



PONDER REVIEW

Volume 1, Issue 2

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POUNDER REVIEW

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A Note to Readers

In early 2017, we launched the inaugural biannual issue of *Ponder Review* showcasing a host of exceptional work in fiction, flash, creative nonfiction, visual art, and poetry. Themed “Firsts,” that introductory volume set a high bar for the quality and caliber—not to mention the diversity—of writing and images featured on these pages. With this second issue, we are delighted to introduce another first, expanding our range of forms to include creative and innovative new media. Digital animation now hosted on our web site at PonderReview.com blends traditional and emerging media in work that is as beautiful as it is adventurous, anchoring a promising new medium for the magazine—one that we anticipate will flourish in future issues.

In the meantime, we are excited to round out our first year of *Ponder Review* with an initial handful of very strong Pushcart nominations spanning the categories of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction—including several pieces featured in this second issue. These pages include writers and visual and digital artists working in the U.S. and abroad. We have incorporated multiple, thematically linked works from a number of our current contributors to give readers a broader taste of their talents, both narrative and visual.

From Twitter-based fiction to four flash gems, we open this issue with mystery and magic and conclude it with careful attention to the specific weight of a word. In between, our contributors take up matters of aging, immigration, political resistance, religion, relationships, whimsy, loss, and love. Two young men part ways in their response to the Vietnam-era draft. A son reflects on his parents’ divorce and a daughter inherits her family’s hardships. Every story in this second issue is unique, and each of these selections offers a compelling sense of contemporary literature and art. We trust that you will find as much pleasure and provocation in this collection as we continue to enjoy.

Sincerely,

The Editors

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ALEXANDRA BARYLSKI

MYSTERY AND MAGIC OF ST. PETER

Cut my limbs. With kettle water boil this clay
until I am loam scented, a rising steam.

O you who know my osteosymmetry,
array these marrow-seeped darkening fragments

on my father's table. Cross me left to right,
clavicles to frontal cranium to manubrium: Trinity.

New flesh rises under stiff bread breaking,
sanctuary of bone-cracks where each Sunday all eat

of one hale body—no small presumption
to make whole an image of God. Human desire

to restore anatomy is an imperfect art.
Genuflect. Kneel. At the Eucharist

my mouth ripped wide with mystery—
broken body on my teeth, your lips

splitting my lips open for wonder
in adoration of lost motherhoods.

I assault every rosemary bush and crush
her leaves, oils inking my palms, pressed

into my life-line like a self-made chrism. I cup
my face to inhale where all is violent, all is bright.

ROBERT JOE STOUT

DESPISE WHAT THE SIGN OVER THE WINDOW SAYS
THE TOURIST RESTAURANT NO LONGER SERVES
ITALIAN FOOD (LORETO, MEXICO)

The waiter stood with hands folded
staring past two window-side tables
at the street. Now and then
a pedestrian paused,
peered inside, continued past.
Their *gringo* faces reminded him of phrases
he'd learned washing dishes and polishing ashtrays
in crowded cafes on The Other Side.

What you would like?

The meal it good, yes? His lips
whispered the words
through matted recollections
of bean fields, migrant camps,
the Border Patrol. (Their faces no different
from tourist fishermen unpacking 4-wheel drives.)

Sst! 'Gorio! The cook's hissed whisper
forced him through tangled hurts
to the doorway where a man and boy
stood debating which table to take.

Buena' tarde, the man said, speaking Spanish.
Espagueti the boy pointed to the window sign,
his accent better than the man's,
espagueti con salsa alfredo... The waiter's
hands turned inward, then outward.

We not...not... Like rocks the words
slid down his throat, bumped
against cliffs in his chest.

As they left the boy took
the man's hand. The waiter watched
the way the father's stride
shortened to accommodate the boy's. Slowly

he lifted his arms, felt
his father's callused grip
swing him over the tailgate
into the pickup the *patrón* let them drive.
Que le vay'bien! That all goes well!
But the shout, like the faces
he saw in dreams,
came from a grave inside.

WOMAN IN A NEAT GREY SUIT

As the man beside her talks,
hands grasping imaginary forms in front of the table,
she touches the top button of her white blouse,
feeling out of place
late at night in the Optimo Lounge
where a rock-a-billy band is banging bad Willie Nelson
and a veil of grayish smoke
scuffs the neon advertising signs. She sees me
looking at her and smiles,
instinctively. Her teeth are uneven;
her lips seem to catch and hold on the incisors,
a half-pulled curtain that she quickly closes.

And touches the top button again,
a bird poised on a branch
listening to sounds in the earth below,
nods and opens the curtains
of her smile and, briefly beautiful,
blinks at her partner
as though seeing, for the first time,
that he, like her, like me,
is there alone.

DISSIDENT, OAXACA, MEXICO

*“Neither have those on the left obliged the PRI
to make any important changes in their form
of governing.”*

—Enrique Semo
The Search

“Cayó! Cayó! El asesino!”

Banner high
he marched
and chanted
confident he and those with him
could make an impact,
force the evil
corrupt forces
to step down.

And with the others
went to meetings,
voted pacifist resistance,
night after night
blockading highways to protect
his *compañeros*
from marauding state-paid gunmen,
singing as they labored
Venceremos!

We will overcome!
Then heard warnings:
Soldiers coming!
Tear gas, guns,
huge *tanketas* spouting
pepper spray and water;
he and companions

forced to run.
To hide. *But where?*
Paramilitaries

had their names and occupations,
pulled them
from their cars and houses,
beat and raped them,
threw them into jail.

Crippled now,
he walks on crutches
—cannot march—
“*Cayó, cayó,*
la buena gente:
Resist is useless;
they have tanks
and guns
and soldiers

we have only
broken souls.”

L. J. ROBERTSON



WRECKAGE

YIDAN XIE

CLASSIC OF MOUNTAINS AND SEAS

As a multimedia artist, I focus mainly on dynamic imaging. My digital works are varied, including use of video, animation, illustration, sound, and visual design. In them, I present a mysterious and fantastic visual experience, drawing on the emerging medium of spatial narrative and on relationships of women to nature and mythology.

This latest project is an independent and experimental animation, “Classic of Mountains and Seas.” Its inspiration comes from an ancient Chinese book of the same name: a compilation of mythic geography and myths. My work introduces new forms of animation to accompany this traditional storyline, in particular images arising from discoveries and interesting concepts in the study of Eastern painting.

Viewers may find that text in this animation is often hard to read, because the font is difficult to decipher. Through these strange texts, I explore and attempt to discover inverse relationships between images and narrative. Movement allows for another level of interpretation and understanding—rough and broad—of the language and its meaning. Viewers may “read” the new symbols, text, and language per the suggestions of the images. In this sense, though they may not directly interpret the text, they nevertheless begin to feel an understanding of its meaning. Viewers are encouraged to experience the work as a whole, to feel rather than simply read the text.

A second notion at work in this piece, the idea of admitting blank space, derives from a concept of “white space” particular to Eastern painting. Eastern artists believe that consciously preserved white space provides room for the imagination. I have adopted this concept in my animation, and use sound to populate imageless blank spaces. Meanwhile, I create a unique background with a different visual aesthetic for each creature represented in the piece, distinguishing the foreground and background, which generates another layer of space.

Sound, finally, is an important element in this animation. It serves not only as background music, but also as a narrative tool for filling darkened empty space with a sense of hearing. For example, when clouds gather, the viewer can hear sounds of thunder and rain, but no corresponding image is offered visually. Sound in this way does not always cater to image: it can develop space and narrative independently.



<http://www.ponderreview.com/new-media/4899-yidan-xie>

KARL PLANK

HOW HUNGER SOUNDS

Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How many are the days of the years of your life?” (Genesis 47:8)

When he asks of the days and years of your life,
he is not being polite nor is he curious about your age.
He wants to know if grain has been ample and
your body warm when sheaves bronze in the sun,
if the milled flour has become bread that satisfies.
Or, he has already read the lines of your brow
as a story of parched fields and faces lost to view,
and seeks to understand the ways of famine,
if the ache is all. It will not be your final word,
but your clearest. *Few and evil have been my days,*
you reply, as if to say, they are not long enough
and still too long. Those who went before had it better.

The heart's hollow growls:
this is how hunger sounds.

VIRGINIA WATTS

MARTI'S FATHER

So this is what it comes down to, a room like this. My daughter is getting ready to begin college, and I will be seeing another room like this one soon enough, but this isn't a dorm room. This isn't a room where you dream into a whole, long life ahead of you. This isn't a room where you talk about professors and parties and the people you had sex with and want to have sex with and never will. This isn't a room where you pretend you know what you don't know. This isn't a room where you drink beer and purse your lips around joints and eat pizza and look outside without noticing the airplanes etching permanent lines into high sky, lines so steady and constant they make you feel a madness once you can't stop noticing them. In a dorm room, you don't notice what is in the sky in your days and nights, but in rooms like this one, there aren't interruptions.

"Where do you want to start?" I ask my friend. A day ago, her father was placed under hospice care. He won't be coming back here. We have come to collect his things.

"Let me turn on the air conditioner first. Isn't this a nice room?" I am staring at the back of Marti's shiny, black hair. I always admire her hair, but not as much as her dark brown eyes that light up like fire with the toss of emotion.

I look around for a way to agree with her. There is real hardwood on the floor, a twin bed, a patterned, wingback chair in forest green with orange beaked, mallard ducks, aren't they all forest green, and aren't there always mallard ducks, an armoire, a floor lamp with a milk white globe, his walker, his wheelchair, and I don't know what else. I found something.

"It has great natural light." I say, probably too loudly, but she has gone into the bathroom and closed the door. I don't know why she wants to save anything. I think we should just close the door, leave the key in the lock as we were directed to, get back on Lancaster Avenue, and go home. We don't. Instead, we carry her father's legion of pressed khaki slacks, a line of striped, button down shirts, his navy fleece jacket, his navy winter jacket, some V-neck sweaters, and one pale yellow shirt with silver embroidery and wide open, short sleeves, to my car. We lay them gently on their backs inside the trunk. I make sure the pale yellow shirt is on top. I remember the Italian men in my hometown wearing shirts exactly like it. I'd forgotten about them.

We weren't Italian like most of the families who lived there, the generations of Hershey Chocolate factory workers. My father never wore a shirt like this, but I love this shirt. I want to ask Marti what she is going to do with the clothes, but I don't. I run my fingertips down the softness of embroidery edges and let the trunk lid drop.

We make seven trips to our SUVs lined nose to trunk, passing in both directions by the residents of Impressions Memory Care of Bryn Mawr Terrace. They are having breakfast in the common area, quiet over their pancakes and butter in plastic cups, about fifteen of them. It is difficult moving things out, because a nurse or an orderly or someone wearing eggplant garb has to come over to the keypad by the front doors to buzz us in and buzz us out each time. I wanted to ask if we could prop the doors open for a few minutes. It didn't look like any of the residents were inclined to bolt, but I think of many things I never say.

I feel terrible, at first, about upsetting the residents and the purple people, parading back and forth as we are, but after my third glance at the group assembled, I believed in their resignation. Where I thought I might see resentment, maybe anger or fear or how about sadness, I see nothing at all. It was breakfast. Even so, I can't seem to shake the refrain of the song we cheerleaders used to inspire the crowd near the end of a winning high school basketball game. It was the late 1970's, and Queen's Freddy Mercury was singing "And another one's gone, and another one's gone, and Another One Bites the Dust."

"This painting is beautiful. Is it Italy?" I carefully remove a painting that is hanging over the top of Room 124s bed. It is an oil painting that, if cleaned, would have the most beautiful blue sky, a pristine robin's egg with no brown freckles. I know that not all eggs will hatch in a nest. They aren't supposed to. Nests are small, and birds expect this. When it happens, they knock the unhatched egg out of the nest and try to hide it under some brush. Nature is nature. Things are supposed to happen as they do. Who doesn't know that. There is a reason why nature does things that has something to do with what is best for the whole. Marti's father doesn't always know who she is anymore.

"No. It's Germany. He brought that all the way back from Germany. I'm going to put it in my living room. Do you think it will look okay in there with the paint color?" I consider telling her to have the painting professionally cleaned first, but I'll wait for another time when we are standing in her future. She'll be smoking a cigarette in her garage, and I'll be drinking red wine out of a paper cup, and that's when I will tell her.

We are slowly emptying the room. When I reach for the lamp next to the bed, Marti catches my elbow in her fingertips.

"That little beauty came with the room. It stays." She says. The lamp's

base is supposed to resemble a tree trunk. I am glad it is staying behind, because something about it reminds me of a prosthetic limb.

We carry out shoes, a curly, brass, desk lamp that reminds me of a military bugle, an LCD television, and a small Happy Birthday balloon on the end of a white plastic stick, in primary colors, inflated as tight as a drum. I think they sell these all day and all night at the checkout lines in Acme. I used to buy them for my kids when they were young, whether it was their birthday or not. There are no rules about birthday balloons.

“Is it your birthday?” People would ask.

“No!” I guess it wasn’t kind, confusing people on purpose, but the harm was small.

We strip the bed to leave behind everything except the blanket, which I roll up like a sleeping bag and shove into another bag. Marti wants to keep it. I really don’t want to touch the bedsheets or the blanket. I think she should touch those, but I do it.

“I think the last thing are his toiletries. I guess grab that big bag over there.” Marti points to a white bag under the windows, banked forward against the force of a vent spewing conditioned air.

“Okay.” I follow her inside the bathroom, shivering, and hold my breath. She starts to save a toothpaste in progress and decides against it.

The bathroom makes sense. Handrails and no conventional shower tub, just a silver shower head in the ceiling, tile curved downward toward a wide drain in the center of the floor, and a round shower curtain drawn back. There comes a time when we all stop climbing. I never thought climbing trees was as much fun as it should be. The bark is rough, and you can’t really sit comfortably anywhere in a tree, unless you are a panther. I was never brave enough to climb high enough to make it all worthwhile anyway.

There are trees outside the windows in the other room. You can’t see the trunks, because of the frosted privacy glass in the lower window panes, but you can see the slope and the tapering of branches and green leaves right now. I imagine, at night, you could see the stars and the moon on occasion and of course the night planes, winking on their approach into Philadelphia Airport.

“Do you really want to take all of that?” I shouldn’t ask.

“Yea, we can use this shower gel and shampoo. Need some Nivea cream? There’s a lot here. It’s the original formula.”

“No, thanks.” I used that cream in college. I haven’t smelled it in years, but I remember. There wasn’t much room in my dorm room. I kept the navy blue bottle on top of the milk crate holding my record albums, Jackson Browne, Fleetwood Mac, The Eagles and their Greatest Hits: “Peaceful Easy Feeling,” “Take It To the Limit.”

Marti is studying a plastic comb and brush in the palm of her hand.

I glance down at the half full trash can at my feet, next to the toilet, and wonder if I should pick it up and offer it to her. She looks up at me.

“If I clean these up, maybe Katie or Andrew might want them.” He has meant so much to his grandchildren. They have meant a lot to each other.

“Yes, of course. Yes, they might.”

I don’t look at the comb and the brush long enough to see much detail, but they appear to be new. They could have come with the room too, sealed inside a plastic bag with other complimentary toiletries, cotton balls, cue tips, a tiny dental floss with twelve inches of floss rolled inside it, but what difference does that make. I understand how we all try to draw connections. I know how we all try not to lose as much as we do. I switch the bathroom light off with my knuckles.

We check the drawers in the room twice. Marti turns off the air conditioner. I look under the bed and the nightstand and the table where the television had been angled toward his head pillows, and find nothing, not even dust. That is another compliment for the room.

“I guess that’s it. Guess we’ve done it!” I say, encouraging the ending.

I noticed a small box of disposable toothpicks on the television table, when we first came into the room. It was the only small shape in the room. I reach for it now.

“I guess I can throw these...”

“No!” Marti’s reaction stops my arm mid motion. I think of the game we used to play in the summer in the backyards of my neighborhood, “Red Light, Green Light.” When someone shouts “Red Light,” you are supposed to freeze in whatever position you are in. I remember holding my breath and trying not to blink, even though I worried about my eyes drying out. Funny, now I can’t remember how you won the game, or if winning was a part of it at all.

“My father always had a toothpick! I am going to bury these with him, I think.” She drops the box into her purse and snaps it shut.

We spin in one, slow, final circle together, before we close the door and leave the key in the lock. On the way outside, Marti hugs some of the nurses. One woman in a suit walks by with her clipboard hanging limp beside her thigh, the coordinator of something. There is a glut of coordinators in the medicine of today.

“Marti, if there is ever anything I can ever do, or if you need anything at all, anything, please don’t hesitate to call me.” That’s an empty offer. He is dying now. Your job is done.

Early the next morning, Marti’s father was gone. I listened to the details of the ending on the phone in my bedroom, where I had been asleep and could not have known what was happening overnight, inside a room on the fourth floor of Bryn Mawr Hospital, or anywhere in any other part of the

world. I thought about the painting of Germany, silver embroidery thread woven through a pale yellow shirt, a box of toothpicks, and the reason that sleep has always scared me. I don't like the idea of me leaving so completely like that. It never feels like my own free will.

There was an Italian restaurant, DeAngelis, in my hometown of Hershey, Pennsylvania. We often went there, my parents and my brothers and I. They had pizza with the sauce on top of the cheese, instead of the other way around. Always, there was a box of complimentary, mint flavored toothpicks, lid wide open, on the left side of the cash register, and on the other side, a bowl of pastel, baby teeth, after-dinner mints. I wasn't allowed to take any mints. My mother said it was unsanitary. She said they needed to put a spoon in the dish. Mrs. DeAngelis watched the toothpicks very carefully, because children weren't allowed to take any. We might choke.

That first morning without Marti's father, I quickly hung up the phone, warm from my cheek. I knew where I was going. I waited in my car until the antique store in Wayne opened for business. I had seen something there long ago, and this morning, I remembered it. I bought the sterling silver toothpick holder, shaped like a miniature flower urn. I polished it and wrapped it. I gave it to my friend, and she wept. I stood in her family room with her, where I had been so often, thinking of the people I should miss again. That's what we all do, I suppose, when someone new dies.

It is probably a coincidence that my best friend's father was Italian, and that I grew up in a predominantly Italian town, but maybe not. Not everything has to be a coincidence. Maybe we should wonder about why we find the friends we do. Marti's father didn't know me, but he gave me something in return, something I haven't had in a long time: Mr. DeAngelis and his smile when he walked past our table in his restaurant, my flute teacher Mr. Cagnoli, the kindest and most patient teacher, his Dalmatian dog resting her head heavy in my lap, while I fumbled through another music lesson, unprepared, Mr. Memmi inside his bakery on top of the hill on Hillcrest Road, walking all the way from the back of that deep building to lean down and hand me a warm roll, Mr. Tulli measuring my feet at the end of every August for new school shoes, but never asking me questions about my summer or my upcoming year, because he knew I was too shy to want to answer, Mr. Pronio inside the family's grocery store in the center of Hershey, on Caracas Avenue, handing me a bottle of bubbles from his ladder stocking the highest shelf, a tangerine in the winter, and once, a plastic dump truck that really worked. He cut the seal on a bottle of soap detergent with his pocket knife to give it to me, even though my mother wasn't going to buy the detergent with the free toy. Mr. Pronio carrying me in his arms to our car one winter day, after I got struck with a sudden fever. He shut the door as quietly as he could, and then his face came close to the window. I was so

sorry, because he looked frightened.

The funeral for Marti's father was on a Tuesday in Glen Mills, in the first Catholic Church established in Pennsylvania. I am not a religious person, but I like churches. I had never been inside this one. There were new windows and heights in colors to see, new arches to trace, different creaks in floors. The wood holding us was smooth and shiny and thickly cut. You can never smell church candles burning, but you make up for that by watching them move. I rested my back against my seat, closed my eyes, and tuned everything away from me, the music, the words, the coughs, the crunch of the car tires getting into place on the cinder drive outside. I wanted to thank Marti's father from inside a church. I wanted to thank Dr. Raphael F. DeHoratius for what he had left behind for me.

SEIGAR



NORWEGIAN PEOPLE



MY EDINBURGH VIII



MORE MOUNTAINOUS

NYANKA JOSEPH

THE EARTH IS A CARNIVORE

At first we sat and watched the flowers laughing for seven hours. It was a new phenomenon. They had sprouted teeth and tongues and lips and filled fields with sound from sunrise to sunset. Of course, some of them cackled. It was unsettling, so we avoided forests as ferns and vines cackled more than daffodils or roses. The best of them would sing, their songs carried onto the wind and through smog filled cities, making us shut up and listen.

Of course, flowers themselves were a new phenomenon. They had begun sprouting naturally again last spring. This threw the scientific world into frenzy. That was around the time I met Xanver. It was at a rally for saving the ocean, and saving the world, or maybe just really about saving humanity from itself. Some scientists tried but, scientists cannot create things that are naturally occurring. No matter how good their science it is never exact and there are always distorted outcomes. But that was a fact and we had long passed the point of facts being un-debatable. They had morphed into a debatable entity.

Fact: I am 24 and was born when the sky was still blue, not the horrid ghastly green it is now.

Opinion: The sunsets looks prettier with no ozone layer to protect us.

Xanver held a picket sign; “Earth’s needs over your greed!” He was chanting loudly, as if his words could single handedly shake sense into the .5%. They didn’t, but I wondered if the seeds were listening. Was his voice the catalyst they needed?

At first, we were happy. In an excited frenzy, people rushed in droves to capture views of the Floral Renaissance. They recorded and played it on their Streams, analyzed and reanalyzed. By the end of spring, we realized that these flowers were different. The petals were darker, not the vibrant colors from old textbooks and pictures on the Stream. We were still thankful. I remember the first report. It was looped over and over on the Main Stream; a shaky video by a man in his late 40s titled “the plants are singing”. It was—well, it changed the game.

Fact: Xanver is 5’11 with deep brown eyes and hair like burnt wool.

Opinion: He tastes the way I imagine strawberries tasted before they were made in Petri dishes.

I poked Xanver in his rib, “Xan! Xan! Wake the fuck up, you have to see this! You have to—”

So we did, streamed it on an infinite loop with just about five billion other people. People rushed again to the fields, hoping to catch a song or two. What they got instead were screams, a shrieking that left you no choice but to double over and cover your ears. People had no choice but to maintain a ten feet radius. No plucking flowers apart, no stomping on roots or sniffing aggressively. We were forced to observe.

On the dark side of the Stream, the Outliers had started chatting. They were saying the world was ending. As if the world hadn’t ended twice before. As if we had not managed to survive a 15-year drought, three major famines, freak tornadoes, and tsunamis. We were the dregs of a civilization that killed itself and lied about it (unpopular opinion).

Xan and I debated the finer points of our demise for the first week of our friendship, before we turned carnal. We turned carnal because we were always expecting to die, and we didn’t know if we’d be eaten by the flowers the way streamer TalkingCadaver suggested. It was our debate on the specifics of being consumed by singing flowers that somehow led to his lips on mine and his fingers in my thick hair, on my collarbone, pressing against my chest, and between my legs.

Fact: Plants have no opposable thumbs.

Opinion: They are better that way.

Lions, when they existed, didn’t have opposable thumbs either. I wonder if a lion will sprout asexually and with opposable thumbs. I forget the thought as Xanver takes me in his mouth. I can’t help but think of the flowers shrieking as I start to do a weak imitation.

Fact: It is spring again, and there are whispers of flowers with opposable thumbs.

Opinion: They are better that way.

Xanver and I lay in bed. We are on the Stream. I am making little curls in his coarse hair with my fingers. He hums with pleasure and makes little vibrations in the air. He uses his opposable thumbs to massage my chest. I start to hum too.

Fact, Breaking News: Child bitten by flower has been rushed to hospital.

Opinion: Her parents must have been stupid. She must have been stupid, too.

News from all over the Stream floods in. Some extremists warn that this is the first step in mankind’s demise.

“We knew they didn’t need thumbs!”

“This is an act of terrorism!”

“We need to bomb the flowers!”

No one says the little girl is a terrorist too for shoving her hands into

the face of a young flower and attempting to pluck away its beauty. Portions of the dark Stream start to shift with tension. Echoes of the word “rally” are thrown about. Xan and I get off our asses and find materials for writing signs.

“If the plants are terrorists what are we? We killed whole species that ain’t killed we!”

“Bomb yourself!”

“If the world had teeth it would bite us too!”

Xan and I walk through the crowd chanting, “If the plants are terrorist what are you!”

At first it sounds like singing. A hypnotic sound that expands and shakes the air, but then it is interrupted by a sound of a shrill whistle, then a loud bang. Six gunshots. Then thirty. Then the singing turns into shrieking. We are running. Xan can’t keep up; his bones are too weak. I turn to look back at him and his dark skin that reminds me of the color of the sky before dawn. At first, his face is set with determination, and he smirks at me. Then, it shifts. We never hear the bullet, but he feels it immediately. I can tell by the deep lines in between his thick eyebrows. He looks to me for help, and I stand transfixed, watching the blood spread across his yellow shirt. He wore it ‘cause he said it reminded him of the sunflowers from yesterday.

“I’d be a sunflower too, you know. They’re all flamboyant and tall with their yellow petals and deep brown center,” we chuckled.

We aren’t chuckling now. I have started shrieking too, rooted in the same spot, watching his slumped body dying. We are all shrieking like the field of flowers on the Stream. I wonder if they will dehumanize us and say that we were hooligans or unnecessarily aggressive. No one fights for the world anymore, that’s so 2000.

I wish flowers had opposable thumbs the way I wish we had guns and bombs, too. I wonder if the flowers would have shot the little girl. I wonder and start running because I don’t want to be shot, and Xan and I had discussed this in passing over fake bread and the new funny tasting water.

Fact: 89 people shot and killed today.

Fact, Streamnews: 89 rebels shot and killed today during flower riot.

Opinion, Streamnews: Flowers are useless. Reality is useless. I wish the world grew teeth too and swallowed them whole since they love it so much.

She and her co-anchor chuckle with their much too big teeth. They don’t talk about how their faces are splotchy and patches of their skin have started to peel. That is why we protest. They could afford better doctors so they don’t care. I want to embed myself in a field of flowers and shriek at them. I want to make them care. She wishes their world had teeth so it could swallow us? The earth shouldn’t because us “rioters” don’t go sticking our fingers into its face, ripping open its ozone, emptying its belly of oil. But they

do. They do and I think the earth would swallow them whole if she could. I think that Xan would've have rather be swallowed than shot. I cry harder knowing that the Earth would swallow them.

I hope secretly that the Earth grows teeth and swallows me too.

KAREN MANDELL

PORTRAIT OF A LADY, 1801-1834

The words next to the paintings tell me what to look for. Dutifully, I read them. Folk art portraits, done by itinerant artists, no formal training, no garrets, ateliers, benefactors, imported cigarettes. *Look, I'm instructed, at the way the child's head is placed on her shoulders without benefit of neck.* Why so it is. *Notice how her left foot has a life of its own.* It is a bit long, not impossibly so. *The part in her hair is drawn without perspective.* So what if her head is flat; her teeth are pretty, though gray by today's standards. *Notice the articulation of the teeth, a touch not often seen in folk art.* Although they made her look rather carnivorous, as if she had just eaten mouse stew. But it's the young woman next to her I'm worried about. She's waiting in plain brown dress for the artist to leave, freeing her to race down to the Gloucester harbor, where her husband, swordfisherman, rises from the sea, like Poseidon in oilskin pants. No fussing with color on her cheeks, no simpering smile; she's told the artist she won't have it. She's got fire in her eyes, though the artist wasn't sure how to put that in. She lived thirty-three years. I search her face for signs of trouble, anemia exhaustion consumption. Nothing there. Succumbed, perhaps a year later, to childbed fever, typhus, cholera. Oh, so many ways. Maybe grief. The world's turned over a number of times since her death, tumbling everybody out like salt from a shaker, refilling, emptying them out too. I'd guess she held on for dear life, but the only record of her is the painting *whose proportions are not those found in real life.*

ROSE HAS A NEW WALKER

We buy it online. She got her old one,
standard issue gray aluminum, at the hospital
after she fell at Susie's house last summer.
It's a man's walker, and she holds her elbows out like bent wings
when she grasps the handles. It's too wide for her.
I toss out the question one day, if you had a new walker
what color would you choose.
Blue, she says, just like that. I order blue.
When it comes, we connect the hand brakes,
attach the basket and the seat,
pull the plastic off the wheels.
Can I return it, Rose says.
It'll be hard, I tell her. It's from the Internet.
She feels better knowing there's no choice.
But it's always good to try again.
Maybe I won't need it. I ride the exercise bike now.
And in Chi Gong class I stand up longer.
Before I did the exercises from the chair.
Anyway, it's not blue. I think it's black.
So for that we'll return it? It's navy.
Under the lamp we compromise on navy black.
I tell her to try the seat. But always remember
To press the hand brakes when you sit down.
It's like the brakes on a bike.
She doesn't get it. She never rode a bike, she says,
she roller skated everywhere, to the botanical conservatory,
to the library. She tightened the skates with a key she wore
around her neck. When they broke, and that was often,
her father would fix them, *a tragedy you kids never met him*.
I ask Rose to push the walker in the hall.
She can't help smiling; stately, royal she glides like the King's barge
down the Thames. The waters part before her; I hear Handel's music.
It's nice, she says. *But what should I do with the old one. A shame to waste it.*
It'll be a spare, I say. Maybe we'll take it in the car when we go out.

Remember when Daddy taught me how to ride, I say. Running beside me, his hand on the fender and then letting go.

Of course I remember, she says, *he taught all of you.*

And then I was free to pedal around the block, up to the drug store, turn right, turn right again, over and over, centrifugally pulled by the gravity of home.

TOBY BUCKLEY

PRAYER

O Lord, teach us not to envy one another
when it comes to things in which we have no say.
For information, I rely on my mother

and she says I must not envy my brother.
Purge this ungodly desire, I pray:
O Lord, teach us not to envy one another.

I read today that man can change his gender,
that little girls can have blue games to play.
For information, I rely on my mother

but to pronounce these words made her lips wither.
I dread to think what she might say.
O Lord, teach us not to envy one another.

Lord, if this is punishment, I can't remember
what I did wrong, when I began to stray.
For information, I rely on my mother

who loathes the very concept I chase after:
Every day that's pink is muggy grey.
O Lord, teach us not to envy one another.
For information, I rely on my mother.

ELLEN DAVIS SULLIVAN

THE FRUIT SALAD OF SHAME

(Three women approach the table. SARAH carries a big bowl of fruit salad. PATTI carries a wine bottle, and ABBEY carries a pie.)

SARAH: I can't believe we finally did it.

ABBEY: (*ABBEY puts the pie on the sideboard.*) Two months to coordinate the schedules of three single women. It doesn't seem possible. How are you?

SARAH: Doing all right. (*To ABBEY*) You?

ABBEY: I'm OK. (*To PATTI*) And you?

PATTI: Good. Did I tell you I'm now gluten free?

SARAH: You mentioned it in your text, so I made fruit salad and soup.

PATTI: What kind of soup?

SARAH: Lentil. No flour.

ABBEY: I made pie.

PATTI: Pie?

ABBEY: Don't worry. The crust is made from gluten-free graham crackers I baked myself.

PATTI: Thanks. I know it's a lot of work to cook for someone who doesn't do gluten.

SARAH: You said you were allergic to gluten.

PATTI: No one's allergic to it. They're gluten-intolerant.

ABBEY: They?

PATTI: I gave it up because I felt like crap. Bloated, achy. I'm a new person now.

ABBEY: I baked graham crackers out of bean flour because you had bloat? I don't get people anymore. At Halloween, a kid comes to my door and says, "I'm peanut-free." I had to bite my tongue not to say "Congratulations." People want awards for their food allergies.

SARAH: It's not like you to be so grumpy.

ABBEY: I need wine.

(*ABBEY unscrews the wine cap and pours some into each woman's glass. They raise their glasses for a toast.*)

PATTI: To us!

SARAH: Old friends!

ABBEY: The best kind!

(*The women clink glasses and drink.*)

ABBEY: (*To SARAH*) Is Joan out for the evening?

SARAH: I said it'd just be us three, no significant others.

PATTI: (*To ABBEY*) If we included significant others, you'd have brought your job.

ABBEY: (*To PATTI*) You'd have brought your cat.

PATTI: Clarence died.

SARAH: I'm sorry. That's a shame.

ABBEY: Geez, I didn't know. Sorry.

PATTI: Thanks. It was rough for a while. I fell apart. That's when I got off gluten, and now it's the new me.

ABBEY: Not the same without Clarence though.

PATTI: I miss him.

SARAH: It's hard when you lose some...a companion. Let's eat.

(*The women sit at the table.*)

(*To ABBEY, offering the salad.*) You first.

(*ABBEY picks through the salad and takes several pieces of fruit.*)

SARAH: What are you doing?

ABBEY: I don't eat kiwi.

PATTI: I love kiwi. I'll take yours.

ABBEY: Do you know the carbon footprint of a kiwi? They don't grow anywhere around here this time of year. They have to be flown thousands of miles, from a different hemisphere or at least California.

PATTI: I'm not sure they grow in New England any time of year.

ABBEY: That's my point. How can you eat something that blasts the atmosphere just so you get a little pleasure on your tongue?

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SARAH: (*Forks several pieces of kiwi into her mouth and chews.*) Because it's delicious!

ABBEY: You're being completely irresponsible.

SARAH: It's a friggin' kiwi. How much room did it take on the plane? You think that plane wasn't coming here anyway, that a pilot decided to expend fuel to bring one kiwi here?

ABBEY: Don't get so torqued. I'm just making a point about the health of the planet.

PATTI: (*Working her phone.*) It says here tropical fruit isn't a big deal. Environmentally, I mean. If you were going to grow the fruit, it would cost more than the cost of—

ABBEY: That's the point. No one's growing fruit in New England now.

PATTI: No fresh fruit all winter?

ABBEY: We're killing the Earth. Because we have to have pears in January and kiwi in March.

SARAH: I love fruit salad. All the colors, the variety. I used grapes for contrast.

ABBEY: Don't get me started on grapes.

PATTI: What's wrong with grapes?

ABBEY: (*To PATTI*) You're so into diet you should know. Grapes are the only fruit with no fiber. Zero. I read an article by a doctor who calls grapes little bags of sugar.

PATTI: Grapes have to be good for you. People have been eating them since the Romans.

ABBEY: Or people have been living under a big, fat illusion for a long time.

SARAH: (*Holds up her wineglass.*) So this is like drinking a can of Coke?

PATTI: No way.

ABBEY: Or a glass of orange juice. Not that I'd touch orange juice.

SARAH: Because?

ABBEY: The only good thing about oranges is the pulp. That's where the fiber is.

PATTI: Vitamin C. Oranges are full of Vitamin C.

SARAH: One kiwi has one-hundred percent of your daily Vitamin C requirement.

PATTI: I thought you weren't into diets.

SARAH: Knowing fruits are good for you isn't a diet.

ABBEY: Now bananas are a worthwhile fruit, full of potassium which metabolizes calcium so we don't fall and break a hip and die.

SARAH: We're not that old.

PATTI: Wait, the carbon footprint of a kiwi is too much for you, but you'll eat a banana?

ABBEY: My mom sliced bananas on my cereal every morning when I was little. They're my ultimate comfort food.

SARAH: That's sweet, but have you checked out where bananas grow? Hint: not North America.

ABBEY: That can't be true.

SARAH: We think they're normal breakfast food because of a big ad campaign in the 1940s.

ABBEY: At least bananas come in their own packaging. They don't need to be mummified in bubble wrap like your precious kiwis.

PATTI: Um, I don't mean to be rude, but did you wash the bananas?

SARAH: Why would I wash a banana?

PATTI: I used to think like that 'til the day I'm visiting my mom and one of the nurses who's from the Dominican is washing a banana.

ABBEY: Which only proves OCD is alive and well in the Caribbean.

PATTI: That's what I thought, so I ask her really nicely what she's doing, and she explains that you can get hepatitis from banana peels.

SARAH: From a part we throw away?

PATTI: If the banana has the virus on it and you don't wash it, it's on your fingers, then you—

ABBEY: Gross.

SARAH: Me touching your food?

ABBEY: (*ABBEY picks banana slices out of her bowl.*) Dying from fruit salad.

SARAH: There's nothing contagious in the fruit salad!

PATTI: There's really no way to be sure...unless you washed the bananas.

SARAH: This is a nightmare. You hate kiwis, grapes, oranges. Now there's a virus in the fruit salad. (*SARAH picks up the bowl.*) I've made every mistake I could make all because I invited friends I hadn't seen in too long to come over for dinner.

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(*SARAH pours the fruit salad over her head.*)

ABBEY: Wow. I didn't see that coming.

PATTI: I didn't mean to make you feel bad.

ABBEY: What will Joan say when she sees you?

SARAH: Joan won't see me. Joan dumped me.

PATTI: I'm so sorry.

ABBEY: That's awful.

ABBEY: How could she? You two were the best couple I know.

PATTI: I'm always telling Jeff those two will be together until hell freezes....

(*ABBEY pours the remaining wine over herself.*)

SARAH: You didn't have to do that for me.

ABBEY: I didn't. I deserve it. I got fired.

PATTI: You? Everyone knows what a great engineer you are.

SARAH: You broke ground for women in gaming.

ABBEY: Now I'm breaking ground in line at the unemployment office.

SARAH: There's something wrong with anyone who would fire you.

ABBEY: It was a layoff. Last month.

PATTI: You'll get a new job soon. You're brilliant.

ABBEY: Not even a nibble so far.

SARAH: Don't give up.

ABBEY: Have you given up on Joan coming back?

SARAH: She's not coming back.

PATTI: You two. Don't be so glum. (*To ABBEY*) You'll get hired. (*To SARAH*) You'll find someone new.

ABBEY: Easy to say, but I can't see it.

SARAH: You can't help how you feel.

(*ABBEY and SARAH gingerly embrace.*)

PATTI: You two need towels. Want me to get some?

ABBEY: I'm not sure towels are what we need. I think we need what only old friends can give each other. That sense we're all in this together.

SARAH: You thinking what I'm...?

(*SARAH and ABBEY meet at the pie and jointly shove it in Patti's face.*)

PATTI: I wouldn't take this from anyone but you two.

ABBEY: That's why we're friends.

SARAH: When we give it to you, you don't have to worry because for sure it's...

ABBEY: Gluten free.

(*SARAH, PATTI, and ABBEY take each other's hands.*)

END

RANDOLPH THOMAS

THE STORM AND THE HORSES

It started with the wind in the field
and then there was the story of the family
in the farmhouse, the suggestion that the wind
blew them this way and that:
illness, anger, love, hard work
the mountains in the background
dark and constant as the work
At night in the rain after her father
had died she chased the horses
lightning all around her and the horses
whinnying her arms dripping water
raised holding the reins between them
tugging pulling against the weight
of the storm of the days tearing her apart

SEPTEMBER

It is the morning I can feel summer
ending and fall arrive:
the dampness in the air, the gray clouds,
cat in the window, urgent voices
from the house next door.
Only last night, our neighbor, bald
from chemo, tottering on her son's arm,
approached me in the driveway
as I climbed out of the car,
exhausted from work.
Grinning, she wished us
wonderful days, she wished us
joy, and this morning I
feel it, as sure as the water
beading on my arms, the cool rain
that has begun to fall.

GEORGE STEIN



JEREMY

DON NOEL

TIRESIAS

“Terry, can you come into my office, please?”

“Yessir, Sarge. What’s up?”

“Wait ‘til I close the door. Can you find the chair?”

“Got it. Sounds serious.”

“It is serious, Terry. The boss says I have to let you go.”

“You’re kidding. Why?”

“He’s got a thing about transgenders in the military.”

“Good gods, why?”

“I don’t know. Frankly, I think he’s talking to some people who want to repeat old history.”

“You mean Hera.”

“I didn’t say that. But we both know she’s had it in for you for a long time.”

“I have to admit, Sarge, I didn’t see this coming. But then, I never asked the birds about the boss.”

“I knew he talked about it, but didn’t think he’d do it. Now he’s made it an order.”

“Does he have any idea what I do, Sarge? You know, when I focus, listen to the birds, I’m good.”

“I know, Terry. You’re damned good.”

“I mean, at a time when we need to anticipate what that crazy imam in Persia will do, or the latest version of a czar in Russia, or those barbarians along the Nile . . .”

“Terry, I couldn’t agree more. Just when we need the foresight of the best oracle on earth today . . .”

“Never mind today. Best for a couple of centuries.”

“You’re right. Never been another one like you, and the seven lives Zeus gave you has kept you with us. Problem is, the boss is afraid we’ll spend too much on sex-change operations.”

“That has nothing to do with me! Hera changed me into a woman for seven years; I never saw a doctor. Had kids. Then bam! I’m a man again, and a better prophet than ever. Remember T.S. Eliot? ‘I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs/Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest.’ I’ve been foretelling all these years, and never been wrong.”

“I’m not sure the boss reads poetry.”

“Sarge, can’t somebody tell him what I’ve done for the country?

“We tried. No less than the secretary of defense. No luck. They tell me I can stall for another week, but then you’ll have to be gone. I can arrange a comfortable parting gift.”

“That’s nice. Nothing worse than a blind old seer with nothing in his pockets.”

“Look, Terry, can you do me a big favor?”

“Don’t know why I should – but yes. What do you need?”

“I thought maybe your birds could tell you what that crazy guy in Pyongyang really wants. If you could get us something, we might even persuade the boss to reconsider.”

“All right, Sarge, I’ll try.”

“Hope it doesn’t come out too oracular.”

“You mean hard to understand. I can’t fix that, you know: I just say what comes to me. What the birds say. But I’ll try one more thing, too.”

“What’s that?”

“See if the birds will tell me how long the boss will last.”

SALLY ZAKARIYA

THEIR DESSERTS

Robin, who couldn't hide her innocence, maker of poppy
seed cake, unhappy in love, leaning toward the nunnery
last I heard

Jeanne of the freckles and flaming orange hair, never quite
one of our group and remembered mostly for her
carrot cake

Willie, practical Midwesterner who did it all a year ahead
and better, who served flaky almond pastry from her
Dutch forebears

friends and family all filed together in the old recipe box
under Cakes and Cookies along with others—Mother's
there of course

no baker, still we relished her peach skillet pie and apple
goodie, sweet memories neatly recorded in her own left-
leaning hand

Nancy, too, big sister who settled into a domesticity I envied
but failed to emulate (I never make her pecan pie but savor
the recipe)

and you, Aunt Betty, your spice cake topped with tangy lemon
sauce deserves a poem of its own, warm and pungent, starting
with the same

simple stuff as all the rest—flour, butter, sugar, eggs—
but how various the cooks, how various their desserts

GARY LARK

MEETING

“Are you one of them?”

Doug levels the accusation with a soup spoon
pointed at my chest. The collar of his flannel shirt
is separating, his cowlick spreads gray above
a rounded forehead, his clothes are unwashed.

I remember us riding recklessly through the countryside,
the Vietnam War hounding us, betrayal in the back seat,
sailing over railroad tracks, around impossible detours.
Until I broke.

I stood in the basement of the National Guard armory,
raised my right hand and repeated words
the sergeant read from a gray card.

Doug disappeared after that, like a coyote
fading into the undergrowth.

Thirty-two years, he’s eating egg flower soup,
looking slightly mischievous in tatters.

“The stars still come out at night,” I reply.

IT WAS THEN

It was evening when I took the shotgun out
to the little bluff in back of the house
overlooking the river where ducks flew
with such speed as to bring night in their rush.
I would try to kill one
but didn't.

It was then I looked down at the small tree
that grew in the shallow dirt for many years
only to reach the level of my knees when I saw
two rattlesnakes entwined in the cradle of its branches.
Something ancient raised my arms
and I fired.

HARRY YOUTT

PARTY

We've all been to that party and wanted not to be, up flights of stairs from the snow-street of a Friday evening. Or was it Saturday? "*And who invited us anyway, and why did we think we had to come?*" When I say this, Gwen looks at me and says I should keep my voice down even though we're not even to the door yet.

Up to steaming rooms through an open door where there's too much light, and smoke that Gwen disappears into even if it doesn't seem to be a good idea, in her condition, and voices, and too-loud laughter, with plastic glasses that only recently stacked together in long and quiet cellophane sleeves and now are grasped in solitary hands and then muffle what would have been the tumbler-clink of ice in a better world.

"We'll be right here by the time you get back," the young one says to me later as she backs away, flashing a quick smile, with a flutter of the fingers on her right hand. And in that gesture it seems for a moment she's discarding cobwebs she encountered somewhere along the way, cobwebs maybe left behind by some minor but sinister spider, strategically positioned. Then her tones lower back to the conversation around her, as if she hasn't missed a beat. Laughter resuming and ice that swirls again in muffled plastic.

"A friend of yours?" Gwen has reappeared beside me.

"Friend?"

"That—teenager—with the makeup."

"She's not a teenager."

"You seem to know so much about her."

"You'd be surprised. She's older than that."

"She seems to like you, don't you think?"

"Ha!"

"Where does she think you're going?"

"Going?"

"—that you'll be 'back' from."

"With you."

Up on the roof the breeze is iced with New Jersey, and the stone-silent lights almost don't even flicker as they seem to go on forever, out to where horizons curve away. New lovers, having discovered a way to flee festivity, would find this rooftop together in warmer weather, and talk about the

future.

Gwen says, “Why don’t we just go home from here? It’s too loud and stuffy down there.”

“Just go? And leave our coats?”

“Why not? We can come back for them tomorrow sometime.”

“It’ll be too cold without our coats.”

“No it won’t.”

“I’ll go down and get them. It’ll just take me a minute.”

Gwen gazes into my eyes as if she’s just about to tell me she’s lost the baby.

“No. It won’t!”

CLEO GRIFFITH

MOTHERHOOD

I tried to keep them out of range
though they each developed bull's-eyes
too quickly. I tried to keep them
from the trap of twisted plastic trash
clogging the rough seas,
I sang of positives while negatives
pounded on the doors, I tried, I tried.
Now they practice sharpshooting and
entanglement.
But I tried, I tried.

RAPHAEL KOSEK

SKY ABOVE CLOUDS, NO. 4, 1965

Georgia O'Keeffe

A sea of clouds floats like stepping stones
in the great blue floor you have made of the sky

and you have us believing like Jesus
that we could step out of the boat of our life
and meander, dazed and daring,
over this endless patio of clouds
with its own tender cafe sky.

But we must never think
what lies beneath
or we will fall through the ether
into the black and white world
of the faithless
with heavy, unswimming bodies.

KELLY LYNN THOMAS

#FEMINISM

Adam Milnes @adam2679

I gotta get this girl.

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 Who is she? #inquiringminds

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@justinrockz You'll find out when she's mine. :D

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 @justinrockz Women aren't yours to "get." They aren't prizes.
#feminism

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl @justinrockz That's not really what I meant... =(#what?

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 @justinrockz You're speaking as if the woman has no agency.
#feminism

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 @justinrockz As if she has no choice in being with you or not.
#feminism

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@acertaingirl You're reading into this way too much. @adam2679 is just saying he's really into this girl. #backoff

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz @adam2679 Sure. And he's talking about her like she's a television. "Check out this awesome TV. I gotta get it!" #fail

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@acertaingirl Obviously you're just another feminist killjoy.
#menhaverightstoo

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz @adam2679 How would you feel if an entire group of people consistently talked about you like you were furniture? #feminism

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz @adam2679 But since you both have dicks, let me just tell you: It sucks. It's exhausting. #feminism

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz #Feminism isn't about denying rights. It's about equal rights for EVERYONE.

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@acertaingirl @adam2679 ...consistently? #wtf Also, bullshit. Admit it. You hate men.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz @adam2679 People, mostly men, frequently talk about women as if they were furniture. We're tired of it. #feminism

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz @adam2679 And we're tired of being quiet little mice, too. So you're the ones who need to #backoff. #feminism

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl I had no idea you felt this way. I don't think you're furniture, I promise! Poor choice of words. #sorry

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 Not sure if you mean me or women in general... #feminism

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl You, mostly. You never seemed like the super feminist type.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 You mean the type who believes women should have the same rights as men?! #feminism

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl I guess I'm putting my foot in my mouth again. I mean the political activist type. #sorrysorrysorry

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 All women have to be activists if we don't want people like @justinrockz taking away our fundamental human rights. #feminism

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 Dude, just give up. @acertaingirl is just going to bitch at you no matter what you say.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

You're clearly a misogynist, @justinrockz. At least @adam2679 is willing to talk about it.

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl Aw, @justinrockz isn't a bad guy. He just never got over the girl who rejected him in third grade. ;p

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 That chick grew up fat. #totallyoverher

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@justinrockz Then why do you talk about her all the time? #justsaying

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz @adam2679 Aaaaand now you're engaging in fat shaming. Not all women are biologically set up to be skinny. #feminism

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz @adam2679 The media just constantly tells us everyone should be a size 0 or else we're too "fat." #feminism

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz @adam2679 And heaven forbid we get old! Then we become really awful. #feminism

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 That's because she seems to be everywhere I go! I think she's developed a crush on me. #gross #saveme

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@justinrockz I seriously doubt it. Becky hates your guts.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 Are you talking about @beckster?

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl Yes! I'm convinced @justinrockz wants to have her babies.

Becky St. James @beckster

@justinrockz needs to get over himself and learn that no means NO. @ adam2679 @acertaingirl

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@beckster Pretty sure you meant to say, no means OH GOD, YES, YES.

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@justinrockz Only in your dreams. I know how many women you've ACTUALLY had sex with.

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 And one of them is your mom.

Becky St. James @beckster

@acertaingirl You should probably just block @justinrockz. He's a troll. Don't feed the trolls.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@beckster I'm more in favor of showing how ugly and stupid the trolls are. #feminism

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl Maybe we should talk about all this stuff in person. It's kind of heavy for Twitter.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 No, this is exactly where we should be talking about it. Here, and everywhere else. #feminism

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl Okay, so... coffee tomorrow?

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Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 I see what's happening here... @acertaingirl is the girl you have a crush on... #why

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@justinrockz You know what happens when you make an assumption...

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 You know what happens when you date a feminazi!

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@justinrockz Lay it out for me.

Becky St. James @beckster

@adam2679 You learn something new and stop treating other people as inferior. #feminism

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 They convince you sports are evil. And never make you sandwiches.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz @adam2679 Oh this is just too much. Please, keep going! #rofl
#wtf

Becky St. James @beckster

@justinrockz Sports ARE evil. At least major league sports. Look at the NFL's concussion cover up for proof.

Adam Milnes @adam2679

That's a bit doomsday-ish even for you, @justinrockz.

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 You've already lost your ability to discern jokes. This is worse than I thought.

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@beckster I once fucked a girl so hard it gave her a concussion... and she liked it.

Becky St. James @beckster

@justinrockz I think you're confusing real life with all the shitty porn you

watch.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz Your sense of humor is, frankly, terrible. Also, cliche.

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@acertaingirl You don't even HAVE a sense of humor, so I doubt you can judge mine.

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@justinrockz I think @acertaingirl is right here. That sandwich joke is limp.

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 No way! It's a classic. #makemeasandwich

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz Yes, a "classic" that reveals the ingrained misogyny of our culture. #feminism

Becky St. James @beckster

@justinrockz "Classically" stupid, not funny, and soooo old.

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@acertaingirl @beckster You both need to get laid. You're way too uptight.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@justinrockz Yeah. Being treated like property and an inanimate object tends to make me uptight. #feminism

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

Also, @justinrockz, if I did get laid, you'd call me a whore. But if you get laid, you'd be praised for bragging about it. #notfair

Becky St. James @beckster

@acertaingirl I'm sure 99% of his bragged-about sexual encounters are 100% false, and the remaining 1% are porn fantasies.

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@acertaingirl So what you're saying here... Is that you ARE a slut bitch whore.

[PR] Fall 2017

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 See? No matter what, I'm bad/dirty/horrible/mean/awful/inferior. #feminism **RT** @justinrockz: @acertaingirl So what you're saying here... Is that you ARE a slut bitch whore.

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@beckster You're just jealous because no one wants to date you. I guess that's why they make dildos.

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@justinrockz @beckster @acertaingirl Maybe we should all just like, calm down?

Justin Like A Boss @justinrockz

@adam2679 Dude, good luck with that. It's your funeral. I need to go beat up some hookers in GTA.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 If @justinrockz is what your friends are like, I think you need new friends.

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl I agree. Can I start with you?

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679Really? You're going with horribly cheesy?

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl But did it work?

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 What, do you think I'm stupid or something? No way!

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl I promise I'll listen to what you have to say.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 I'm not interested in talk. I'm interested in action. #feminism

Becky St. James @beckster

@adam2679 News flash: You can't always sweet talk your way into someone's pants.

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@beckster I'm not trying to sweet talk my way into anyone's pants. I just want to get coffee with @acertaingirl.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 Start acting like a decent human being who respects EVERYONE, not just men.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 Then maybe I'll think about thinking about getting coffee with you.

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl What do you want me to do? Volunteer at Planned Parenthood?

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

That would be good, but you could also start calling out your friends when they're sexist asshats.

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl Hm. This is a lot to think about.

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

@adam2679 Further reading: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/13/sexism-feminism-comic-rasenth_n_5976660.html

Adam Milnes @adam2679

@acertaingirl Thanks!

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

I don't know why I let myself get dragged into arguments about #feminism on the internet.

Becky St. James @beckster

@acertaingirl Because keeping silent makes you complicit in your own oppression? #feminism

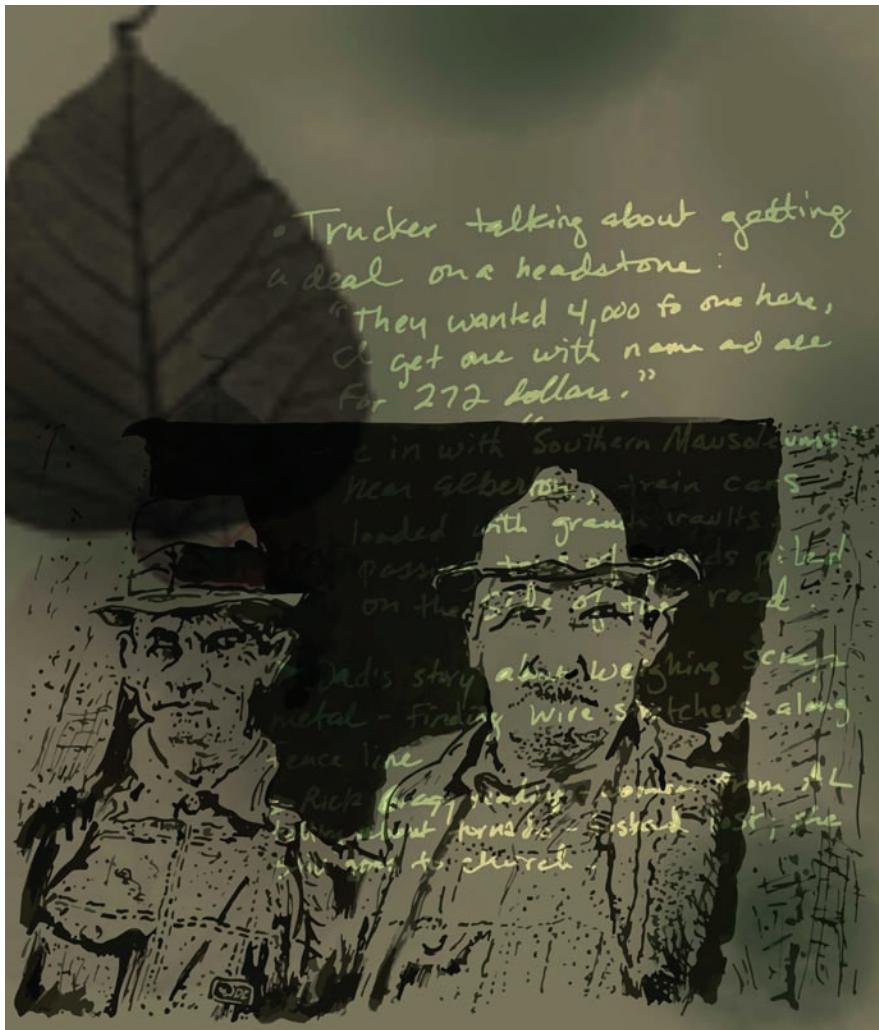
Amanda C. @acertaingirl

Oh right. That. #feminism

Amanda C. @acertaingirl

Silence is a powerful oppressor. So speak up. Speak out. #feminism

STEVE SIMMERMAN



TWO FARMERS

JOYCE BROWN

OLD WOMEN IN MCDONALD'S

Eat their burgers
With tiny lips
Dip their fries
In ketchup dabs
Opened by big-boned
Companions currently
Between hair colors

Who maneuver the walker
The cane the chair
Settle the patient
Pick up the order
Squeeze the ketchup
Unwrap the burger
For trembling hands

Then seat themselves,
Text tap tap
To some other world
While their elderly
Charges sit with
Pink-rimmed blinking
Eyes tidy pink-scalped hair
Searching other domains
For faces unreachable
By text or phone.

J. C. SMITH III

TRUE IS AS TRUE DOES

Characters:

FAIRY/TINKER

KING

QUEEN

FARROW

LADY WANTITAL

LADY ANGELINE

DUKE OF SCHITTFIELD

FOOL

(KING and LADY ANGELINE enter followed by the FAIRY.)

FAIRY: (*aside*) Take heed. On all of them a spell I've placed. The truth alone they all must speak. (*exits*)

KING (*to LADY ANGELINE*): Fetch the Queen. I have news! (*trumpets*) Ask her to use perfume and not her hair fall long.

LADY ANGELINE: (*aside*) Would that all her hair removed and perfume used more often. (*exits*)

KING: Now humor for the boys in the pit. Farrow!

(FARROW, a short and round-bodied man enters and bounces around the stage with a bottle of rum.)

FARROW: Let's expose ourselves and vulgar jokes unveil, pretend you're still a prince.

KING: No, you little flat bottom, the boys do know you're just a lass, but tell them how the kingdom's wives you do seduce.

FARROW: And gladly!

KING: First, (*trumpets*) hear my news! Call my brother, Duke of Schitfield, and Lady Wantital, his mistress and my daughter.

FARROW: (*shocked*) Your majesty? You know about your daughter?

KING: Oh, that humpbacked philanderer, of course I knew.

FARROW: (*aside*) Should I tell the King his daughter Lady Wantital is not his blood?

(DUKE and LADY WANTITAL enter.)

KING: Ah, my brother, daughter, what schemes brew now?

LADY WANTITAL: The Duke has promised marriage if I kill you and Farrow.

KING: Must I jail my daughter?

LADY WANTITAL: You're old, without a purpose, your people see no hero and think you never cater. Your days are done.

KING: (*to the Duke*) Why hate so much? Is it my skin?

DUKE: Yes, it is. Why must you receive the blessed dark? Even your daughter Lady Wantital is not your color.

KING: Our parents are the same, my brother.

DUKE: And yet my skin refutes that claim.

LADY WANTITAL: (*to DUKE*) Time for revenge.

DUKE: (*to LADY WANTITAL*) So true. The black is pure, but white means death. Let's wait until the stage is filled with bodies. After dinner, please.

LADY WANTITAL: (*aside, rubbing her hands*) He'll kill the King, become the King, his son is next in line. But if the son should take the throne, then I'll get nothing. I'll cook the boy and make a feast. The Duke will eat his son, and I will be the Queen. Cook the heir, eat the bird, rule the roost.

KING: You want the crown. Here! (*hands over the crown to the DUKE*) Take it now.

FARROW: No, sire. Think what you're doing. (*to the DUKE*) The King is unwell.

DUKE: (*snatches the crown*) It's not enough. You have to die. We must have royal blood and men who play the girls and vulgar comedy for the pit.

LADY WANTITAL: (*aside*) And he who eats his son.

DUKE: (*points to the FOOL*) Cut off his tongue. I hate the tattletale.

LADY WANTITAL: Who will roast today?

FARROW: (*aside*) Perhaps you, when King discovers she who lacks the kingly blood. But cooks often have their share of burns.

(QUEEN enters with LADY ANGELINE.)

QUEEN: What's that smell? The brother of the King?

DUKE: (*bows*) You once did like my smell, my lady.

QUEEN: You mistake me for the tinker's goat.

DUKE: Perhaps I did.

LADY WANTITAL: Where's the tinker?

KING: I have news! (*trumpets*)

LADY ANGELINE: (*to KING*) My news is bad, my King.

KING: You're a girl, correct?

LADY ANGELINE: My King, I am your loyal daughter. But Lady Wantital is not. Her parents are the Duke and Queen. Alas, there's more. The Queen must have your crown. You she'll kill, and then the Duke. The Lady Wantital will cook his son and make a feast.

QUEEN: Still not enough of blood. Bring in the fool. (*pulls the cord*)

(*FOOL appears.*)

FOOL: Yes, my Queen.

QUEEN: Reveal your son.

FOOL: My lady! I? A son?

KING: He has no son.

DUKE: He has no son.

LADY WANTITAL: Indeed, he has a son.

LADY ANGELINE: (*confidentially to King*) The shipwreck.

KING: The shipwreck?

(*FOOL tries to sneak away.*)

FARROW: Remember, sire? When you did meet the witches, and they did counsel you to stay away from swamps? If you did, the crown was yours.

KING: Huh? What was at the swamp?

(*FOOL is grabbed by FARROW.*)

FARROW: Tell him!

FOOL: I did once pretend to be a girl who played a boy.

FARROW: Not that, you idiot!

FOOL: Fine. Before your birth, oh sire, I too knew frightful witches, forced me to disguise myself as King of Naples, who is my twin. The Queen of Naples thought I her husband, had my son when I departed, blinded all the witches so they would frighten no one else. But still you met them. I also helped some old man whose daughters had deserted him.

FARROW: What old man? What has that to do with this?

FOOL: Another king alone and lost. Or was that the king whom nobles stranded with his daughter? I remember also helping couples who were lost and wandering in the woods. And some poor guy whose friend had banned him from a city to steal his lover. The forest swells with ventures, and I am star in many. (*putting his arm around the KING*) In any case, you are my son.

KING: (*pondering*) A fool's son am I, and with a queen who doesn't know me.

LADY WANTITAL: I want revenge!

FARROW: It's coming, lady.

DUKE: Soon.

KING: The shipwreck?

QUEEN: I want revenge.

KING: Revenge for what?

QUEEN: It matters not! Must revenge have reason? My life! My life, a boring endless series of costume changes. That's revenge enough! Ah yes, my soul does swim around in pools of unclean fish, and there I sit with little hooks awaiting purity and kindness. But no! I might as well be holding my own skull and spit on it. Alas, poor Queen, I say. I sit and sit—alas, my bottom stings—and wonder how I came to frames of mind in which I kill and kill and sleep with that man and his brother, fantasies about the Farrow and the Tinker. What mean these wanton choices? Must I kill my husband or my lover? Who's the woman stuffed within these gowns?

KING: (*in a fiercely patriotic voice*) For dear old England then, my queen! We die the proud protectors of this glorious land and save our...

LADY ANGELINE: No, Daddy...

KING: No?

LADY ANGELINE: England this is not. We're all in Italy robbing Latin and Italian stories, do you remember?

LADY WANTITAL: Where's the tinker?

QUEEN: Why ask for tinkers?

FOOL: She's in love with him. The Duke is just a means. (*aside*) These nobles always do prefer the scandal.

LADY ANGELINE: (*aside*) I'm in love with Tinker, too. Who wouldn't be? Look at that...well, just look.

[PR] Fall 2017

FARROW: (*to LADY WANTITAL*) Let's not forget Adonis's suffering.

LADY WANTITAL: Who?

(TINKER [*also plays the FAIRY*] enters.)

TINKER: I'm the tinker. (*Sees LADY ANGELINE and LADY WANTITAL*)

Oh you are both such precious fields that I must sow.

QUEEN: My daughter marry someone from that Gutterling family? Never!

KING: The tinker is a Gutterling?

LADY WANTITAL: Fine. Off we go to tombs and drink of poison. Tinker, come!

TINKER: I'm with Lady Angeline. Poison's not for me.

KING: I have news! (*trumpets*) Still, what about the shipwreck?

FARROW: My liege, you once again forgot the time when you and so-called friends—you killed them all eventually—went on a trip to swear off women, but soon the ship did crash and left you with the witches where the fool lived. Several times he tried to kidnap you. This shipwreck gave to him his opportunity, but listened you to witches, met your Queen.

KING: I did? I don't remember.

FARROW: (*whispering to KING*) Do you recall you gave your crown away? The Duke is now your King!

KING: What? (*to the DUKE*) Give it back, you scoundrel! Take the crown, Farrow, and put it in another room.

FARROW: (*scratching his head*) Why another room?

(*FARROW tries to grab it from the DUKE, but the DUKE will not give it to him.*)

FOOL: Oh my King, your forebears you too much resemble, and none should act like those who give away the crown.

QUEEN: Be with me, oh Tinker.

TINKER: I'm with Lady Angeline.

KING: (*to FOOL*) If it all ends badly, tell Leakystern of Denmark that he can have the Dutch. A friend should have something.

FARROW: He's dead, sire. He died just after asking you to pay the money you had borrowed. You found him digging deep for gold within your garden. For any coin he looked.

KING: I remember now. I hate the diggers. I killed him?

FARROW: He killed himself. His daughter begged one so rich not to live in

poverty.

KING: Once generous was I, but of me they took advantage. Leaky stern asked for too much.

FARROW: (*aside*) The King was never generous.

LADY WANTITAL: (*bored*) Someone now must die. Please. Or bring on the Church or France. At least do start a war on who should have the crown. Do we still hate the French?

KING: A war? I am a soldier, a name that does become me most.

FARROW: No, my sire, you always say that conflict is your foe. You've never fought.

DUKE: A comedic episode will do.

LADY WANTITAL: Ah yes, just before the bloody ending.

LADY ANGELINE: Or we could say that someone died to have a mourning.

DUKE: I like that. Who can we pretend is dead? And how can we pretend they die? (*brings out two potions*) One of these potions kills, but which? Your life, your choice.

(*LADY ANGELINE pretends to drink and collapses to the floor, faking death.*)

KING: (*unaware of the game, rushes to LADY ANGELINE*) My truest dearest daughter! I never told her how much I love her. How I regret. The news I never told her. Guilt.

FOOL: Perhaps it only seems she's dead. I knew this monk who made a mixture masking death. Perhaps she wants us all to think she's dead.

FARROW: And why would she do that?

QUEEN: Because she likes attention! Please. It's what she wants.

TINKER: (*pushes everyone away*) She died for me, I know it, yet I, a Gut-terling, am most unworthy. Here lies such beauty, such truth. Oh, far above thought I love you, Angeline. So wonderful were you, so glorious. I'll make a statue and keep you next to me forever. No words, no poetry, can equal her. If only I could prove it to her.

LADY WANTITAL: You can, you unfaithful wretch!

(*LADY WANTITAL pulls out a long dagger and stabs the TINKER. He falls on top of LADY ANGELINE, who stands up, grabs her knife and stabs LADY WANTITAL.*)

LADY ANGELINE: What have you done?

LADY WANTITAL: (*dying*) He broke the law of fornication.

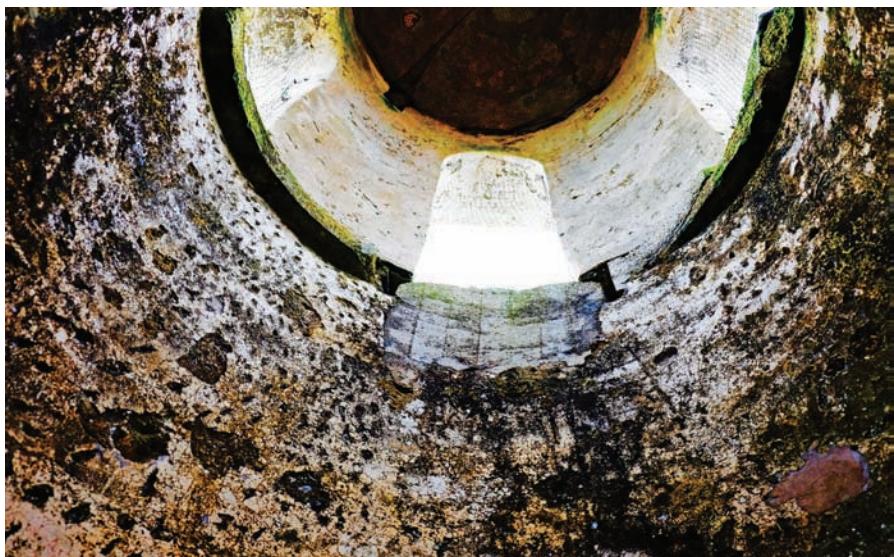
(*The DUKE brings out his own knife and attempts to stab the KING but misses and stabs the QUEEN, who tries to stab the KING also. FARROW gets in the way and receives the blow. The FOOL also goes to protect the KING, his son, but the QUEEN in her last effort stabs the FOOL, who stabs her again at the same time and throws the dagger at the DUKE, who falls dead. LADY ANGELINE and the KING remain. They go to mourn FARROW, the FOOL, and the TINKER. With tears in their eyes, they walk to the table with the two potions. They each take one and drink. LADY ANGELINE dies. Kneeling beside her, he drinks the remainder of her potion.*)

KING: (*dying*) The news? What was it? (*trumpets*)

END

This spoof, sometimes by only one word or phrase, sometimes by direct quotations, paraphrase or allusion, refers to the following works and writing habits of Shakespeare: the sonnets, the poem “Venus and Adonis,” and the following plays: *Timon of Athens, King Lear, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, The Tempest, Much Ado about Nothing, Midsummer Night’s Dream, Henry IV, Part I, Henry V, Titus Andronicus, Richard III, Twelfth Night, Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida, As You Like It, Merchant of Venice, Richard II, Love’s Labour’s Lost, Comedy of Errors, Othello, Pericles, Winter’s Tale, Cymbeline, Coriolanus, and Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

SARAH E. N. KOHRS



BELL-LESS BELFRY

MARTINA REISZ NEWBERRY

LAPIDARY

Envision it this way:

It is 1975.

You are walking along Hwy 1
walking toward Morro Bay,
and up on a hill,
near a stand of trees,
is a farmhouse.

It is the farmhouse in all pictures of farmhouses.

There is a horse up there
and a big dog and,
best of all,
a woman hanging laundry
on clotheslines.

You watch for a long while, until she goes inside.

Even now,
50+ years later,
all you want is to be
that woman's daughter.

ANTHONY DIPIETRO

THE GRAVE ROBBER WHO BUILDS POETRY WITH HIS BROTHER'S BONES

after "The Levite" by Brian Borland

of what are my poems built? of boots,
of broken toilet tops. nothing cracks like

white ceramic. of radio static.
of torn window shades

once white, now yellowed by years of smoke.
of a color between peach and salmon

in fashion in 1989,
the color my father painted the house

he built. I will never build a house. my poems
may well be my house. instead of wood

and wire and pipes, my house, my body
made of books, some of them

smelling of wood rot, wet, some of them
burning like incense, slow and holy.

when my mother left
my father, he had nothing

to curtain his windows. he hung,
instead, their bedsheets.

WILLIAM AUTEN

IN TRANSIT

The train made its way through the rain falling on the plains. It had a certain smile about its grill that made it seem as though stopping wasn't an option, that it planned on skipping whatever series of destinations scheduled for it. This, of course, is what stunned the lovers inside; they had not considered a train bypassing its stops between start and end points. And so she realized how much was at stake now as she watched her husband fiddle with the fish that had been over-cooked, much to his chagrin. "Bob!" she shouted, and he turned towards her with a mouthful of rosemary sprigs dangling from his lips and said, "What is it, Bets?" "The train is not going to Tiger Town." "What a miss!" he replied and dipped another chunk into a honey-Dijon sauce. His beer was warm now, her food had not arrived, and the storm clouds started breaking apart, letting to the front the blue-black transition of day into night. She had ordered a plate of mussels and a tall glass of Chardonnay; together they would share the cheesecake triple-layer. And as the train chugged on, she paced the car and stuck her head out the window every now and then, avoiding dark branches and the stars that began forming their nightly sequences in order to collect wishes. She had yet to understand that time was different in the car, that it was closer to Schrödinger's cat. In fact, as far as the lovers know, the train did not stop; it kept up its delicate path along the rickety rails—or so we now think, having traced its route and smoke from afar. We're just waiting for it to arrive so we can check inside.

NATHANIEL WANDER

ME AND MARGARET MEAD AGAINST THE WORLD

The Arabian Bedouin have a saying that reflects how their ‘tents,’ their households, articulate and disarticulate in peace and war. “I against my brother, my brother and I against our cousins, my brother, my cousins and I against everyone.” It’s merely rational political ecology in a habitat where rainfall and pasturage shift unpredictably and where economics and warfare are focused on the herds.

I was brought to study anthropology by my mother, but “brought to the faith” by Margaret Mead. I ended up more nearly a student of her (third) husband, the British anthropologist Gregory Bateson, perhaps best known for his essay collection *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. One of the key ideas in his writing, that ritual works *precisely* because practitioners don’t know how it works—or, in other words: “Don’t look behind the curtain, Dorothy”—became central to my own anthropological understanding.

When I was 12 years old, my mother enrolled me in an anthropology course at the Brooklyn Children’s Museum. It was partly to ‘expand my intellectual horizons’ and partly to get me out of the house on Saturday mornings. Both of those things reflect the person she was.

What you are reading is memory fueled by emotion and not any kind of researched or reserved biography. However, if such is needed, I have ‘objective’ evidence of this duplex relationship.

On the one side, my mother enrolled me in the Gertz Department Store’s birthday book club, through which I acquired Jack London, Mark Twain, and Robert Louis Stevenson at an early age. On the other side, there is a 1948 photograph sent to my father’s sister in Los Angeles, showing an infant of two months, zoned out in his baby carriage. My mother has written on the back: “Nathaniel at his very, very ‘Best’- asleep, dry & fed.” What a definition of “best”: replete and unconscious, incapable of making any demands.

The Brooklyn Children’s Museum was an unlikely progressive institution. But, when an anxious America, having been “beaten into space” by the Soviet launch of Sputnik in ‘57, opened the tide gates of funding for scientific research and education, the Museum acquired a grant from the National Science Foundation to teach anthropology to teens. The program began as a Saturday morning class and expanded to an intensive summer

course in which we observed primates at the Bronx Zoo, dug for Dutch and Indian artifacts on Staten Island in the footprint of the coming Verrazano-Narrows Bridge and conducted cultural studies in Brooklyn's Hasidic Jewish community of Williamsburg.

The program was directed by a young Black anthropologist named Paul Curtis Hooks, but I'm still puzzled over what part it was expected to play in winning the Cold War. Hooks probably looked to have the requisite background; he was drawn to his subject while serving in the military in Korea, but who decided that recruiting teenagers to anthropology was going to halt Soviet hegemony?

Actually, the U.S. had accomplished some mixed success employing anthropologists during the Second World War and soon would be doing so with greater viciousness in Vietnam, using field studies to target local leaders for assassination. From the government's side, prior successes had included recruiting Pacific Islanders to work for the Navy essentially for spit. (Well, actually, for *Spam*.) Less politically useful, on the other hand, was the "Anthropology at a Distance" program, intended to identify potential opposition leaders in the soon to be Soviet-held Eastern Europe—the geographic spoils had been divided up long before the war was won. Instead, the researchers mostly collected accounts of Jewish *shtetls*, where no one remained to serve or undermine the Soviets. This small act of subversion was fostered in part by Margaret Mead, whose own teacher, Franz Boas—who founded the Columbia Anthropology Department—had vociferously opposed U.S. entry into the First World War, let alone anthropologists' cooperation with the military, which he called "prostitution."

Mead, based at the American Museum of Natural History, then became my first anthropology *teacher* at a distance. My family wasn't exactly destitute, but we were poor enough that buying books was a luxury, so I mostly read *Coming of Age in Samoa*, *Growing Up in New Guinea*, *New Lives for Old* while slouching against the museum gift shop walls or leaning on its radiators. I thought I could get through a chapter before anybody realized I wasn't buying and always left before being asked. On reflection, I suspect they knew exactly what I was up to and were being kind.

Mead's work has since been called into question, but in the early 1960s she was the unrivaled monarch of the discipline, if starting to sound a bit dated to professional ears. It would be another 20-30 years before New Zealand anthropologist Derek Freeman argued that her work on Samoan sexuality was largely bogus. Her informants, he claimed, just made up sexy stories to get this dirty-minded young woman to stop asking embarrassing questions.

While the jury is still out on some of this stuff—some Samoans think *both* Freeman and Mead erred in opposite directions—it's clear that Freeman's

revisionism went way overboard, that Mead was not such a naïf as he would have had it. Freeman was still fighting the “nature versus nurture” wars and the scientists who accepted his reading, Freeman himself, Stephen Pinker, Richard Dawkins, were largely from the “You *do* what you *are*” side—biology dictates all. Mead, on the other hand, was a foundational exponent of “You *are* what you *do*,” that the social and cultural structures of life prominently shape feelings and behavior. At a time when *epigenesis*, the study of how gene expression is affected by environment, is one of the hottest topics in evolutionary biology, the very ‘controversy’ seems more than merely dated.

So, Mead was an attractive nuisance to a boy-anthropologist and I was going to New Guinea. In fact, I was still intending to go to New Guinea as a newly accepted PhD candidate at Columbia a dozen years later.

Well, I started out bound for *Arabia Deserta*, intending to study nomadic Bedouin. I thought that understanding the transmission of property and authority among them could be used to do structural analysis of Biblical tales. I reminded myself, however, that it might not be such a wise career move for a Jewish kid to build his profession on Arabian sands.

There are Bedouin in Israel, of course, but the Israeli anthropologist Emanuel Marx had already laid a substantial claim to them and not being able to study their kinsman across Arab borders would have been further limiting. I wasn’t pleased, either, with what I’d seen of the Bedouins’ treatment by the Israeli government during my three years there. The Israeli Bedouin were repeatedly displaced from their lands and their historical conflicts with other Arab groups were manipulated to use them in the military. Anthropologists take responsibilities to “their people” seriously. If I defended Bedouin interests against the Israeli government, I could end up banned from the only country in which I could do Bedouin studies in the first place.

So I fell back on New Guinea until my wife rudely interrupted my fantasizing. (Actually, my father had been bad-mouthing New Guinea since I started reading Mead. “Why do you want to go there? It’s hot, it’s dirty, it’s noisy!” he insisted. I *got* the “hot” and “dirty” parts, but “noisy” eluded me until I remembered how my Polish immigrant father came to know about New Guinea in the first place—he arrived in the middle of the Allied assault against the Japanese in 1943.) My wife was then in her second year of medical school and had already mapped out her life for at least the next decade: internship, her first child, residency, her second child. No way was she going off to the middle of a jungle. Now, if I picked a place where they practiced Western medicine in real hospitals....

India was the compromise. My wife could pursue her medical education and I could test my ideas about relationships between religion and political-economic organization. Also, I liked curry and as our professors had

taught us, a research site needed to satisfy two appetites: for intellectually tasty questions and a cuisine you could imagine living on for a couple of years. When I finally met someone recently returned from New Guinea, I discovered another strike against the place. I've never cared for yams; less for rotten pork.

By the time I reached India, however, my wife and I had already been divorced for three years. We'd married because she was attracted to my whatever-tomorrow-brings attitude and I was equally drawn to her I-know-exactly-where-I'm-going one. We divorced for approximately the same reasons.

I retain two striking memories of Margaret Mead and one occurred after she was dead. Although her funeral proper was slated for Pennsylvania, a memorial service was held on November 17, 1978, at St. Paul's Chapel on the Columbia campus.

This must have been the first Episcopal funeral I'd ever attended, although the stated goal of Columbia's undergraduate college had been to make all of us into Episcopalian gentlemen. (They failed with me on both accounts and I wonder what they strive for now that half the student body is female and, I imagine, all still a good third Jewish.) At the service, I was surprised at how moved I felt by the sonority and the weight given to both the material and the spiritual. I was constantly knocked back, however, by references to "the body before us" when no such body was present at all. Don't look behind the curtain.

When the ceremony ended and the audience, drawn from all the many walks of Mead's life, filed out onto the endless broad and shallow steps of the chapel, a classmate came up behind me and started telling a joke.

An eighty-five year old couple has come before a judge seeking divorce. The judge was astounded. Why after more than sixty years were they just now looking for a divorce?

The wife explained. "My husband's a bum, your Honor; he's always been a bum. He constantly ran around on me with other women, he never earned a decent living and what he made, he threw away on gambling and drinking. He never helped with the children."

The judge looked towards the husband.

"My wife's a tramp, your Honor," the husband said. "She's always been a tramp. The house is a pigsty, she can't cook, she cheated on me with other men. She was no kind of mother."

"But why," the judge asked, "have you waited all these years?"

They answered together: "We wanted to wait until the children were dead."

I cracked up. The woman who clobbered me from behind turned out to be Betty Friedan, outraged, apparently, that someone would despoil the

solemnity at the funeral of her fellow feminist icon. She should have whacked Joel: he made me laugh.

The last time I *saw* Margaret Mead, it was in the audience of a lecture given by Gregory Bateson two years before her death; I think it was at Baruch College in the Bronx. Mead had the honor of asking the first question, a *pointed question*.

Bateson began his response by thanking Mead for her “*very good question*” and when he had finished, she thanked him in turn for his “*very good answer.*” (Forgive me, I forget both.) The tension between them was physical.

Bateson died in 1980, two years after Mead. In 1984, their daughter, anthropologist and memoirist Mary Catherine Bateson, published a remembrance of her parents—*With a Daughter’s Eye*. They could scarcely have been more different: Mead, an upright, didactically responsible, middle-class, Middle American, who never (entirely overtly) defied convention but did exactly as she pleased; Bateson, a diffident, slouchy, upper class Briton, a scientist and son of a prominent evolutionary geneticist, who came to write extensively of the role of the sacred in human evolution and lived out his last days at Esalen and the San Francisco Zen Center. Catherine appears to have genuinely loved both her parents, but seems proudest of having survived their peculiar parenting.

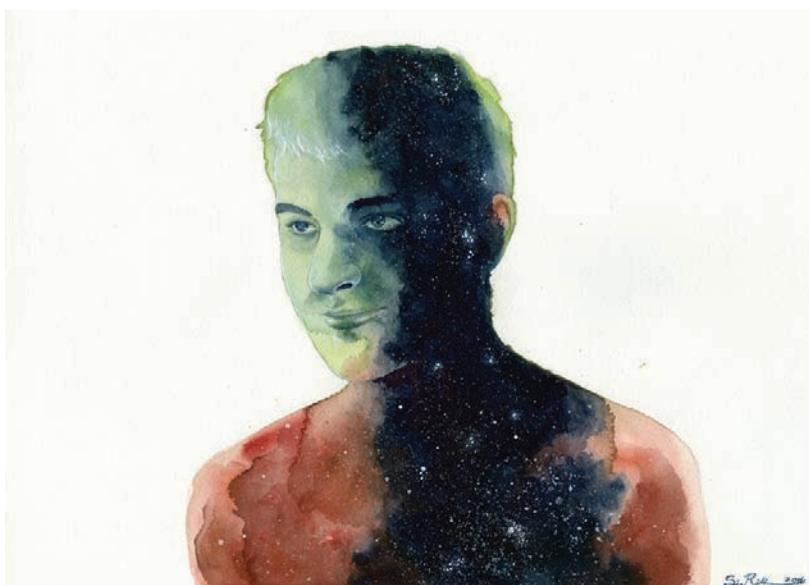
SIN RIBBON



HIDDEN UNIVERSE



INNER LANDSCAPE



BELIEVER BOY

STANLEY TOLEDO

DONUTS

Characters

JACK, 20s

COLETTE, 20s, married to Jack

STRANGER

PERSON IN BLACK #1 (man or woman)

PERSON IN BLACK #2 (man or woman)

Place/time

A park. The not too distant future.

Synopsis

A man and woman in a controlled future meet a stranger who offers them a donut, upsetting their well-managed life.

AT RISE: The stage is empty except for a park bench located upstage. Seated on the bench is the STRANGER. He is reading a book. Next to him on the bench is a white paper bag. COLETTE jogs on the stage and stops, having just now finished her run. She wears gray nondescript work-out clothes. She looks at the band on her wrist, reading her numbers with satisfaction.

COLETTE: Okay, Okay. Good.

(She begins doing stretch exercises, waiting for JACK to arrive.)

COLETTE: *(Looking off stage) Come on, Jack, will you?*

(More stretching. Finally JACK jogs on stage, wearing the same gray workout clothes. He is winded.)

COLETTE: What are your numbers?

(JACK is trying to catch his breath; COLETTE stretches.)

COLETTE: Jack, what are your numbers?

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JACK: Wait a minute, Colette.

(*She crosses to him and takes his wrist, attempting to read his band. He pulls away.*)

COLETTE: I just want to read your numbers.

JACK: My numbers are fine.

COLETTE: You haven't looked. How do you know?

JACK: I know.

COLETTE: Then let me see.

JACK: We're going to be late for work. Let's go.

COLETTE: You're hiding something.

JACK: That's not true.

COLETTE: I'm worried, Jack.

JACK: What about?

COLETTE: Your numbers.

JACK: They are in the normal range.

COLETTE: The normal range has just been revised.

JACK: Again?

COLETTE: For some people, what was normal yesterday is not normal today.

JACK: How in good conscience can they do that to people?

COLETTE: They want good numbers, not a good conscience. Now let me look at your numbers.

(*He shows her his wrist band.*)

COLETTE: You are borderline.

JACK: I am not.

COLETTE: Under the new standards, you are. Let's run another five miles.

JACK: I'm exhausted.

COLETTE: We'll rest a few minutes, then start.

JACK: We just did ten miles.

COLETTE: Please, Jack. They will sterilize us.

JACK: Why will they sterilize you if my numbers aren't right?

COLETTE: If they sterilize you, it's the same as them sterilizing me. I want a child from you and no one else.

JACK: You say that now.

COLETTE: That hurts. Thanks a lot.

JACK: I didn't mean it, Colette. I'm sorry.

COLETTE: I love you more than anything.

JACK: I know, babe. What do they want? People to have perfect numbers until the day they die?

COLETTE: They want to stop predispositions from being passed down to the next generation.

JACK: I have good genes. My father had excellent health until the end.

COLETTE: Are you sure?

JACK: Don't believe my mother.

COLETTE: What if she is right? What if your dad's death wasn't an accident?

JACK: Right. They killed my father because he let his cholesterol get out of control.

COLETTE: Then he did have abnormal numbers.

JACK: Yes. No. He was in great shape.

COLETTE: They have two goals: one is to eliminate genetic predispositions in the population. The other is to purge people who log in too many doctor visits and take too many prescription medications. People who expend more than their share of our limited resources are weeded out.

JACK: That's an extreme interpretation of official policy.

COLETTE: There used to be obese people. Do you know that?

JACK: I've heard it before.

COLETTE: In today's modern world, you must manage your health or they manage you.

STRANGER: Donut anyone?

(The STRANGER has taken a donut out of the white bag and taken a bite out of it.)

COLETTE: Who are you?

STRANGER: I have a glazed, a chocolate, and an old-fashioned with maple frosting. What's your pleasure?

COLETTE: Donuts are poison.

STRANGER: Actually, they are delicious, especially with a cup of hot coffee.

JACK: We stopped drinking coffee.

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STRANGER: (*Amused*) Some clever wag once commented: forget love, fall in coffee.

(*He takes another bite out of the donut, savoring the taste, playing it up.*)

STRANGER: (*cont.*) Hmm. This donut tastes like heaven on earth. Have one. My treat.

JACK: No, thank you.

STRANGER: (*Taking another bite*) Are you sure?

JACK: We are sure.

STRANGER: Then I'll have to eat them all.

COLETTE: What are your numbers?

STRANGER: My numbers are perfect, and the beauty part is I don't have to deny myself and be a fool like so many of you other people.

JACK: (*Grabbing him by the throat*) Don't call my wife a fool!

STRANGER: Hey, hands off, man! Hands off!

COLETTE: (*Pulling JACK away*) Jack, stop it.

JACK: This slimy jerk needs to be taught some manners.

COLETTE: Who are you?

STRANGER: I'm the man who isn't afraid to eat cheese nachos and banana cream pie on a daily basis.

JACK: What's that supposed to mean?

STRANGER: It means – when was the last time you enjoyed a well-seasoned ribeye steak with a stack of onion rings on the side?

(*The question confuses JACK.*)

JACK: I, I. I can't recall the taste of a steak.

STRANGER: Let me help you. Steaks are savory, tender, and juicy. The taste breaks your mouth with flavor.

COLETTE: Don't listen to him, Jack.

STRANGER: Yeah, Jack. Go on the rest of your miserable life eating soybeans and sawdust disguised to look like real food.

COLETTE: How can your numbers be perfect when you're consuming all that fat and salt?

STRANGER: That's a fair question, since people who dare to eat as I do have a habit of mysteriously disappearing.

JACK: Then what's your secret? How do you come up with perfect numbers?

STRANGER: That information will cost.

COLETTE: Jack, he's running a scam. Let's go.

JACK: How much?

COLETTE: Jack!

STRANGER: If you want to eat like a human being instead of a farm animal, the cost is cheap at twice the price.

JACK: How much?

COLETTE: Honey, this is a rip-off!

JACK: Colette, I have cravings. Sometimes I want to wolf down a hamburger. I want to plate of French fries. I want a milkshake.

STRANGER: What flavor?

JACK: How much?

(*Two menacing looking people dressed in black enter. The STRANGER sees them immediately. One PERSON IN BLACK begins to cross upstage, moving unhurriedly but deliberately. The other PERSON IN BLACK begins to cross downstage in the same manner.*)

STRANGER: (*Beginning to back away*) Well, I must be on my way. Business will have to wait for another day.

COLETTE: Who are they?

STRANGER: They are them.

COLETTE: What do they want?

STRANGER: My secret. Or, my dead body.

COLETTE: Why?

STRANGER: No time to chat. Sorry. I'm leaving you the bag of donuts on the bench. Enjoy.

(*He rushes off; the PERSON IN BLACK upstage follows the STRANGER off stage. The PERSON IN BLACK downstage crosses to JACK and COLETTE.*)

PERSON IN BLACK: Do you know that man?

JACK: No.

PERSON IN BLACK: Disregard everything he said to you.

(*PERSON turns to walk away.*)

COLETTE: What are his numbers?

PERSON IN BLACK: It doesn't matter.

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(*PERSON exits in the same direction of STRANGER. Beat.*)

JACK: It's getting late.

COLETTE: I didn't know you have cravings.

JACK: We better go.

COLETTE: I have cravings too.

JACK: Of course you do.

COLETTE: Why do you say that?

JACK: We're not farm animals.

COLETTE: Let's race back to the house.

JACK: Okay. I'll give you a thirty-second head start.

COLETTE: I should be giving you a head start. But alright. Here I go.

(*She takes off, leaving the stage. JACK looks at his watch, ready to run. He looks over at the bench, sees the bag of donuts. He crosses to the bench and picks up the bag. He opens it, takes out a donut and smells it. Beat.*)

JACK: (*Dryly*) Heaven on earth.

(*He drops the donut in the bag and puts it back the bench and jogs off stage.*)

END

ANGELA CARLSON

MITLEID

(fr. German: to pity)

Here— with this one hand
placed center, almost reaching
but not entirely, maybe a little higher,
draw the string tight
right up against the cheek
locked elbow
raised head
eye on the target
feet solid placed standing still don't move
square hips and do not turn away
drop him at three, two, one—
now
before the ice cracks, leaves crunch
air shifts direction,
before he catches scent.

Here— drop to one knee
when it's loosed, and run to that spot
where his blood pours out on thirsty ground
do not pull hard on the stick
push it through, don't stop if it hits bone
just go around,
flesh is easy, push it through
till it feels like it hit you too,
your side, your back, your haunches.

Here— lay your head down
on the wet grass still dewed
where animals might have slept
through the night,
where angels might have wept
from all the beauty of the dawn.

EGON LASS

SPECIFIC WEIGHT

The specific weight of a word
Is dependent on the number of its vowels.
Pfffft has no specific weight,
Despite its use as a movie appellation.
The specific weight of a dandelion
Does not depend
On your opinion of it.

The specific weight of his iron plow
Was fifty-five *sheqels*.
To sharpen it, the Israelite had to fork over
Three *Pym* of silver to the Philistine smith.
Pfffft!
The smith had shaved down three conal seashells
To the weight of a *Pym* each.
The Israelite's pouch became that much lighter.

The specific weight of a cormorant
Is inversely proportional to the revulsion
That certain fishermen entertain for it.
An Israelite loves dandelions for their hardiness.
How can there be a specific weight
For an ode to cormorants, when there is
No mouth to sing it?

Some words cannot stand what they can stand,
Devouring themselves in obsessive
Compulsive monologue.
The weight of specific monologues...
Please, no jittering of the plow.
How much longer will some words
Not be able to do what they can do?

How long is the distance from contact
To awareness? Contemplative words
May be of assistance.
The specific weight of a woman
Depends on her self-perception.
Consider contemplative words.
You may gather ancient conal shells
While running along the beach,
One *Pym* at a time.

CONTRIBUTORS

WILLIAM AUTEN is the author of the novel *Pepper's Ghost*. Recent work has appeared in *District Lit*, *Sequestrum*, *Solstice*, *Superstition Review*, *Thoughtful Dog*, and elsewhere. Having lived in the Midwest and the South, he now calls California home with his wife.

ALEXANDRA BARYLSKI is a senior editor at the *Marginalia*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and the author of the chapbook *Imprecise Perishing*. Her poetry appears or is forthcoming in *Tupelo Press 30/30*, *Ninth Letter*, *Ruminate Magazine*, *Phoebe*, *Minerva Rising*, *Ithaca Lit*, and elsewhere. She won the 2015 Morton Marcus Poetry Prize. She was a finalist for the 2017 *Fairy Tale Review Poetry Prize*, the *Yemassee Journal Poetry Prize*, and the *New South Poetry Prize*.

JOYCE BROWN, after pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees in literature, taught for a number of years and studied creative writing at Appalachian State University, Hindman School, and Wildacres. She was featured poet at the 2016 Doris Betts Literary Festival and has published in numerous journals, including *Now and Then*, *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel*, *Kakalak*, and *Pine Song*. Her chapbook, *Bequest*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2015, and her forthcoming *Singing with Jarred Edges* was a finalist in the Main Street Rag Cathy Smith Bowers chapbook contest, 2017.

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ANGELA DOLL CARLSON is a poet, fiction writer, and essayist whose work has been published or is forthcoming in publications both online and offline, such as *Thin Air Magazine*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, *Apeiron Review*, *Relief Journal Magazine*, *St. Katherine Review*, *Rock & Sling*, *Bird's Thumb Magazine*, *Ruminate Magazine*, and *Art House America*. Her memoir, *Nearly Orthodox: On Being a Modern Woman in an Ancient Tradition* was released July 2014. Her latest book is *Garden in the East: The Spiritual Life*

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ANTHONY DiPIETRO is a New England native who worked for 12 years in nonprofit organizations on issues such as violence, abuse, and income inequality. In 2016, he moved to Long Island and joined Stony Brook University as a candidate for a creative writing MFA. A graduate of Brown University with honors in creative writing, his poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Assaracus*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *The Southampton Review*, *Anomaly*, *Rogue Agent*, *Talking River*, and *The Good Men Project*.

CLEO GRIFFITH was Chair of the Editorial Board of Song of the San Joaquin for twelve years, and remains on the Board. She has been published in: *Cider Press Review*, *Iodine*, *Main Street Rag*, *More Than Soil*, *More Than Sky: The Modesto Poets*, *the Auorean*, *The Furnace Review*, *The Lyric*, *Tiger's Eye*, *Time of Singing*, and others. She is a member of the Modesto CA Branch of the National League of American Pen Women. She lives in Salida, CA with her husband Tom and their aptly-named tabby, Tank.

SID GUSTAFSON was raised by horses under the Rocky Mountains in the shadow of the Blackfeet Nation. He later became a novelist, journalist, equine behaviorist, and veterinarian living and practicing in Bozeman, Montana. His photo is from Iceland, where there are no unwanted horses. Doctor Sid's latest novel is *Swift Dam*, literary fiction pondered from the Flood of '64.

NYANKA JOSEPH was born on the tiny island of St. Lucia and spent much of her early years there reading and climbing guava trees. At the age of 10 she moved to Brooklyn, NY where she swapped climbing guava trees for riding trains. Since then she has found her way to the University of Connecticut where she has received a Bachelor's of Arts in English and a Master's degree in Public Administration. She currently works as an assistant programs manager for a non-profit helping make the world a better place.

SARAH E. N. KOHRS creates written and visual art that seeks a unique perspective on how surroundings kindle hope in even a disparaged heart. Find her photography in *Virginia Literary Journal*, *Blueline Literary Magazine*, *Mt Hope*, *Columbia College Literary Review*, *Claudius Speaks*, and *Shenandoah Living*; her poetry in *From the Depths*, *Claudius Speaks*, *Virginia Literary Journal*, *Colere*, and *Crosswinds Poetry Journal*. Sarah is a homeschooling mother, managing editor for *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, director of The Corhaven Graveyard, potter for local Empty Bowl

Soup Suppers, and savors many other altruistic roles. She has a BA in Classical Languages and Archaeology from The College of Wooster, as well as a Virginia state teaching license endorsed in Latin and Visual Arts. Find her online at <http://senkohrs.com>.

RAPHAEL HELENA KOSEK's poetry has appeared in numerous journals and magazines including *Big Muddy*, *Poetry East*, *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Catamaran*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and *Briar Cliff Review*. Her latest chapbook, *Rough Grace*, won the 2014 Concrete Wolf Chapbook Competition and her essay tied for first place in the 2016 Eastern Iowa Review Lyric Essay Contest. Her "Caregiver's Journal: How to Survive or Not" just won the *Bacopa Literary Review*'s nonfiction contest. Her new full-length poetry manuscript, *American Mythology*, was a finalist this year at Grayson Books. She teaches American Lit and creative writing at Marist College and Dutchess Community College.

GARY LARK's work includes: *River of Solace*, *In the House of Memory*, *Without a Map*, *Getting By*, and three other chapbooks. His work has appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *The Sun*, *Poet Lore*, and *ZYZZYVA*. Three poems were featured on *The Writer's Almanac* with Garrison Keillor.

EGON LASS has published *The Seasons of Tulul*, an account of life among the Bedouin of the Judaean Desert (parts of which appeared in the *American Scholar*), and a recent book of poems, *A Lean Against the Wheel* (FutureCycle Press), as well as about forty scientific papers in his capacity as an archaeologist. He has a Master's of Science from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

KAREN MANDELL has taught writing at Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis, Mount Ida College in Newton MA, and literature at Framingham South High School. She's also taught literature at various senior centers in the Boston area. She's received three awards: first place from the American Poetry Society/Oil of Olay contest in 2004, second place winner of the Muriel Craft Bailey award, 2004, and the Charlotte Newberger award from *Lilith Magazine*.

MARTINA REISZ NEWBERRY's most recent books are *Take the Long Way Home* and *Never Completely Awake*. Newberry has been included in *It Happened Under Cover*, Ascent Aspirations' first two hard-copy anthologies. She has been widely published in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. She has been awarded residencies at Yaddo Colony for the Arts, Djerassi Colony for the Arts, and Anderson Center for Disciplinary Arts. Passionate

in her love for Los Angeles, Martina currently lives there with her husband, Brian, a media creative.

DON NOEL has retired after four decades' of prizewinning print and broadcast journalism in Hartford, CT. He received his MFA in Creative Writing from Fairfield University in 2013. His work has so far been chosen for publication by *Calliope*, *Shark Reef*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *The Tau*, *Indian River Review*, *Midnight Circus*, *Oracle*, *Clare Literary Magazine*, *The Raven's Perch*, *Chronicle*, and elsewhere.

KARL PLANK is the author of two recent chapbooks: *A Field, Part Arable* (Lithic Press) and *BOSS* (Red Bird). His poetry has appeared in publications such as *Notre Dame Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Zone 3*, *New Madrid*, *Spiritus*, and *Poetry South*. A past winner of the Thomas Carter Prize (Shenandoah) and a Pushcart nominee, he is the J.W. Cannon Professor of Religion at Davidson College.

SIN RIBBON is a storyteller on page, canvas and screen—her work culminated from poetry, screenplays, films, and paintings. An eclectic blend, she draws from the philosophical and spiritual to tell existential stories of encouragement and consequence. A recent MFA graduate, she is now venturing into the world to share her impassioned works, hoping to inspire personal growth along the way while finding her place in the creative community.

L. J. ROBERTSON holds a Bachelor's degree in history from the University of South Alabama. He serves as an officer in the National Guard, which takes him to beautiful places where he photographs objects and landscapes that tell stories about the history found there. An avid outdoorsman, he also enjoys photographing nature, paying particular attention to the small objects found in such large spaces.

SEIGAR is an English philologist, high school teacher, and curious photographer. He is a fetishist for reflections, saturated colors, details, and religious icons, feels passion for pop culture that shows in his series, and considers himself a traveler and an urban street photographer. As an artist he tells tales with his camera, capturing moments but trying to give them a new frame and perspective. Travelling is his inspiration. However, he tries showing more than mere postcards, creating a continuous conceptual line story from his trips. His most ambitious project so far is "Plastic People," which focuses on the humanization of mannequins in shop windows across the world. He participated in several exhibitions in Tenerife, and his works

have also been featured in international publications.

STEVE SIMMERMAN's passion for music, archaeology, and branding often shows up in his artwork. Much of his work features remnants of pop culture, with themes infused of spiritual, chronological, and ontological motifs. His work is created with a variety of media—typically ink, watercolor, and acrylic—as well as digital tools like Illustrator and Photoshop. He has illustrated two children's books and exhibited artwork in New York, Chicago, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and San Francisco. Additionally, he has taught graphic design for fifteen years.

J. C. SMITH III, an American residing in Toronto, has four degrees from Syracuse University, Duke University, and the University of Toronto (PhD), has published fifteen short stories in 2016-2017, a long poem (253 lines) entitled "Prometheus Laments," forthcoming this fall, as well as publication in commercial publishers of both Master's and Doctoral theses, and several essays.

GEORGE L. STEIN is a writer and photographer living in Northwest Indiana. George works in both film and digital formats in the urban decay, architecture, fetish, and street photography genres. His emphasis is on composition. George has been published in *Midwestern Gothic*, *After Hours*, and *Darkside Magazine*.

ROBERT JOE STOUT's commentaries on Mexico appear online and in print, in the book *Hidden Dangers* published by Sunbury Press and on Author's Radio. His poetry has been published in numerous anthologies including *New Southern Poets* and *Southwest*, as well as in numerous journals and magazines. He has won journalism awards for spot news writing.

ELLEN DAVIS SULLIVAN has had other one-act plays produced in festivals around the country, and she is a member of the Dramatists' Guild. Her stories have been published in print journals, including *Stonecoast Review*, *Clarion*, *94 Creations*, and *Moment Magazine*. Her essay "The Perfect Height for Kissing" won the 2014 Columbia University Non-Fiction Prize and is published in Issue 53 of *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art*.

KELLY LYNN THOMAS reads, writes, and sometimes sews in Pittsburgh, PA. She lives with her partner, two dogs, and a constant migraine. Her fiction has appeared in *Permafrost*, *Sou'wester*, *The Journal of Compressed Creative Arts*, and received a 2017 Pushcart nomination. Kelly received her

MFA in Creative Writing from Chatham University, is hopelessly obsessed with Star Wars, and can always be found with a large mug of tea. Read more at <http://kellylynnthomas.com>.

RANDOLPH THOMAS's first collection of poems, *The Deepest Rooms*, won the Gerald Cable Award from Silverfish Review Press and was published in summer 2015. He also writes fiction, and his first collection of short stories, *Dispensations*, was recently published by New Rivers Press and won a Bronze Award from the Independent Publisher Book Awards. He has new work recently published, or forthcoming in, *New Letters*, *Juked*, and *Pleiades*.

STANLEY TOLEDO's one-act plays are presented in theatres across the country. Upcoming productions include *Mountain Life*, which will be produced in October at the 6th Annual Warner International Playwrights Festival in Torrington, CT, and *A Settled Matter*, which will be staged in November at PARAGON, a science fiction and fantasy play festival produced annually by Otherworld Theatre in Chicago. Stan lives in California.

NATHANIEL WANDER's story is excerpted from a memoir in progress titled: *You Are Here--X: Tales from the Evolution of an Anthropologist*. In the manuscript, he is trying to demonstrate all the many streams that fed into the making of a 20th-21st century anthropologist. He retired from the profession in 2011 to study birds and evolutionary biology. And to write.

VIRGINIA WATTS, born in 1961, grew up in Hershey, Pennsylvania. After college, she earned a law degree and held several judicial law clerk positions. In recent years, she has been writing her own work steadily and joyfully. She has been published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and her story "Time in Space" will be featured in the Fall 2017 issue of *Ruminate Magazine*.

YIDAN XIE is a multimedia artist who focuses on dynamic imaging. Her works are various including video, animation, illustration, sound, and graphic design. In her work, she presents a mysterious and fantastic visual experience. She has discovered the new art presentation of space narrative and explores the relationships among women, nature, and mythology. Read more at <http://cargocollective.com/yidanxie>.

HARRY YOUTT is a long-time instructor in the UCLA Extension Writers' Program, where he teaches and conducts workshops in fiction writing, narrative nonfiction, and poetry. His work has been several-times nominated for Pushcart Prizes, and he is the author of six collections of poetry, including

most recently: *Outbound for Elsewhere* and *Saint Finbarr Visits the Pacific*.

SALLY ZAKARIYA's poems have appeared in 60-some print and online journals. She is the author, most recently, of *When You Escape*, as well as *Insectomania* and *Arithmetic and Other Verses*, and the editor of *Joys of the Table*. Zakariya blogs at www.butdoesitrhyme.com.