. One contender: the long-running debacle between

Greek and Turk. Its wounds, especially among older generations, are startlingly fresh. At dinner in 1985, when I was a high school freshman, I informed my father that I'd signed up for Model United Nations. The meal ended with my father informing me—shaking his head in a way that carried some of the shoulders with it—that I was mistaken, that in fact I had signed up for nothing. He issued this pronouncement after asking me, not once but twice, to repeat the part about how the school's team would be representing Turkey.

The next day I told the MUN moderator that a piano recital had come up last-minute, the way piano recitals sometimes (never) do.

For centuries Byzantium staves off Islamic conquest. For centuries the Greeks shelter behind Constantinople's famous walls. Even on Tuesday, May 29, 1453, when 60,000 Ottomans and mercenaries mass outside the city, the walls hold. The Turks do not breach them. But, it turns out, they do not need to. A Genoese general fighting for the Greeks has demanded that a single gate be unlocked so that he can abscond to his ship.

The Turks find the gate. They pour in after Giovanni Giustiniani and his retreating contingent.

One Italian's desperation becomes every Greek's catastrophe. The Turks take the capital and the empire. For hundreds of years after 1453, the Greeks live in slavery, subjects of the Ottoman sultanate.

A few years ago I reminded my father about his forbidding me from representing Turkey at a school event. He is eighty-two years old now. I asked him if, looking back, he thought it was the right thing to do. He shrugged his shoulders, the same shoulders that in 1985 had loomed like a bulwark against the possibility of appeal, and said simply, "I don't know. But it was too much to ask."

Five and a half centuries after that fateful Tuesday, one and a half centuries after liberation, and still my father speaks in terms of insufferable burden.

(11) 1500S–1600S AD, GREEKS: Rome dominates the Christian faith, dispatches it to three new continents. Still, the Greeks persist in their

differences. They continue to reject, for instance, the Catholic communion wafer. They cite historical fidelity and maintain that only leavened bread can stand in for Christ's body. This candidactism is in fact an act of mercy. The hungrier the communicant and the more freely salivating, the less likely the prim and stinting disk survives long enough to be chewed.

As a teenager I took comfort in this notion one Wednesday a month. That was when my Jesuit high school held mandatory mass. We had time during these services for quiet contemplation, the Jewish kids and I, when at Communion we perched in our pews and watched our schoolmates file out to the priests and their wafers and file back.

I had every opportunity then to mull the incongruences between Greek and Catholic worship. There existed a serious discrepancy, for example, regarding the provenance of the Holy Spirit. I'd been taught from the age of nine that it proceeded from the Father. Yet every Wednesday in St. Anthony's Chapel roughly 615 people disagreed, reciting a version of the Creed in which the Holy Spirit proceeded also from the Son.

At some point I learned something that cheered me. The Greeks had long ago spurned the Filioque as theologically unsound, as surplusage bolted on by the Catholics nearly 800 years after Christ. I came to enjoy this moment in the Creed. Every Wednesday I reveled in silence while the rabble droned their tri-syllabic blasphemy: and the Son. It came at the end of a sentence and sounded like superfluous prattle. The anapestic rhythm, moreover, suggested a blunder—words absently blurted and later regretted.

(12) 1687 AD, ITALIANS: The Venetians attempt to dislodge the Turks from Greece. The Greeks, two centuries into Ottoman subjugation, let their hopes soar. But ultimately the Venetians fail. In the attempt, however, they do succeed in bombarding the Acropolis.

When the world looks at the Parthenon, it sees the temple that still stands: a monument to humanity's greatest achievements. When the

Greeks look at the Parthenon, they see also the parts that have fallen away. The view is no less wondrous. Like every dashed hope, it is a sad and beautiful ruin.

(13) 1757 AND 1810 AD, GREEKS: The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is the holiest church in Christendom. Inside are the sites of Jesus's crucifixion and burial. Empress Helena oversaw its construction. It was during excavations for this building that she smelled basil and found the True Cross.

For centuries, six sets of Christians have struggled over control of the Church: Catholics, Greeks, Armenians, Copts, Ethiopians, and Syrians. They live side by side inside the building but in an anxious pique. Each obsessively preserves historical claims over particular rooms and walls and inches of floor. Each watches carefully for where the others make repairs, or leave their brooms, because even these might be the basis for future claims. A ladder propped alongside the top-right window over the main entrance has leaned there since 1854. No agreement has ever been reached on how, or even whether, it might be moved.

In 1757, the Ottomans, fearing a Russian invasion, award primacy of the Church to the Greeks. The Greeks get Christ's tomb; the Catholics get a scattering of lesser chapels. Czar Nicholas and his fellow Orthodox are placated. The Pope and his followers, on the other hand: not pleased.

In 1808 the building is devastated by fire. By 1810 it is restored. But now the Greek spaces are larger, the common areas smaller in exactly the same proportion. Also, many of the Latin markers and decorations are now Greek. It happens that the architect for the renovation was a man by the name of Nikolaos Komnenos. From Mytilene. A Greek.

(14) 1863 AD, ITALIANS: It takes the Italians over half a century to retaliate. Not until 1863 is the cookbook *La Cuciniera Genovese* published. Inside is the first written evidence of their cunning: pesto.

Here is the recipe. Take Greece's holy plant. Do not merely shred or dice it. Pound it into a paste. Adulterate this new substance with pig food:

pine nuts. Add a malodorous cheese—Parmesan, Pecorino, Romano, it doesn't matter, because what's important is to corrupt Saint Helena's beloved scent. Finally, slick this mealy abomination with copious amounts of oil, so that you and your guests turn it as promptly as possible into shit.

Basil, when heated, blackens and goes bitter. The fourteenth vengeance, therefore, is best served cold.

(15) 4:00 AM, OCTOBER 28, 1940 AD, GREEKS: The Italian ambassador thinks it a good idea to present the leader of Greece with an ultimatum. Surely Mussolini himself, chafing to found a new Roman empire, has commanded it. Surely Mussolini used his famous signature posture when giving the order—chin thrust forward and up.

The threat comes on October 28. Submit to Axis occupation, warns the Italian ambassador, or face war. Ioannis Metaxas reportedly answers with a single word: *Ohi*. No.

The Greeks still celebrate Ohi Day every October. Mainly they honor the laconic defiance in that single word. No stauncher proof of a readiness to fight than keeping talk to a minimum.

But anyone who has been to Greece, or Astoria, Queens, or Tarpon Springs, Florida, might guess the real reason for the day's immortality. If you've seen a Greek say no, you've seen him do it in the iconic Greek fashion. Whether or not the word itself is spoken, whether or not (as is often the case) the tongue is instead unglommed abruptly from the palate with a percussive "tch," always that negating Greek chin is thrust forward and up.

Ohi Day is not a mere remembrance. It is a living caricature of Italy's most notorious leader. It is a cue for derision on a national scale. "It does not matter that once you hung him upside down," a whole country is saying; "we and our chins will mock him, right side up, in perpetuity." It is an evergreen humiliation.

(16) 5:30 A.M., OCTOBER 28, 1940 AD, ITALIANS: Mussolini attacks later the same morning. The assault lasts months.

(17) 1940–41 AD, GREEKS: There is one radio in my father's village of Kounoupitsa. It belongs to Ioannis Dedegikas. When Ioannis is in a good mood, he sets it on his balcony and turns up the volume. Neighbors gather underneath to hear news of the fight against the Italians. Some are drawn to the understated glamour of the BBC. Others prefer the strident tones of the Free Voice of Greece, the mouthpiece of Greece's government-in-exile in Egypt; its broadcasters manage to speak in a kind of perpetual call, sounding exactly as far away as across the sea.

The rest of Kounoupitsa gets their war news from the church bell. A slow tolling means a Greek defeat. A fast pealing means a victory. Who knows who rings the bell—the priest himself? His wife? Not his son. His son has gone to war.

The villagers hear more peals than tolls. So many peals, in fact, that it's hard to believe. One imagines the villagers starting to suspect the accuracy of the ringing. One imagines them joking that the priest's wife is purposely botching the job so that her son will have to return from the front to take over.

But no. The peals are accurate. The Greeks are prevailing. They do not simply resist. They repel. They counterattack and chase the Italians into Albania. It is a rout.

Hitler asks the Italians to withdraw from Greece altogether. Like children bold with sugar and capering in a driveway, they are urged to get out of harm's way. The Panzers will take it from here.

(18) 1941 AD, ITALIANS: Two men from Kounoupitsa die at the lines. One is a seventeen-year-old named Nikos Javelas. The other is the priest's son.

The bodies are never brought back from the front.

The priest and his wife carry on. Nikos's mother does not. For the rest of her life, she wanders the village, moaning the same words over and over. *Niko mou, se afísane sto krio*. My Niko, they left you in the cold.

The Germans occupy key locations: Athens, Thessaloniki, Crete. The Italians get the leftovers. In the Italian zone there is looting. Worse, too. Depredations mount with desperation. Generally, their egregiousness is in inverse proportion to their distance from the cities. Kounoupitsa sits in the hilltops of Methana, a peninsular bit of volcanic land that points like Diogenes's lantern from the Peloponnesus toward Athens. My father remembers mostly chicken theft.

(19) 1947 AD, GREEKS: The war dust settles. Greece reclaims the islands of the Dodecanese. This ends a thirty-five-year Italian occupation. There is only one downside. Arguably this vindicates the Italians. They had always insisted on describing their takeover as "temporary."

(20) 1954 AD, ITALIANS: Before he owns a sandwich shop, before he comes to the United States, my father is a ship captain. He starts his merchant marine career as a *naftis*—a deckhand. His first ship is the *Maria*. It has only one route: Piraeus, Greece, to Trieste, Italy, and back again. The *Maria* is a cargo shuttle. From Greece to Italy, it carries *alefopetra*, a lightweight stone used in construction materials. From Italy to Greece, it carries hay.

My father remembers lots of things about the *Maria*—how the captain and the owner both discovered he knew English (at the time a mark of some distinction), how the captain thereafter replaced all his duties with just one (paperwork), how the owner thereafter invited him to lunch after lunch to discuss his marriageable niece (my father, wily as Odysseus, implying just enough interest to keep the lunches coming).

But most of all my father remembers gelato.

Every night in Trieste, he and the rest of the crew eat gelato. Every night the Greeks place their orders, and the Italians behind the counter ask "E?" The Greeks, oblivious that the custom is to request two flavors served side by side, smile as if remembering picnics with their favorite aunts. The Italians give up. Apparently convinced all Greeks love lemons, they give them all a second serving of lemon.

The crew stroll about as they enjoy their gelato. They admire the clean streets. They envy the city's easy vigor, its liveliness without traffic or crowds. They watch the passing women, fully appreciating the impossibility of looking manly while eating gelato. They manage anyway.

Having brought with them stones lighter than stone, and eaten ice cream lighter than ice cream, the Greeks head home aboard the *Maria*. Amid the affable huff of aging diesel engines they feel lighter, more hopeful, than when they arrived.

This was Italy's vengeance: It bewitched my father. His first taste of the ships had the flavor of promise, of perfection. By golden association, the happenstance of gorgeous Trieste, of wonderful gelato, of counterwomen who smiled back like they were the favorite aunts, ensnared my father into a long merchant marine career, nearly derailing his larger dream of coming to America.

It is a small vengeance, though. Really my father's stories of Trieste are less about rivalry than about sweet commiseration. Whenever my father tells them, I see two countries, one as war-broken and impoverished as the other, trading rocks and grass between them. Each offers the other what it can: parts of itself.

(21) AUGUST 2, 1968 AD, GREEKS: The *Katingo* lies in port at Genoa, Italy. It is a 16,000-ton oil tanker. My father is captain.

Onto the ship struts a man my father has never met. My father knows only two things about this stranger: he arrives fresh from a honeymoon on a lake in Austria, and he is taking over command of the *Katingo*.

My father is resigning his captaincy. In just over a month, he will take a train from Piraeus, board a Luxair jet to New York, and emerge from JFK International Airport's arrivals hall into a new life. The stranger coming aboard is the *Katingo*'s new captain.

For a man with larger concerns, my father spends an inordinate amount of time considering his successor. Specifically, he believes he

will be a disaster. A captain who honeymoon on a lake in Austria does not know how to speak to a *lostromos* (bosun) whose family's only asset was a mule. A captain who honeymoon on a lake in Austria does not know how to say enough is enough when a seller's representative insists that tank number four be washed a fifth time, or how to manipulate this representative with a particular cocktail of geniality and menace into feeling shrill and fatuous and unreasonable, or how to finally appear to give in and provide the requested signature—but with the sneaky and nullifying words “subject to owner's approval” underneath—when the representative demands defensively that the ship at least assume the risk of contamination from tank number four's uncleanable muck.

It is important that Italy was both my father's first destination as a seaman and his last. It made the contrast all the sharper. In his first port, the air itself smelled of sweet destiny. In his last, the grinning and obsequious ship chandler brought aboard a local introduced only as “Dominick,” who proposed that my father sail loads of cigarettes after sunset to boats waiting just inside international waters. In Trieste, there were smiling passers-by. In Genoa, there were grim-faced insurance inspectors who insisted on seeing the lifeboats lowered and raised and lowered again. In Trieste, the world waited at happy heel. In Genoa, the groveling chandler listened as my father, in one of his last acts as captain, ordered two cases of Coca-Cola and then promptly ignored the request because a soon-to-be-former captain is the same as nothing.

Life for everyone, to some degree, is a trip from Trieste to Genoa. Life hardens under the press of responsibility and striving, shrinks to fit the strictures of routine and betrayed expectations, wears from the constant scanning for threats and mustering of wherewithal. The blush of promise turns—even as we mourn its loss, even as we protest it needn't be this way—into the uncleanable muck of necessity and mediocrity and compromise.

We all collect our wounds and retreat to Genoa.

Forty-seven years later, my father will drive his Ford Econoline E-150 cargo van on a bi-monthly basis from his Tampa home to a shop on Florida Avenue. The shop sits directly across the street from ABC Auto Sales and alongside Fried Rice King. There he gets his hair cut for twelve dollars by a Vietnamese woman named Kim. Often she will ask him—half in jest, half in deference to profit—if he's sure he won't try a manicure. Each time my father, without willing it, thinks of the captain fresh from his honeymoon on a lake in Austria. One pristine hand grips a deck rail. The other tightens with clear-coat nails the line around a seaman's waist before sending him across a storm-tossed deck to secure a pair of loose steel pipes.

The honeymooner keeps silent. A good captain says, This will keep you safe. Because everyone knows it's really so that a mother will have something to bury, so that she'll not haunt a village with wails and wandering.

(22) SEPTEMBER 2002 AD, ITALIANS: I marry an Irish-American from Ossining, New York. She is Roman Catholic. The wedding is in her childhood parish. My mother makes me swear that after the honeymoon we'll have a Greek Orthodox ceremony at my own childhood parish in Tampa. It will be a brief ceremony, a kind of blessing. My mother makes this request not because she cares, but because my father otherwise would pretend not to.

I accede for the same reason a Trieste counterwoman could simply dispense a double serving of a single flavor but would never dream of it. Tradition is important.

For the honeymoon my wife chooses Italy. In Venice we stay at the Danielli because we cannot afford it, and that goes far in making it a honeymoon.

A few hours after check-in, Cathy drops her wedding ring into the bathroom sink. She peers down the drain and sees nothing. I peer down the drain and see the gently graying, soigné salesman at David

S. Diamonds standing behind the vitrines with a replacement ring in one hand and my 18.99 percent APR MasterCard in the other, pinching the latter between thumb and index because, shriveled, it now resembles the torn corner of a page from a very sorry ledger.

The front desk sends a maintenance man, who dismantles the under-sink assembly. In moments he finds the ring and hands it over. He receives a tip worth one one-thousandth of the ring's value.

Twelve years later I will learn that during a festival every spring, in a millennium-old tradition, the mayor of Venice (and before him the *doge*) drops a wedding ring into the sea. This is how Venice celebrates its marriage to the ocean.

At check-out I review the bill. The bottom line is an injury, the comma between numbers a dagger. The top is insult: staring out at me from the letterhead are the four famous bronze horses of St. Mark's Basilica, looted by the Venetians from Constantinople in 1204.

(23) NOVEMBER 2002 AD, GREEKS: The parking lot at St. John's Greek Orthodox is not huge. When we arrive one Saturday morning, therefore, it is easy to see the priest is not there. In fact he arrives fifteen minutes late. (Promptness for a Greek is disrespect for tradition. We are five minutes late ourselves.) While family and friends fill the pews with chatter, the priest pulls my wife and me into an office, briefs us hastily on the ceremony and answers "Yes, yes" to a question from my wife that begins "Where." This persuades us against the utility of further questions.

When the ceremony begins, we know to face the priest. We know that much. What we don't know—because no one has told us—is that we're in for a full-blown wedding, complete with wedding crowns and three processions around the altar.

What we also don't know: to take off our wedding rings. After speaking a few lines to launch the ceremony, the priest regards the two of us warmly, leans in, and asks, "Do you have the rings?" My wife and I have the same reaction; we cram our ringed hands against our stomachs

while using our other hands to torque the rings off, careful to smother our elbows against the sides of our bodies because, unaccountably but passionately, we both believe that this will somehow ensure invisibility. It is a caricature of surreptitious movement. It is a caricature performed in tandem, moreover, and on the equivalent of a stage, making it that much more ridiculous. When the priest sees those rings, he freezes, his mouth hardens—the warmth is gone—and he looks up at us and stares, and we realize our error.

These details do not concern my father. He sits in a pew quite satisfied. He once sailed a Pacific route where, during a nighttime transit through the Panama Canal, the crew was so exhausted they humiliated themselves by trying repeatedly and failing to heave a half-inch line to a waiting tugboat; where he stranded himself and six ailing crew members in Tokyo after navigating them to a pre-arranged clinic visit but missing the rendezvous with the ship; where the ship encountered a typhoon so violent, and swamping seas so massive, that continuing ahead seemed like sure disaster, and turning seemed like certain catastrophe, and the ship—equally sensitive to this predicament—took forty-five seconds, engines full ahead and rudder hard starboard, to decide finally to turn.

For my father, the challenges of the journey are irrelevant. He has reached the appointed harbor.

The second wedding reception is at Maggiano's Little Italy. The Greek priest is invited but does not come. I do not know whether these facts are related.

In sum: I am Greek. But I have never lived in Greece. I do not speak Greek. My identity and provenance are a patchwork of remnants: family vacations in Athens and Methana; weekly duty as altar boy; Sunday school with Fifi Russell, a sweet-tempered woman with enormous spectacles who taught that anyone we encountered could be Jesus in dis-

guise; Greek dance practice; an esteem for basil; unrepentant tardiness. For me, these totems are a large part of my Greekness. For my father they are fusty and faintly ridiculous, like the inside of a favorite aunt's purse. He lived Greece; he has no need for tropes. In the end, his avoidance of basil is a habit and not much more.

My son is named after my father, in the Greek tradition. But my son's name is "Peter," what my father called himself after arriving in this country. It is not *Panagiotis*, my father's birth name. Even names are an approximation.

One wonders what happens to the Greek identity after a generation or two. One wonders whether the identity proceeds from the father and the son, or just the father. I am, after all, a man who honeymooned on a lagoon in Venice.

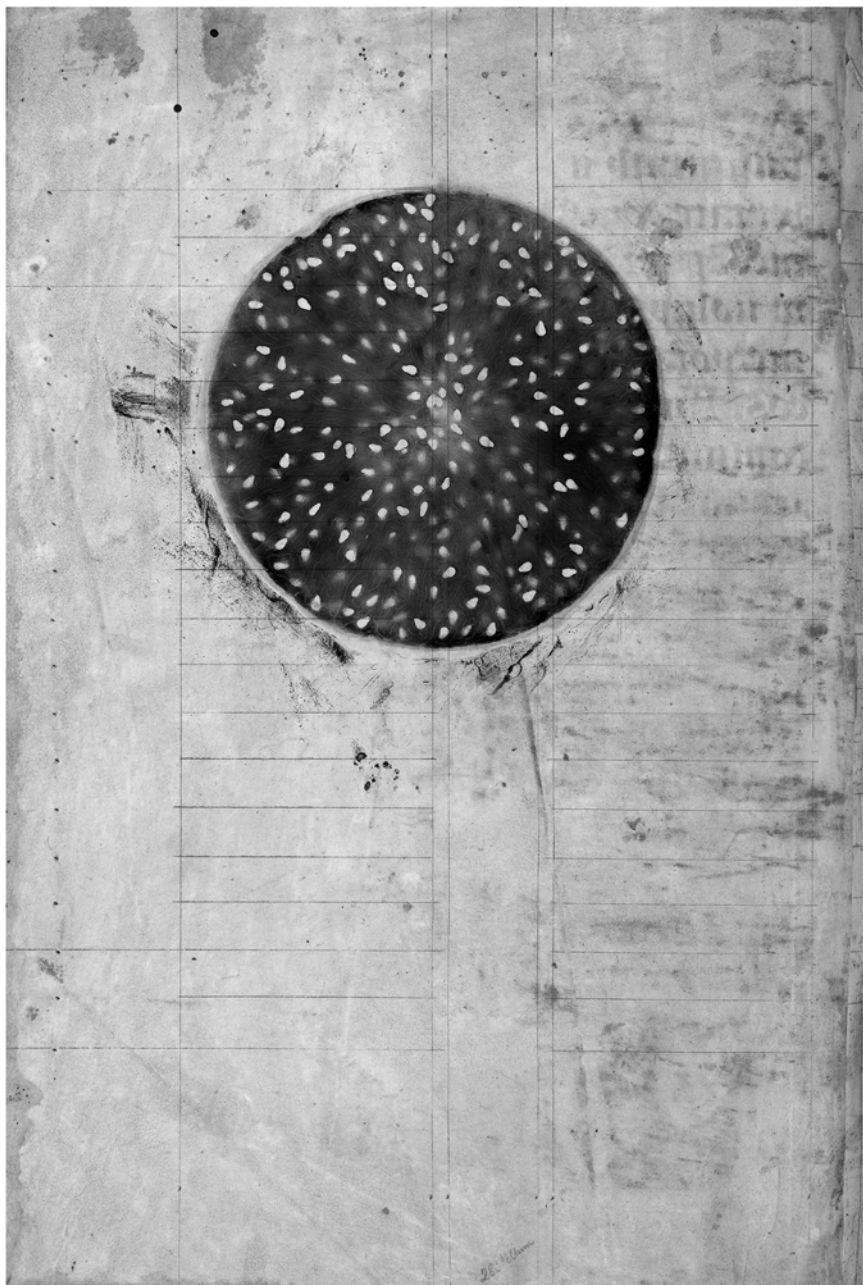
My bride is Roman Catholic. The Italian sea stole her during our honeymoon and married her in the U-bend of an enameled drain trap. Both my children are baptized Roman Catholic. We live in Westchester County, in fact a collection of Italian neighborhood restaurants with just enough homes to supply a clientele and just enough trees and grass to dilute the scent of adulterated basil.

Of course that's how it ends.

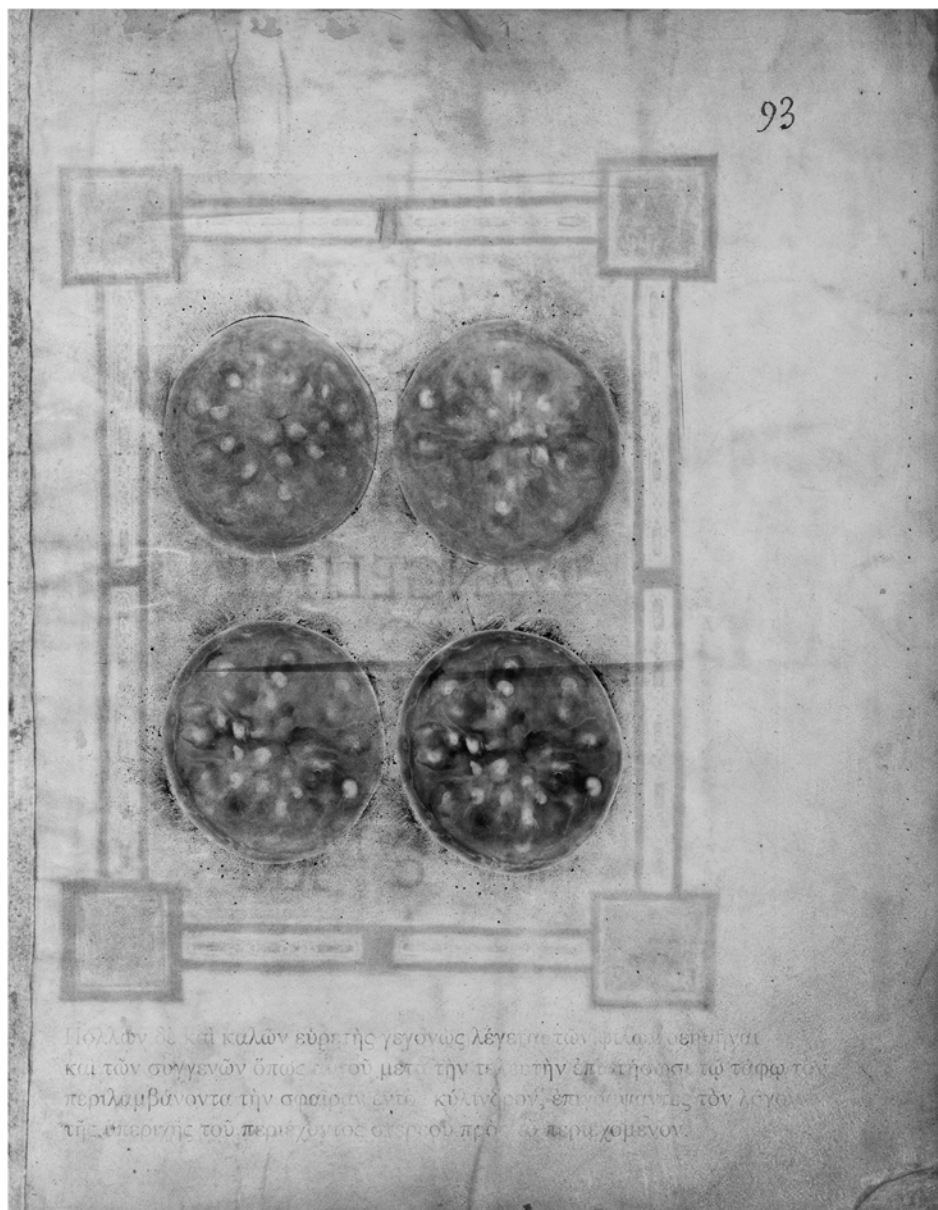
Love is the fruit of every perfidy, of every cataclysm.

Match, Italians?

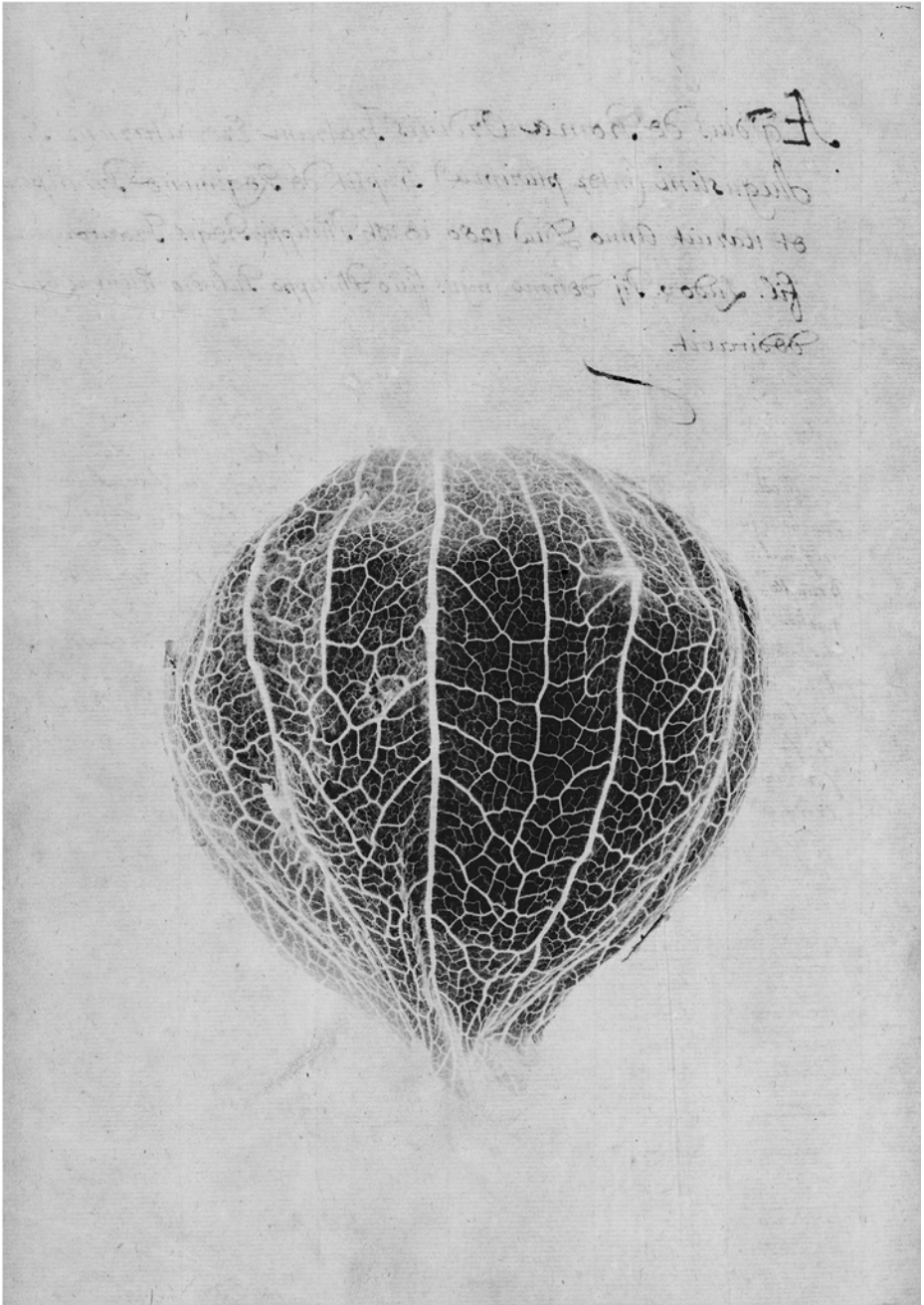
Oh. A Greek never capitulates. Not ever.



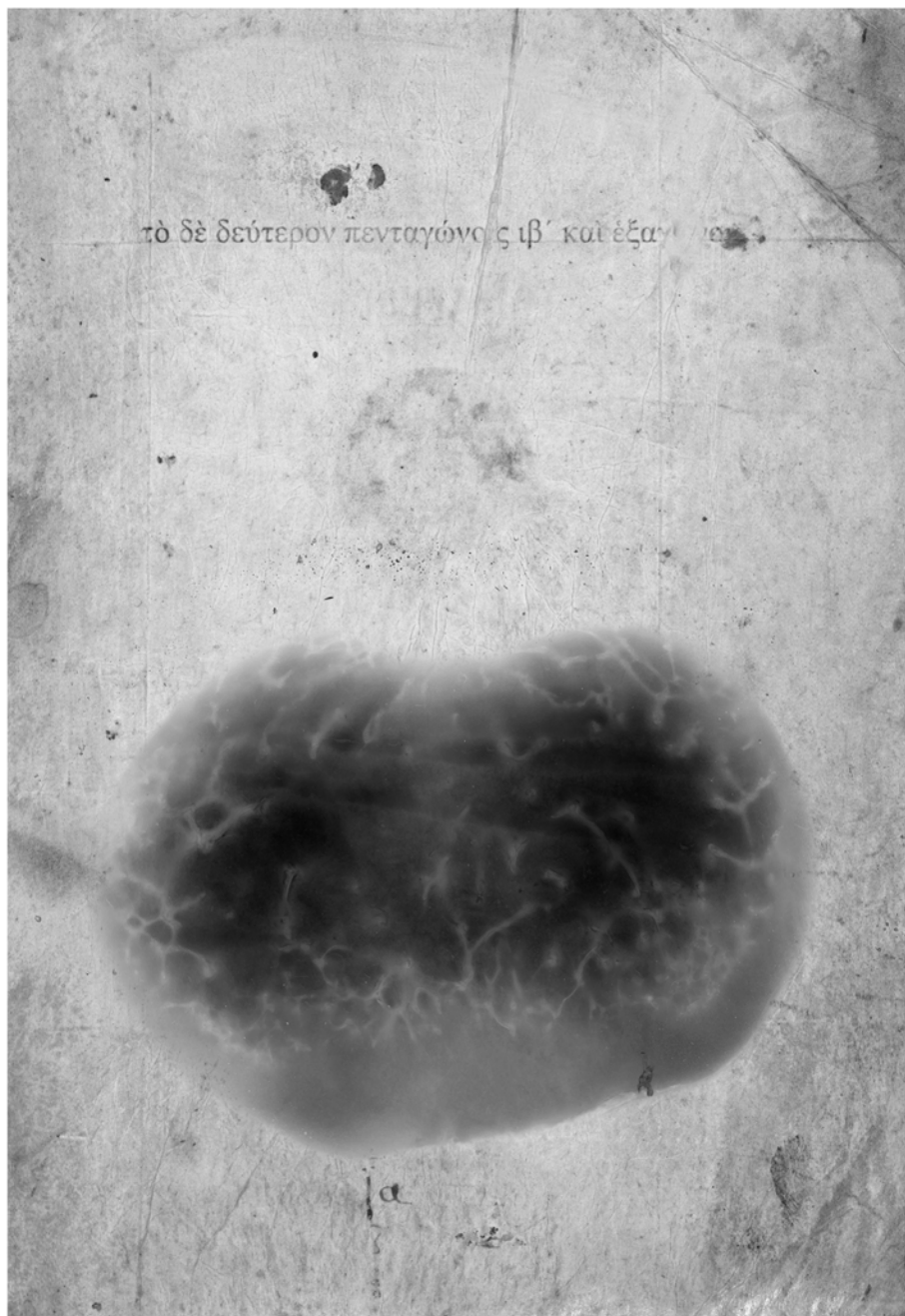
David Weinberg, *Palimpsest #1*, 2012, digital photograph,
composite image, archival inkjet print, 11 in. x 16 1/2 in.
*All background images courtesy of the digital archives,
Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland.*



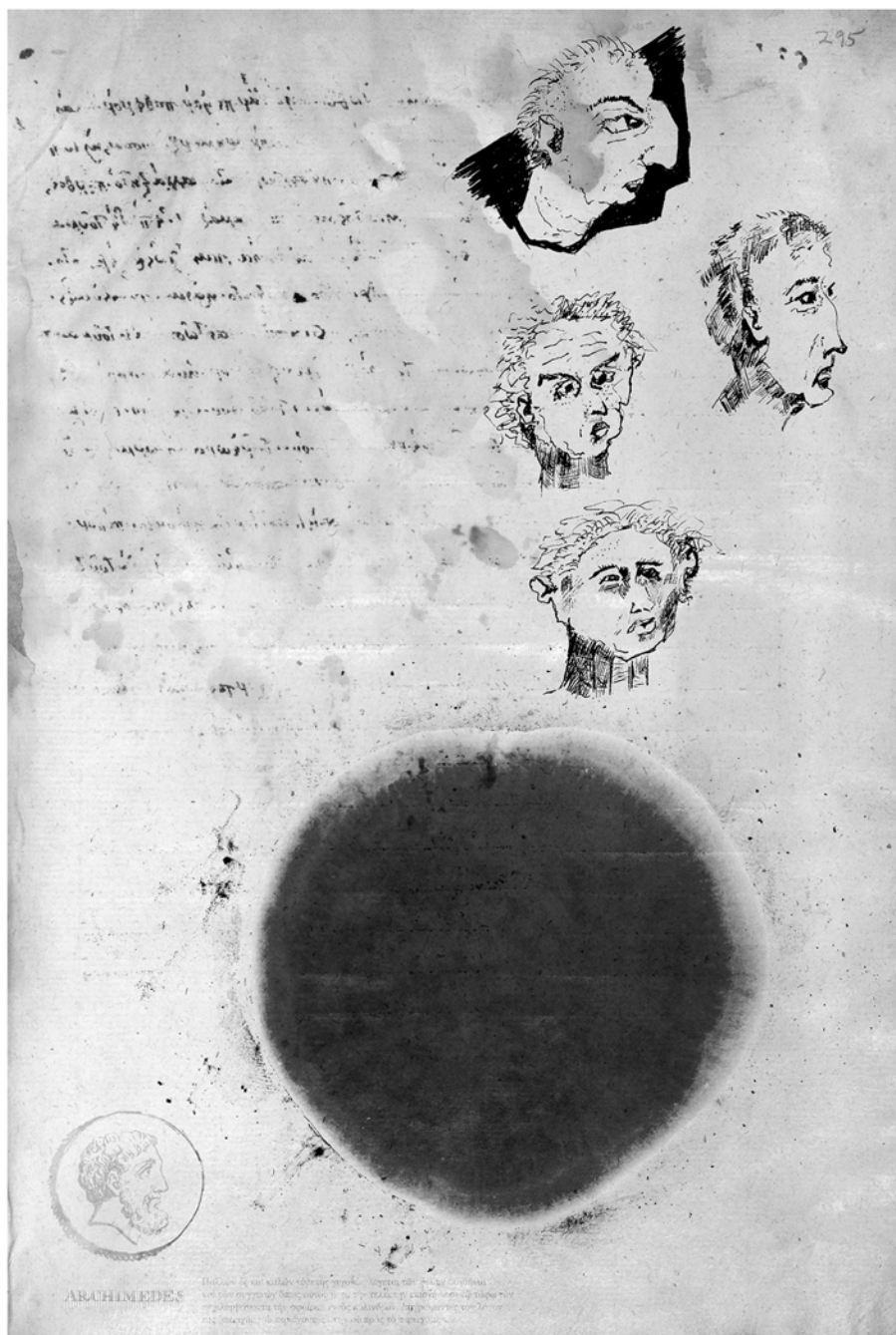
David Weinberg, Palimpsest #5, 2012, digital photograph,
composite image, archival inkjet print, 11 in. x 16 in.



David Weinberg, *Palimpsest #7*, 2012, digital photograph,
composite image, archival inkjet print, 11 in. x 15 3/5 in.



David Weinberg, *Palimpsest #10*, 2012, digital photograph, composite image, archival inkjet print, 11 in. x 16 2/5 in. Drawings courtesy of Louise Weinberg with permission.



David Weinberg, *Palimpsest #12*, 2012, digital photograph, composite image, archival inkjet print, 11 in. x 14 1/5 in.

RAÚL ZURITA
TRANSLATED BY
ANNA DEENY MORALES

from *Anteparadise*

/CI/

It was already getting late when He took
hold of my shoulder and said:

“Go kill me a son”

Come on—I grinned—you’re kidding,
right?

“Look, if you don’t want to that’s
your choice, but remember who I am,
and then don’t you complain.”

Willing—I heard myself say back to Him
—and where do you want this killing
done?

Then, as if it were the wind howl that
spoke, He said:

“Away, in those lost cordilleras of Chile.”

RAÚL ZURITA
TRANSLATED BY
ANNA DEENY MORALES

from *Anteparadise*

/CII/

With my face blood-soaked I called at
His door:

Could you help me—I said—I’ve got
some friends out here.

“Go away”—He replied—“before I kick the
shit out of you.”

Come on—I reminded Him—sir, you
know they also turned Jesus back.

“You’re not Jesus”—He answered—“get
or I’ll break your face. I’m not your father.”

Please—I insisted—they’re your sons...

“Fine”—He calmed down—“take them to
the promised land.”

Okay, but where is that place?—I asked—

Then, as if a star spoke, he replied:

“Away, in those lost cordilleras of Chile.”

RAÚL ZURITA
TRANSLATED BY
ANNA DEENY MORALES

from *Anteparadise*

/CIII/

Awoken suddenly from dreams I heard Him
in the night:

“Listen, Zurita”—He said—“get your wife and
your son and leave now.”

Don’t screw with me—I said—let me sleep in
peace, I was dreaming about these mountains
that went...

“Forget that shit and get out of here”—He was
adamant—“don’t think you have so much time.
The Duce is closing in.”

Listen—I said—remember that for a while
now you’ve kept me in the dark, don’t try to
do it again. I’m not Joseph.

“Stay on this road and don’t argue. Soon you’ll
know what’s true.”

Yes—almost weeping, I said—and where can
she safely have the child?

Then, as if the Cross itself illumined,

He answered:

“Away, in those lost cordilleras of Chile.”

ROXANA VON KRAUS

Meridians of the Heart

HALF MY LIFE I was trying to leave Romania, and the other half I was looking for it.

I escaped Communism on Christmas Day 1975. When I returned in 1991, the Bucharest airport had not changed much. Lufthansa still landed among cows grazing the airfield, and the concourse echoed with boots and anxiety. Customs agents smoked heavily and cursed loudly. Only this time, there were lights everywhere—the airport, the highway, the city.

When I left in 1975, the country lived in darkness. Ceausescu had decided to drain the economy to pay back the country's international debt. Overnight, he imposed a discipline of madness; he shut off the electricity and heat in the entire country. Hospitals operated on emergency generators, people were stuck in elevators, trains were canceled, and twenty million people cooked by flickering gas and read by candlelight. Schools, offices, and theaters were unheated. People attended Communist party meetings and *La Traviata* in full winter regalia. A photo of my parents from that time shows them celebrating New Year's Eve with friends, sitting around a festive table wearing winter coats,

fur hats, and woolen shawls. Their gloved hands hold up champagne glasses to toast the New Year.

Walking through Bucharest in 1991 felt like walking onto a movie set. Wooden crosses surrounded the Intercontinental Hotel and large banners proclaimed the revolution's credo: *Better dead than Communist*. The university's walls were pockmarked with bullet holes; white candles on the pavement illuminated the places where students had died.

Our stone house, with walls the color of ocean fog, was still there—only we were missing. Some of us had married and moved away, others had crossed borders to join somebody else's freedom, some had forgotten the time and simply died. On the front door was a handwritten note: *Anestia*. *Anestia* is a Greek word that means to be without a country, to have no land or language. That's how I felt, suspended somewhere in nobody's space or time. I sat on the cold front steps and listened to my city and to the stories of those who had passed through our house into nowhere.

The Tailor of Bucharest

When Domnul Badescu was evicted by the Communists from his home, he came to Strada Spatarului with his overweight wife, Betty, and Gypsy, his Pekingese dog.

They settled into the basement apartment with its street-level windows. Outside you could see only passing shoes, boots, or sandals, depending on the season. Occasionally dogs peed on the windows and children knelt to look inside.

Domnul Badescu brought to the basement his Singer sewing machine, a high, polished cutting table, and a wooden suitcase of parchment patterns and flat white chalk. Most mornings he waltzed around his clients, a measuring tape around his neck and a hedgehog pin cushion on his wrist. He wore black pants and a sharp winged vest. The sleeves of his white shirt were secured with gold-plated cufflinks. His real gold

cufflinks, along with his gold coins and gold teeth, were deposited at the State Bank in 1947, when the Communists declared gold and guns illegal. Nobody had protested or even questioned the declaration. They simply donated their forbidden valuables in silence and fear.

From whole cloth, in his basement apartment, Badescu created gray cashmere blazers and *kamelhaar* coats, silk blouses and velvet corsets. His handmade shawls of Spanish lace and persimmon organza were folded in drawers, layered with lavender seeds and rose petals.

In the seventies, Badescu became the couturier of the *nomenklatura*, the Communist elite, who could afford his prices and disregarded his bourgeois past. When the minister of Foreign Affairs came for a fitting, the State *Securitate* closed the entire street.

As a student, I went to their apartment to read forbidden books, the decadent literature of the West published before the Bolshevik era: Cronin's *Hatter's Castle*, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Remarque's *Arch of Triumph*, Maurois's *Climats*. Stories of hidden lives and forgotten times that were stacked on small tables or shelved behind glass in cherry-wood bookcases.

Domnul Badescu lived under the constant surveillance of both the *Securitate* and his jealous wife, Betty. There were rumors that, when his affairs became unbearable, she would beat him up.

Betty, dressed in a red velvet robe and shiny black flats, spent her days in the kitchen smoking and playing cards. She spread cards on the table and foretold the future. On Sundays she did not go to church, nobody did. She baked vanilla biscuits instead, with raisins soaked in Grand Marnier.

In the evening, bored with her husband's work, Betty climbed the back staircase to our apartment. She brushed the stairs' flaking paint from her shoulders and velvet hips as she emerged into our kitchen. She had no telephone so she used ours—the black rotary phone on the Biedermeier table in the common vestibule. She sat on a leather stool,

talking for hours with her relatives in the provinces and her daughter Coca, who lived two streets away. Coca was a heavy-boned woman who dreamed of becoming a ballerina but entered the world of theater only through an affair with a married actor. Betty's telephone conversations became so embarrassingly intimate that we placed a lock on the telephone dial to discourage its use. She could pick the lock with a safety pin, but she stopped using the phone when she lost a leg to diabetes and could no longer manage the stairs.

In December 1989, Domnul Badescu had a stroke and died, slumped over the cutting table. Chalk in hand, he was tracing a new suit for Ceausescu. That winter, death reached for both the tailor and the emperor and the suit remained unfinished.

A Romanian Story

In 1968, I attended high school in an orange house by St. Michael's Church. The Communists closed the church but could not stop its chestnut trees from blooming over the school yard next door. Every spring our classroom smelled of green chestnuts.

We shared wooden desks, Koh-I-Noor colored pencils, and Bic pens. All the school manuals had Ceausescu's picture on the first page, and his portrait was displayed on the teachers' desks and nailed over the blackboard in a large golden frame. We started to learn Russian in the third grade and English in the fifth. In high school, Madame Coulon tried to teach us French. I did not learn much from Madame Coulon, who was already defeated by Communism and melancholia. But I will never forget her arthritic fingers or the way she held the pencil so tightly that her knuckles turned white when she corrected our homework.

That year I received first prize for academics: a copy of Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, which I immediately traded for two pictures of Jean-Paul Belmondo, the French actor of *Breathless*.

Schools closed in May for summer vacation. We lived in a society where newspapers were censored, books were banned, and travel was forbidden, but summers, mysteriously, escaped government control.

Our summers in Bucharest were spent kayaking on the lake and playing soccer in the street. At night, garden cinemas projected movies on screens hung on ivy-covered brick walls. My friends, living in surrounding apartments, had beer parties on the balconies and watched the movies. Too far away to hear the sound track, we read the subtitles with old army binoculars or made up our own screen dialogue. During the day, the asphalt melted and remembered our shoes. Men smoked Carpati cigarettes and played chess in the shade. Women wore low-cut dresses and canvas espadrilles. And then it happened.

In August 1968, the Russians troops entered Prague, putting an end to Prague Spring and Dubček's dream of Communism with a Human Face. The democratic attempts that had been tolerated by the Russians for almost a year were over. Twenty years later Gorbachev would reform the Soviet political and economic system, but in 1968 the Soviets did not accept any deviation from the Party line, and our shared dream of freedom with the Czechs turned into a nightmare. All the members of the Warsaw Pact supported the Russians. The only Communist country that did not participate in the invasion of Prague was Romania. We wondered, *So what happens now? Will we be next?*

When the Russian tanks entered Prague, I was in the kitchen eating peaches. My father got the world atlas, a large book published before the Communists invented the political geography. He cleared the table of plates and knives, opened the atlas, and showed me all the places he had traveled to. There was Czechoslovakia, where he saw the puppet theater in Wenceslas Square. "That's where the Russians are now," he said. Next he showed me the Strait of Gibraltar and the coast of Patagonia, Africa, India, and the Arab lands.

I was mesmerized. The Russian tanks rolled out of my mind and I touched the map like an icon in church. Every day that summer I asked

for more stories, “meridians of the heart,” as he called them. I was so proud of my father that I told all my friends about his adventures. One Sunday morning my mother overheard me and said loudly over our heads, “Your father has never left the country. The Communists did not trust him with a passport.”

Waterways

Doctor Sosoiu was the chief anesthesiologist at the Bucharest City Hospital. He lived upstairs with his wife and son. Every Sunday, he played chess with my father. One day he disappeared. We never knew what happened, and, suspecting a family conflict, we never asked. Years later, when I was ready to leave the country, his son showed me his father’s journal:

They came in the middle of the night. They always come at night, when the sleep is sweet and the love is warm, when you are at the lowest point of resistance . . . and dignity. They knock at the door, rush in with the cold air and the silence of the street, and order you out of bed, out of dream, out of life, into their secret torture chairs and shifting sands. Nobody protests, questions, or doubts the ambush. After all, who could start an insurrection in a pair of pajamas? You must have done something wrong, something shameful, something inhuman. Otherwise why the hurry, the rush, the whisper of black tires on wet cement? I did not know. For fifteen years, I did not know why . . . they sent me to the Canal to dig dunes of white sand . . . with wooden shovels, to weave the waters of the Danube and the Black Sea. Each day took me one meter closer to the sea and one life away from life. For fifteen years I died with every sunrise. With every breath.

Now the son told me why his father had been imprisoned. It happened during his last open-heart surgery. While he monitored the patient,

the chief surgeon mumbled a political joke under his mask. They all laughed, but one nurse informed on them and the *Securitate* arrested them all, including the patient who was under anesthesia. They gave him fifteen years to recover.

Downstairs

In the seventies our extended family of aunts, cousins, and uncles lived downstairs. We placed a note on the door: *Ring once for Zamfirescu, twice for Belloiu*, informing mainly the mailman and the milkmaid, because our friends did not care who opened the door.

The apartment, previously occupied by two people, was now shared by eight. The new Bolshevik law allowed only five square meters per resident, and we all lived like cabbage heads in a garden patch. We, the kids born in Communism, were happy to share. We were born with nothing and did not miss much. It must have been much worse for our parents, who lost their dignity in the German war and their fortunes in the Russian peace.

The apartment had high ceilings and honey-toned parquet floors. A French door divided the space. On one side were three Zamfirescus: Bebe, Bobby, and their daughter, Mariuca. On the other were five Belloius: my parents, my brother, Dan, my grandmother, and me. All eight of us shared the bathroom, the kitchen, and the hallway.

Bebe was born a Cantacuzino, from the line of the Byzantine rulers. Brought up with *gouvernantes*, she was fluent in English and French and cursed the Communists in both languages. Evicted from her mansion, she came to Strada Spatarului with a truck full of wonders: Boule cabinets, Cordoba leather chairs, Russian samovars, and Japanese Kabuki masks with eyelashes and flowing beards. A Louis XIV red secretaire with inlays of brass and tortoise shell stood by the bathroom door. A Biedermeier table held a black telephone and a Baccarat decanter. The Japanese armoire in the hallway had a black lacquered frame and

delicate drawers decorated with ivory geishas in silk kimonos and tiny samurais with pearl swords and gold horses.

All the doors in the apartment were kept open, and the shared space became an extension of our lives. Bebe and Bobby lived in the front room facing the street. Mariuca had a camp bed in the back, in a dark room with no windows. A large Venetian mirror with Murano roses covered the wall and reflected the darkness. The Florentine dining table in the center did not serve its intended purpose. Bebe did not like to cook, so their meals were taken on the run on silver trays. The Florentine table came to life on Sundays when Bebe brought out the French roulette wheel and a Monopoly board with streets named after Hapsburg kings and Viennese cafes. The Communists did not believe in luck and declared these games illegal, along with other social vices like hoarding and homosexuality.

A golden mechanical piano stood by the entrance. Every Christmas, Mariuca sat on a black stool and “played” Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*. Mariuca was not a musician. Her performance was an illusion like everything else. The piano merely followed its own mechanical nature, reading rolls of punched musical notes.

In the seventies, Bebe sold the piano to a pharmacist, who did not want to shop in consignment shops for fear of germs. The pharmacist liked the idea of acquiring an *objet d’art* from a private home. Unfortunately, this museum piece was riddled with bedbugs. We tried for two days to clear them out with soap and aromatic oil, but eventually we gave up and sold it to the pharmacist *as is*.

Bobby was a doctor and when he was in his forties he got arteriosclerosis, a devastating disease where the sick lose their mobility, coordination, and eventually life.

One morning I saw Bobby facing the Venetian mirror trying desperately to knot his tie. He no longer went to the hospital to heal others and remained in bed waiting to die. One morning, I found him lying

on the floor. He must have fallen and was too embarrassed to call for help. He was fully dressed with gray slacks, white shirt, and suede house shoes. When I picked him up, he was light as a bird. I could feel bones through his skin. When he thanked me, his breath smelled of graham crackers.

He died that afternoon.

Bebe had the *veghere*, the mourning of the dead, at home. When somebody dies in Romania, the family covers the mirrors, but lays out the dead in the open. Bobby was placed, fully dressed, on the Florentine table, which was surrounded by friends and fellow doctors who came to whisper their respects. I had never seen a dead man before and the image of the gray body on the wooden table and the scent of funeral candles and incense entered my blood.

Forty days after his burial, on the night of a full moon, Bobby came back to me. I felt his hand on my shoulder and I smelled graham crackers on his breath. "Please help me. You are the only one who can help me," he said. Then the French door opened and closed behind him. I was terrified. I cried for hours. Mariuca dreamed of her father that same night. In the morning we both lit a candle for his soul, as we still do now, thirty years later, on nights of a full moon.

The Typewriter

Garro Hatchatourian was an Armenian who left Turkey, crossed Lebanon by truck, and arrived in Bucharest in the spring of 1970. He followed the Levant route that brought an entire generation of displaced Armenians from Anatolia to us.

Garro lived in a small apartment upstairs. He remained a Levantine, caught in a confusion of cultures, languages, space, and time. He lived like us, pretending to accept the Communist reality, while planning to escape from it.

In the seventies, he received an exit visa and took the overnight train to Paris. He left a gift for us—his manual Remington typewriter.

Under the Communists, a typewriter was an object of desire and intense fear. Every typewriter had to be brought to the police station for registration. Special agents took a copy of the typeset and filed it, together with the address, age, occupation, and marital status of the owner. If a political manifesto was posted on a public wall, its typewritten characters would betray the “class enemy.”

Garro brought us the typewriter in the middle of the night. It came with an instruction manual showing white hands over black keys like birds in flight. My brother did all the practice exercises and in a week was typing faster than the wind. I did not follow the instructions. I wanted to make money and learning good technique took too much time. I typed my English literature course notes on thin sheets layered with carbon paper, six copies at a time, and sold them to my fellow students.

There were no staples in Romania so I secured my notes on *An American Tragedy* with tiepins from Domnul Badescu. By the end of the year, my typed notes on Dreiser, Chaucer, and *The Wind in the Willows* bought me a pair of Italian boots on the black market. The boots came from Milan, chestnut brown, with fine leather strings that wrapped around from the ankle to the knee.

Radio Free Europe

My mother covered the French door, which separated the two families in our apartment, with a heavy Persian carpet that brought more dust than privacy. On our side, I shared a room and a bed with my brother and grandmother. The parents had the other closet-sized room that held two armoires, a mahogany bed, a Russian refrigerator, and a work table where my mother painted icons and movie cartoons. A large bay window faced

a purple lilac bush, where we draped our family's bed sheets to dry. In winter the sheets froze and cut our faces when we passed them at night.

An amber terra-cotta stove heated the apartment. We used to cut thin apple slices with a razor blade and dried them on the stove's marble shelf. There were no exotic fruits in Romania. Occasionally, my father brought home bananas, mostly in winter, when international freight trucks got stuck in the snow and whatever was headed to Paris ended up in Bucharest. Bananas were completely foreign to us, and their appearance in the market was usually followed by emergency radio broadcasts that sounded like nuclear tests warnings: *Tovarasi, comrades, do not eat green bananas! They have to turn yellow before they are any good!*

We did not have a TV, only an old Philips radio. Every night I listened to Radio Free Europe's heavily jammed broadcasts, looking for music. My father was terrified—*You'll send me to prison with your Beatles!* He refused to listen to news or commentaries because he no longer trusted the West. *I heard the Americans on this radio in forty-five, when they promised to come and bomb the Russians out of Eastern Europe. And nothing happened. Nobody came, and forty years later I am still here, and so are the Russians.*

Portocala

On December sixth, our house on Strada Spatarului was waiting for a saint. Our shoes, placed the night before in front of the stove, were by morning, heavy with gifts from St. Nicholas, the protector of children.

I never knew where my mother found gifts in the gray world we lived in. One winter, a Little Red Riding Hood was left in my shoe, a sugar cookie with aromas of Arabian cinnamon and Tahitian vanilla. I looked at her for weeks and when I finally decided to eat her I started, like the wild dogs, with her feet. Other delights were left in our shoes: *Amarettos* in colored cellophane, Nuremberg *Lebkuchen*, brilliant

aquarelles, picture books, and Matchbox cars. One winter morning there was a doll with real glass eyes! I will never forget her, standing by the terra-cotta stove, looking at me. She did not last long though. My brother, Dan, pushed her eyes in. Then her arms fell off. My mother tied them back on with an elastic band from Dan's underwear but the magic was gone.

In the seventies the entire country was standing in line. You never knew what the line was for until you reached the front and discovered the elusive toilet paper, eggs, milk, or chicken's feet. When I turned eighteen, my grandmother, who had more common sense than any of us, gave me one liter of sunflower oil and one kilo of sugar as a birthday present.

Still, the best gift came from my mother—the *portocala*. Once, after hours of waiting in the snow, she brought home a brown bag of oranges. We gathered around the table, all five of us, for the "orange ceremony." My grandmother peeled the orange and put the peels in a glass jar for Christmas baking. The naked fruit left behind, one orange at a time, was divided into segments, shared, and enjoyed in silence. In Romania I never ate a whole orange by myself.

Years later, at a party in New York, I was given an orange for dessert. I divided the fruit and turned around with my offering for everyone at the table. Nobody understood and I was left with my arms, stretched out like wings, reaching out to old shadows left behind in Bucharest.

Contributors

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CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY's twentieth poetry book is *Back Room at the Philosophers' Club* (Stephen F. Austin State University Press, 2014). He is also the author of the nonfiction book, *Holy Days of Obligation* (Lynx House Press, 2014). He is the recipient of a Guggenheim in poetry, two NEAs, a Fulbright in creative writing, four Pushcart Prizes, and the 2013 Campbell Corner Poetry Prize.

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CATHERINE CARBERRY recently earned her MFA from Bowling Green State University, where she served as assistant editor of *Mid-American Review*. She has also served as a reader for journals including the *Paris Review* and *Columbia Review*. Her fiction appears in publications including *Tin House online*, *North American Review*, *Greensboro Review*, *Sou'wester*, and *New Ohio Review*, and has been broadcast on National Public Radio. She lives in Spain.

VICTORIA CHANG's third book of poems, *The Boss*, was published by McSweeney's in 2013 and won the PEN Center Literary Award and a California Book Award. Her other books are *Salvinia Molesta* (University of Georgia Press, 2008) and *Circle* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2005). Her debut children's picture book, *Is Mommy?*, was published by Beach Lane Books/Simon & Schuster in 2015. She lives in Southern California and teaches poetry at Chapman University. You can visit her at www.victoriachangpoet.com.

GEORGE CHOUNDAS's work has appeared in over forty publications, including the *Southern Review*, *American Reader*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Subtropics*, and *The Best Small Fictions 2015*. He is winner of the New Millennium Award for fiction, a former FBI agent, and the son of a Greek merchant mariner and a Cuban schoolteacher.

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SUZANNE MATSON is the author of two volumes of poetry and three novels, including *The Tree-Sitter* (W. W. Norton, 2006). She is a recipient of fiction writing fellowships from the National Endowment of the Arts and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and she teaches at Boston College.

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