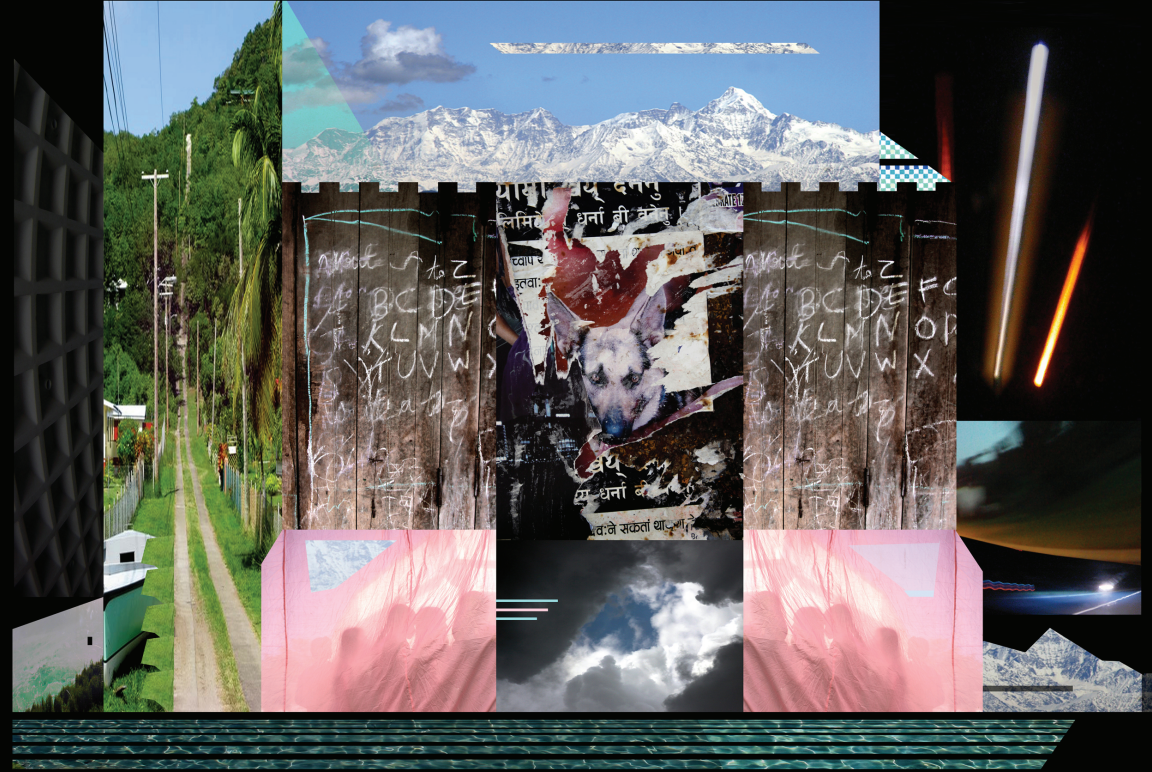


Anomalous 2



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Cielito Lindo

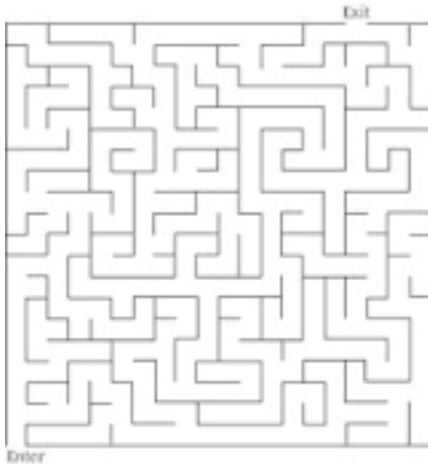
Brandon Holmquest

I began to feel hatred for birds which flew back and forth across my blue sky, cloudless sky, because they tried to bore holes in my greatest and most beautiful work.

—Yves Klein

I burnt so many English muffins. It was awful. Another immigrant to Canadian Mexico, so high I don't know anyone. Listen, I just can't listen to that record I bought. It's too, too painful. Bittersweet like breakfast some chill morning in Guadalajara, Saskatchewan. For example. Or, for example, somebody's birthday. Any random whoever's birthday.

You.



Me.

The resulting confusion nothing new to an immigrant who might actually be a refugee. Who's learning the language in his off hours. Who hangs around the German beer hall, among the polka impresarios. Trudging two gratuitous blocks through Mexican snow on my way home, to stop and feed the ducks, who would starve if I didn't feed them. Really they would. I'm the only one who's got tortillas and they eat nothing else. They can't understand other food. They're from Juarez, Ontario and they intend to stay that way.

And so do I. I tried their food, I really tried. But when I was buying it there was this child next to me, and beside her a mother screaming in English, which I don't speak. Though I did understand it when she said, No santa, no santa, no santa. And she's right, the supermarket is unholy. It sets off syllogisms. The grocery store is a museum of human wretchedness. My heart is a museum of human wretchedness. My heart is a grocery store. I use it to sell you vegetables and feel imaginary emotions like emapathy or nostalja vu. Animal guts is a thing you can go in me and buy.

I try to root for the local team but I can't understand the game they're playing. The aimless running into one another, then stopping and minutely planning the next aimless collision. I worry that I'm aging about as well as a rapper's bragging, and it's lonely, when you have no one to talk to, because you're the only person who speaks Spanish in all of British Columbia, so you go out and wander among the cacti, the cacteese, the cactuses and polar bears. The last Aztecs in their igloos, with the same movie playing all the time so you just walk in whenever, sit down and watch a while, and see the movie several times, but only ever out of sequence.

Gather in service then separate, cast a short diaspora before the next day, leaning against things like bored horses, talking just to hear the sound of the syllables pronounced what we call the right way. Our agreement that all these gringos are crazy becoming the only thing that binds us. Stomping down the middle of the street. Going to a bar. Through a blizzard. Singing the Himno Nacional, knowing that if we die here they'll bury us shallow in the frozen ground. They won't ship our bones home, who'd pay for it? So we're almost lying when we sing, which makes it sadder and makes it matter more that we get to the bar. So we can sing more.

And you ride your secondhand bike around in unstylish clothes. You begin many sentences with the word back then the word home. Every time you say it, everyone nods. This is to signal that they know which where you mean. Discussion of not knowing which who you are. We all feel that way, in our grocery store hearts, with their clean aisles, ordered contents, refrigerated cases all cold only at different temperatures.

For the repose of the soul of Lindsay Buckingham

Brandon Holmquest

The police department
has some lovely flowers,
but still,

it's hard to see
that as grounds for
reconciliation.

I mean, there are
armed men everywhere.

It's intolerable.

It doesn't matter
what they're doing,

even if it *is* just
directing traffic

around the static mass
of people and tables
called a festival.

You wind your way
through it on the
path that opens up
behind the booths
and around the trashcans.

And when you
sit down
on the other side you
feel the same,

just as when
in motion it seems

there was never anywhere
truly comfortable to sit,

when sitting it seems
there is no such thing
as motion.

Then there's something simple,
like the sun goes down,
a dripping
air conditioner between
us and it,

a drop falls
onto the sidewalk,
breaks

into a hundred
smaller drops,

and they all fall,
then another drop falls.

After that whole
pushy arrest scene,
just before that.

Cop screaming, Got
any needles?

and the guy they were
after simply turned around
when he saw them coming,
put his hands
behind him for the cuffs.

And neither of us
noticed it at first,
the way he
assumed the position,

we saw it
when we remembered it
right after it happened, and

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that is what
we are
talking about
when we see
the first drop fall.

Nor pause nor perch

Brandon Holmquest

Peach soda,
 tacos,
a box of baby ducks,

Thursday, in other wirts.
Not just ducks, but many bords,
all of them
doomed,
 even if they do get adopted.

Cracked,
I ca-
I cannot
keep the act from
happening,

 then I forget which
 act it is. They all
 seem so
 inevitable,
 so wry, so
 gone astray.

Wide whispers
 fill the hall.
Shallow footsteps
 recede to the

feedback
from two
broken guitars
broken by the
dripping rain.

There's nothing
I feel like collaging, I mean
isn't there
a single picture
without a famous person in it?

No, there isn't.

I'd like to
diff er en ti ate
myself
from the kind of logic
that leads to
cut roses
or the British monarchy,

but it isn't easy.

If you need to think of
negative capability
as a doctrine
then you haven't got any.

Which is fine. It's
not a virtue.

A Keats reference,
a handful of
illustrative metaphors,
and all the elm seeds
in the gutter
 spin up
 into
 a cyclone.

I watch it
rise
and fall

 while I
 talk to you,

and what we
talk about

 is the elm
 seed cyclone
 and how

 I'm like a
 mountain
 of bricks,

 dumped
 in front
 of what will
 soon be
 City Hall.

Remember all those
flooded flower boxes
and bocce courts
a few months back?

They're still flooded.
I'm starting to think they'll
always be flooded.

I like thin books
because I can carry
more of them
when I move among
the places I
habitually sit,
and I really mean it,
I think leaves
are underrated.

They sit there
all summer,

then go beautiful,

then they're

just like you, but then
Oh, there you are
and then you're back and I
am riding a bus to the
bus you're riding, board the
same train in different cities and

meet in the cafe car or
finally grow feathers
and fly because
when I eat
 bread and salt it
 tastes like your skin
and this is how I
know I'm home,
wherever that is.

Antagonistes

Nalini Abhiraman

Most of our possessions come from the thrift store up the block. We shop there to indulge our deep hatreds — of waste and sales tax. We walk there to save gas. The store smells better than its brethren often do; of fresh tobacco and Love's Baby Soft. Its racks of clothes and bedclothes are tidily curated by color, although one-half of the middle-aged couple who run it is colorblind, meaning that we occasionally find outliers — sage-colored pants blooming among a row of khakis, or a bright blue dress ruining the otherwise neat progression from indigo to violet. He always purchases these pieces if they fit, finding meaning in their not being of their surroundings. I think this is dumb. Always have. Still find any number of ways to tell him so, the lacerations echoing across the length of the dinner table. He says nothing, fingers a cuff or a hem after I'm done talking. Paces me as we eat our oatmeal. We lift our spoons, drop them in unison.

We lift our spoons, drop them in unison. Always have. Smell our possessions, which come from an otherwise neat progression that is better than its brethren. Blooming echoes lacerating the dinner table. We walk there, up the block from the thrift shop sales, which is dumb. He says nothing, tidily curates the racks if they fit his length, finding meaning in their number of ways to tell him so. Occasionally he fingers me after I'm done talking, smelling of fresh tobacco until I come, always. Clothes and bedclothes — pants (khakis), a bright blue dress — purchased, indulged with Love's Baby Soft, ruined, although hemmed. A cuff between couples becomes colorblind, going through its paces, from indigo to violet to sage to oatmeal. What

does it mean to still find deep hatreds, store them across the length of middle age? Or any length? Waste taxes one-half and runs the other into gas, most often not colored, as we eat. These pieces surround our being, our meaning. I think we are outliers among the saved. Who is to find us there?

I Will Try to Scream As Much As I Can

Nalini Abhiraman

During the night, mosquitoes, and all through the day. Buzzing around the bath bucket and the mug floating in it. The canopy bed draped in white netting, mosquitoes caught thrashing in its folds. Mosquito coil burning sickly sweet in the corner. Once she laughed and two flew into her mouth. What did it mean that they would rub her hands and arms with calamine but not her legs and belly? Pink slick drying white, ghosting hairs as moisture faded. Mosquitoes landing light as rain if she was unwise and wore short sleeves. Biting her fingers as she typed. She bit her own fingers for relief when welts swelled, wondering what there was to taste. A friend wrote, told her that *Anopheles* was Greek for *useless*. Different sizes of mosquitoes, some striped like warplanes. What did they talk about in the kitchen, snorting and laughing, shutting down when she walked by? She tore the net once, ever so slightly, so mosquitoes came in torrents. Clapped limbs in defense, saw her own blood bloom. Each nip from a needling mouth in different gauges. One night she forgot to look inside the net for stragglers; a single mosquito bit her face from brow to chin as she slept, leaving her as a half-blistered mask. She heard the whine of them in her ear when there were none to be seen. At times she sat in the middle of the bed, lightly coated in sweat, and stared and stared and stared at them. How they hunted, never letting up for long, as their enormous husbands floated gently in the corners near the ceiling.

from *The Heroic Age*

Richard Chetwynd

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He's leaning out over the edge of the roof. She once had a broken nose and a broken arm; she's a broken girl in a broken woman. He's leaning out to show me that it's high enough to die if one were to fall. I step toward the dizzy edge and then lean back. I place my hand on his shoulder. Applying a little pressure, I tilt him over the side. He hits the concrete with a frightening thud; gets up slowly, bloodied and wobbly. Then he marches to the ladder embedded in the stucco wall and clamors back to the roof. I extend my hand to help him with the last step. "Why did you do that?" he asked. "To prove you right," I said. "Now, show me the leak."

8

His mother became a carpenter, his sister a bricklayer. His father drank time, and his brother sat against the trunk of an oak. One bird pecked at his brother's eyes, another fought off an interloper, while another was happy with a worm. His mother built three chairs and his sister built a mausoleum. They sat inside together waiting for the door to close. After a while they stopped breathing, but even that didn't help.

14

She stopped tending to the chickens, keeping the goat out of the garden. She stopped feeding the dog. She lived in the well like a lost frog. When it rained she felt better, like a lost frog. Men came to replace the men who left with grumbling machines and the language of prisons. She was a frog in a well. They buzzed against the walls of her mind

like flies in a glass room. When they landed to rest, she sent her frog tongue to greet them. The flies left flying captured her and put her on a train. She felt like a frog on a train. Others cried out, but she was silent as a hitchhiker. A hitchhiker frog on a train.

17

He's in the yard with his shirt off and a towel over his knee. He shaves from a bucket of cold water. Snowflakes melt on the surface. All the kitchen windows face his way; all the kitchen sinks are full of admiration for what he's done. All the kitchen eyes have their eyes on him. He molts in broad daylight. Only the mirror refuses to see him. It hangs from a crooked wire with a chip on its shoulder. The attention's warm as an incubator bulb. He's the oldest egg in town.

19

She gave them all names. They gave her a name in turn. She set the sun on fire when she emerged. The clouds rushed away. All the trees waving blue flags abandoned her. She heard their cries of joy. Joy in their cries. The men that arrived didn't kill themselves. There was only sound. Each face was like the other. Each hand had five fingers. The arms were like snakes; they hissed and tightened their grip. She could smell last year's apples fermenting in the grass. She didn't feel a thing and then woke up. She called out their names, the new ones the men left behind.

24

She married a spoon. A ladle. A hammer and a nail. They lived a honeymoon in a tool box. There was a slight breeze off the sheet-metal. SS Bliss was sailing in. It was sailing out. It had yet to make port. It had radioed the master. Preparations for boarding were underway. She spooned out helpings of love like ice-cream. He hammered it melting

to the dock. Once aboard, she ladled tears for soup. The waves upset the bowls, clogging all the bulk-heads. He got fat and couldn't swim ashore. She said the toolbox was dragging her down. By the time they jumped ship, they went straight to the bottom.

29

Ghosts return to the woodwork. The house is a site to visit. A notebook fills in the gaps. She takes a trolley to the edge of town, takes a bus to the last stop. She walks through the village with her head down. Even the bed-ridden know she's there. Even the rafters, the floorboards. A sign: the name of the village, a black X over it. She rests in the tall grass at the edge of a wheat-field. The next page has a man and his son in a wagonload of carcass. Flies conduct a seminar. They talk of the children. It's because of the children. For the children, they will fly to kingdom come. She draws a crooked blue line from edge to edge. On one side, he stands with a rifle. On the other she stands with a spoon. A battle is about to commence. She lets the wagon take her along the blue line. Hooves like hail hitting the roof; the iron roof on fire pouring down on the flesh of its guests. The house is a site to dig in. The house is a yardstick. The gaps remain gaps. She returns to the woodwork of the page.

38

The goat has spoken. The chicken is going down with his brethren. Trucks line up in the darkness. A string of red lights, sawdust flies and a sound like ammonia. The numbers are in the numbers. One driver leans against the cab, a cigarette in his hand. He puffs and puffs like a little chicken factory. A processing plant. He wants the men and women inside to speed up the dirty work. He can't wait to get on the road, to be between places. Every time he stops he needs a shrink.

Stopping is bull's-eye. The goat told him that; and looking around, he trusts the goat.

44

He was from a country without a past. He invented it anew every morning. He signed peace treaties in the afternoon. By nightfall he was lurking in wardrobe. His code was Xeroxed and passed down. His agents memorized the juice, defecated the pulp. Hard as we thought, we could do nothing to outwit his ops. He was on the lookout for holy mushrooms in the sauce, dark patches of slander amid the veggies. An evil eye tiptoeing behind a lid. He triple-locked all his locks, spent his evenings cleaning the barrel. You could smell the lube in the pit of your stomach. Tomorrow a new flag will go up the pole. You have to be a well-oiled machine; you have to purr to survive.

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Plastic Afternoon

Tresha Faye Haefner

The afternoon is long as the tail feathers
of Marc Chagall's floating coq.

Coq as in two lovers floating
over a red chicken.

They will last for centuries
in their beautiful cartoon way,
the way the tiger in the painting
on my wall lasts.

The afternoon sunlight in the
oil on his canvas stripes lasts.

The cows lowing in a meadow
outside my window
do not last.

Mr. Potato Head lasts.

I wonder what everyone was thinking
three dozen years ago
when they invented the first

Mr. Potato Head.

The first microwavable potato.

The first picture of a plant.

The first picture of a plastic plant.

The first firework.

Fire. Work. Work fire.

Fire for lack of doing work.

A purple notepad. A purple desk.
A plastic secretary is a porn star.
A porn star is a plastic secretary.
A husband watching is a fired employee.

A leaf is a hand.
A plastic leaf is a plastic hand.
A plastic hand is a hand that lasts.
A hand that lasts is a ghost.
A moon is a large microwavable china dish.
A dish is a frozen moon.
The moon is as far away
as one of Chagall's floating fish.

What Distinguishes One Crow from Another in Its Flock?

Tresha Faye Haefner

If it lands on the lawn, next to your car.

If it picks up a piece of bread you've thrown out the window.

If it stares at you and there is light on its face.

If it caws to you from its branch, and you answer.

If it looks you in the eye, and you do not look away.

Stork

Justine Tal Goldberg

He wanted to love someone so much that he would die from it. Just seize up, roll over, go stiff and die. Beloved son for thirty-nine years, husband for three, and father for one, he wished for nothing more. Daniel bore this thought, wore it heavy, every day.

Daniel bears this thought even now. He trots along, his house a ways behind him and getting further by the minute, carrying The Boy who is not used to being carried. Daniel refuses to hold The Boy's hand and swats The Boy's wrist when he tries to suck his third thumb. The Boy looks surprised, as if he does not know that he has a third thumb, that eleven fingers is one too many, and that sucking on a birth defect is disgusting.

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"I don't hate you," Daniel says. "I don't. I may even love you." The words sound nothing like they had in the bathroom mirror rehearsal, shower running in case Nora came home. The message, between now and then, had hollowed. The Boy—not knowing any better, poor creature—smiles wide, finger fish hook at the side of his mouth. He clucks at his father, pre-speech speak, who catches a whiff of his son's baby breath and denies that in it he recognizes his own. "Love," Daniel says, shaking away some demon, "is not the point."

Daniel stops walking long enough to hoist The Boy higher on his hip. Although The Boy cannot ask, his eyes are wide with questions. He wants to know where they are going and when they will get there, why his father hardly ever holds him, avoids touching him always, and why with ick faces and reluctant hands he has chosen to do so now. Daniel

imagines all this and does not want to look at The Boy anymore.

Daniel keeps his eyes fixed on the pavement in front of him. The Boy arches his back in discomfort, stretching to reach for something far behind him, the way little boys do.

The group members wore “Resilient Father” pins, all except Daniel and Scott. They were two outcasts together—pinless, hopeless, deprived—but they did not look alike. Scott was dark and shaggy and un-suburban. He had a habit, Daniel noticed after a few brief exchanges, of arching his brow and twisting his upper lip, that made his face appear contorted and tragically fixed that way. Daniel had avoided him until he accepted that Scott, father of a boy with a hideous skin defect, was at heart a Daniel too.

My son can't walk, said one nervous-looking man with jowls that jiggled.

My daughter can't breathe, from a fidgety father, pacing the floor, ringing the life out of a paper napkin.

Walk, talk, eat, breathe, from another father and another.

Daniel and Scott stood aside and watched as the Resilient Fathers asked each other what they could do, wondered what they had done to make their children suffer so. There was something about these people that made Daniel feel like an ugly, ridiculous man. So, at the coffee machine, when Scott told Daniel that guys like them had to stick together, look out for one another, a you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours kind of arrangement, Daniel said he thought so too.

“There are these people I know,” Scott said. “These people I’m in contact with. They do a good thing, a good thing for guys like us.” Then, Scott told him about Mr. S. and the good work he does in the community. “Here’s my number if you’re interested,” Scott said, handing Daniel an inked tissue. “I’ll make a call,” he said. “Send the stork your way.”

Daniel made sure to lose the number in his pants pocket for a week. The following Tuesday, Scott came into group looking like a poker player with a card up his sleeve and Daniel decided to join the game.

Daniel tugs on The Boy’s shirt collar. He wants The Boy to hold still.

“Stop,” Daniel says, half to The Boy and half to himself. The Boy is squirming and will not stop looking towards home, now out of sight. Daniel keeps moving, fearful of being late, disrespectful, rude, of mucking up this opportunity, this inspired stab at life.

Can’t The Boy understand? This is for his own good. The best for all of them: The Boy, Nora, and himself last of all, of course. He was always last of all. There’s only so much a man can take, only so much abnormality a man can stomach. Sometimes a man needs to take matters into his own hands. Put his foot down and say, Boy, Nora, that’s the way it is and that’s final. Things will be much better now, she’ll see. And really, she left him no choice. She would have to see that.

The Boy finger paints, for crying out loud. He draws pictures, insists on tracing his disfigured hand in chunky red crayon. Nora mounts them on the fridge, calls them his “hand-iwork” and chuckles. The Boy drops his plastic dish, splatters his meal on the floor. “That kid’s all thumbs,” Daniel says, but for him, Nora never laughs. The Boy

does, though, happy in his not knowing. Nora used to call ten times a day, couldn't wait for Daniel to come home. Now, Mommy Nora puts her all into knitting those hideous double-thumbed mittens. Now, she shuffles around in her sensible shoes and floral apron, looking old, as undesirable as a grandmother.

Daniel had tried. Hadn't he tried? He had gone to group, in secret of course, and when he met Scott there, in the Child Disability Support Group in the next town over, he had resisted his advice, quite adamantly at first. He had approached the problem from every angle, with a scientist's precision, considered every option, every possible solution. For goodness' sake, he's tired. He's run out of ideas. He's flat out. What in the world more can he do?

Daniel needed to fall deeply and madly in love with someone until his heart gave out, his lungs collapsed, and he finally ceased to be. A year to decide, but now he knew for sure: The Boy would not be that someone.

The Boy, Nora's beautiful fragile one-of-a-kind almost perfect son, who had been born with two eyes, two ears, one nose, one mouth, one belly button, two arms, two legs, one penis, two hands, two feet, ten toes and eleven fingers. The birth defect is very common, the medical professionals had said. The birth defect is called hexadactyly, they said. The choice to amputate is yours, they said, but there are some slight risks involved, better to leave well enough alone. Pay no attention to the "defect," they advised the new parents. They themselves, the doctors, disapproved of the terminology. This means there's more of him to love, they said, that's all.

A blue Pontiac had come into view and now it's less than a block up. Daniel can see Jersey plates and a smashed-in tail light, just like Scott said. The guy is leaning against the driver's side door, his weight resting on one leg because the other is kicked up behind him. Daniel stalks towards him and imagines The Boy clinging tighter, his extra finger digging into his back like a punishment, like a thorn in his side. For a second, he considers turning back.

"You him?" the guy says, studying Daniel with beady, black eyes. Daniel nods because his mouth is very dry and he feels he may choke. He feels like he is already choking.

The guy is all lean, no fat, and unshaven, maybe hasn't seen a razor in weeks. He gnaws on a toothpick, looking bored; it dances beneath his pointed beak nose. The Boy studies him and squirms, reaching out for a tug on his beard.

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"He likes me," the guy says and smiles a young smile.

"You're just a kid," Daniel says.

"I'm no kid. That's a kid," the guy says, gesturing to The Boy. "I'm almost eighteen already."

"I didn't know," Daniel says. He takes a few steps backwards and hugs The Boy in a new way. "You're a child. I didn't know. Who runs this operation? I need to speak to Mr. S. Put me in touch with Mr. S."

The guy doesn't answer, just rolls his eyes. He looks as if he's seen this last minute guilt rag a hundred times before. Perhaps he thinks it pitiful. The guy pushes off the car with one foot and opens the back door.

Daniel makes no move. Daniel made a decision and now, this is really

happening and he cannot move. The guy is reaching for The Boy and The Boy is reaching back for him, and weights are being lifted and replaced, and a voice is saying, *Say bye-bye. Say bye-bye, daddy*, and doors are slamming, and engines are starting, and Daniel is standing there like a dummy. This kid is taking his kid. But what does this kid know? He's just a kid, for crying out loud. What does he know about good homes, good parents, good food, good morals, good deals? What does this kid know, about love, about life, about anything?

And as the blue Pontiac pulls away and Daniel is left holding a stranger in his arms where his six-fingered son used to be, he almost yells out to the almost eighteen-year-old kid to bring back his baby. There is a voice inside of Daniel's head, screaming louder than anything he's ever heard. *Give me my baby! Bring back my boy!* But Daniel is not speaking. He is standing in the middle of a deserted street, in a neighborhood he doesn't recognize, with a brand new son who is gurgling and looking mildly confused.

Daniel and his new son walk home together, hand-in-hand.

Nora is on the phone, chewing on a cuticle and sitting very close to the edge of the couch when Daniel walks in the door.

“—I hear him. Yes, they just walked in. Good, thanks. Bye, now.” Nora hangs up the phone. She starts to speak, then stops. She knows immediately, by instinct, the same way some animals know when to eat their young. Nora's lips pucker and she looks as if she may cry or faint or kill or die or sink through the floor or propel through the ceiling. She looks as if she might do anything.

“It’s our boy,” Daniel says, dwelling in yet-to-come memories of time made for this boy, thumb wars and tickle torture and baseball gloves that fit. He dreams, catching a side glimpse of his new son in the hallway mirror. But what is that? What is that thing? A lump, a growth, just behind the boy’s left ear: a thin, pink chewing gum bubble, stretched tight as if threatening to pop. And beneath it, another. And another. Daniel takes the boy’s chin in his hand roughly, so that the boy, tolerant thus far—perhaps only now realizing what has happened, where he is and where he is not—begins to cry. When Daniel turns the boy’s head, he finds a reddish cluster on the other side and, on the back of his neck, an angry cauliflower bump already in bloom. That man, that devil! Just who does he think he is?

The boy makes a familiar face with his forehead and his lip and Daniel is drowning.

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Daniel wanted to love his new son so much that he would die from it.

When Nora finally speaks, there is fear in her eyes.

“Monster,” she says.

The Aerostat Room

Edward Gauvin translating the French of Marcel Béalu

My room was unfolding like a giant cardboard box. Walls and ceiling opened without a sound, letting the sky in as I rose silently up. And so, without having left my desk, I soon found myself at such an altitude the earth below was no more than an enormous, purple-fleshed fruit. I felt no fear, just the ineffable joy of knowing that, at the end of this ascent, arcane secrets would be revealed to me. At some point, hearing something like a moan, I bent my head over the abyss to see where the strange noise was from. A sudden awareness of the void and, at the same time, a dreadful sight: beneath my room, someone was clinging to the dining room chandelier, grip slipping, a stare no longer in any way human lifted toward my own. And in this bundle dangling in space, of floating hair, of flesh and fear, I recognized my mother. *What madness to try and follow me!* I thought, while my throat produced unformed sounds dictated by pity. Quickly, working loose a floorboard, rupturing the plaster, I caught hold of the chandelier and tried to pull it toward me. Suddenly my extraordinary climb came to a halt and, as I continued my efforts, I felt myself descending back to earth bit by bit, as though the living weight I wished to hoist up to my own level drew me instead toward it. After a moment, my room returned to its place, walls and ceiling folded back up, and I heard my mother's voice calling me to dinner.

The Bus of No Return

Edward Gauvin translating the French of Marcel Béalou

Revelry in the lanes of the park! The orchestra in the distance on the lawn! Confetti on the nape of Suzanne's neck, and her sudden kiss alone behind the grove! No, Raymonde would never know, nor Renée, nor Jacqueline... The smell of the wind was on their cheeks. And that downy softness beneath my lips, that fleeting taste, was the bitterness, the shattering sweetness of happiness. But I didn't know it, I didn't know. When the music ended, we heard shadows rustling under the plane trees like a great silk dress. I was drawn by that murmurous solitude at whose end the gate opened on the world. A lure that soon took on the imperious character of need. *Wait for me! I'll be back!* I whispered solemnly, for myself alone, to my lovers of fifteen. And then I left the festivities at a run. An empty bus with all its lights on seemed to be waiting for me. I counted out the price of a seat with the apprehension of leaving home for the first time. We hurtled through unidentified villages, outlying boroughs like tunnels, then long, deserted boulevards and streets, endless streets. Suddenly it seemed we were passing the place where I was to get off. I tugged on the bell with all my strength, and the bus whose only passenger was me stopped with an appalling shriek at the bottom of a hill (later I remembered the driver had snickered as he left me there). I walked for a long time between walls that drew closer and closer together. The cobblestones grew uneven, I stumbled under the streetlights, aging whores called out to me. The last subway had just left. It must have been very late; rain began to fall. A single desire seized me then: to find a place to sleep. Hesitantly, I entered a narrow hallway where a light glimmered. Just like that pale glow still lay, buried beneath my distress, the senseless hope that I would make it through the night.

The Honest Illusionist

Edward Gauvin translating the French of Marcel Béalu

For a long time, I was an illusionist. I can now say that chance led me down this path and not, as one might believe, an irresistible calling: I bought a fakir's paraphernalia at an auction for a wink and a smile. Right from the start of my career, I knew how little interest the public had in my exercises. Decapitating an assistant or impaling an audience member seemed innocent games to those thrill-seekers. And yet I'd managed, with various little bits I'd invented, to lend an air of absolute truth to these unlikely experiences. No doubt my patter lacked the heat of conviction. After much reflection, I decided to renew the entire principle of the genre. What did my demanding spectators desire but to know the singular tremor of fear? There was only one way to satisfy them: to cease all pretense and substitute, for the illusion of reality, the illusion of illusion. From then on, it was actual blood that gushed at my blade, and my assistant, preferably young and pretty, had only to give in to her natural impulses when my swords ran unflinchingly through her flesh. Thanks to this simple technique, which no one had thought of before, I immediately became a great success. The snag was finding new victims every night and making them vanish, after the fact, without arousing any suspicions. But here at last I found an occasion to exercise my talents as a prestidigitator—quite real, in fact—and moreover, in an utterly disinterested way, since there were no witnesses.

Palmistry

Edward Gauvin translating the French of Marcel Béalu

I was proud of my hands, with their unmarked fates. Whatever possessed me to see a palm reader? Upon arriving, I entered no banal vestibule, but a long glass corridor. From the warm half-light prevailing in the hallway soon emerged several rows of plants whose large leaves seemed made from some dead matter. From the middle of each opened five thick petals, widowed of stamens. I drew closer, curious: the flowers were hands, some open, some half-closed. Just as I realized this, a tiny door toward the back of the greenhouse opened, and a man in a gardening apron appeared, looking furious. But no sooner had he glanced at my palms than he began to laugh silently, grabbed my right hand, and turned it like the handle on a vise. The motion reminded me that one day (until now I'd thought it was a dream), my wife had unscrewed all four of my limbs so I'd fit in her doll's bathtub. Then, as now, it went quite well. When my right hand had been entirely unscrewed, the man in the gardening apron seized my left and unscrewed it even more nimbly. His job done, he pushed me more than showed me to a lower room that was completely dark. I tripped over several stretched-out legs before finding an empty seat and letting myself fall into it. Men—like me, in black morning coats—were seated around the room, but all I saw of them at first were enormous Legion of Honor rosettes. After a moment, I realized these were just the wrists from which their hands, like mine, were missing. What could I have been thinking, to be so utterly wrong? There we sat, perfectly patient clients, despite our dignity and ceremonious attire like vagrants in a waiting room (who wish to feign interest in the pass-

ing trains but on whom weariness forces immobility), when suddenly, from behind the wall, we heard an altercation, immediately followed by two ringing slaps as a single word boomed out: *Charlatan!* Our silence became like the silence before an explosion, flame racing down the fuse. Slowly, light replaced shadow, and I could see in all the widened eyes the wild fear that, for a moment now, I'd been trying hard to hide. This feeling only lasted a few seconds. Abruptly one of the handless men lunged for the door, and we followed in panicked terror. Beneath the glass roof, a horrifying and farcical scene ensued: each of us, looking for a right and left to fit his wrists, using his stumps, mouth, and even feet to try and screw them on when he found them. I ended up with a pair of hands that fit me to a tee, but whose palms were so crosshatched, streaked, and striped every which way that I haven't been able to pick out my life line ever since.

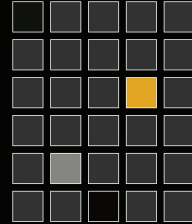
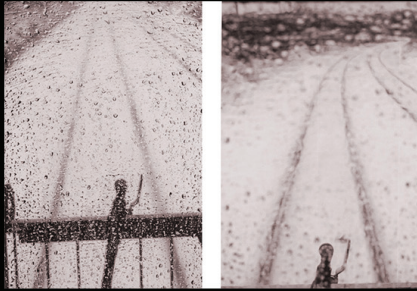
Meridiend

Michael Filimowicz

MERIDIEND is a work of net art combining literary writing and digital photography to explore a variant of psychogeography, defined by Guy Debord as “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals” and as “a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances.”

The approach to psychogeography in MERIDIEND is to explore the interstices between writing and the real places that served in some way as a point of contact for these texts. Neither text nor image “explain” or “caption” the other, but rather viewing and reading relies on the memory of each, as texts and images are not viewable simultaneously. Furthermore, this approach rejects the “anti-ruralism” of the Situationist *dérive* with its urban obsessions, and engages the poetic and dialectical tensions between city and country.

The interface instantiates a *dérive* for the interactor, who can drift amongst these texts and images in either random or systematic fashion. Once the image has been replaced by its accompanying text, it cannot be easily gotten back to unless an effort has been made by the viewer-reader-drifter to keep track of their moves.



There is always the ever-present fear of mechanical failure. Even at the muffler shop when your car is up on the hydraulic lift, there is the worry that the whole contraption might come crashing down, that even with every machine built to spec or even three times the requirements of spec a machine always seems capable of doing us harm. In a house you don't think that the roof might collapse onto your head, but a battery can always explode acid into your face, a generator might generate shrapnel should its internal combustion combust externally, a winch might stress out a steel cable so that it goes whip-like berserk on deck, a hitch might unhitch so that its towed freight becomes a hurled, inertia-bound projectile. What we need are machines built like stone walls, machines which produce comfort rather than anxiety, machines which last for millennia rather than breaking down just after the warranty expires. We need machines without moving parts. We need machines that do nothing.

1728 Dashes Equal a Gallon

Corey Mesler

If we were a measuring people
and, at times, we are,
we would say it's still a long
time between victories.

Except the small ones, of
course, the ones secretaries and
pet owners notate.

If we were a measuring people
we might say that today
we're coming up a little short.

We might say, I loved you
when things were golden, when
our arms browned in the sun.

We might say, between
you and me, there is a gulf as large
as the poles asunder.

We might say, let's count up all
those moments, slipping
through our hands like sands,
until we are beached.

We might say, come closer,
just for tonight, with the light the
way it is, having come so
far to empurple our gloaming,
light years uncountable, if
we were, if we were a measuring people.

Making the Knock

Scott Esposito

TV and I have been estranged for years. It is an ailment, I believe, that is common to my generation, an entirely meaningless distinction that I contracted by accident. This is how it went: little by little that box communicated to me its worthlessness for anything I held to be important, until one day it was the most natural thing in the world to simply acknowledge that I had quit watching it. I suppose you could say I outgrew it, like I outgrew Nintendo and baseball cards.

But the Internet. God help me if I didn't have the Internet.

*

Almost anywhere you go in Mexico, the web will be there. Even in towns of dirt roads and saddled horses, chances are you will find that cramped room with a bunch of old 486s, adolescent boys flashing looks at each others' screens and yelling to one another, a solemn-faced woman tapping out something with determination. Even in this room, the experience is overpowering: once you sit down and the screen is all yours, it is very much the same experience you remember from your home country.

To an American living in Mexico, the Internet is like a great shadow in the shape of those united states. Sometimes the coziness is a little too wet—for instance, when you are reading about the latest actions of your President W—and at these times you begin to scrape around for a way out from under this shadow; then at other moments you luxuriate in this ease of accessing things that remind you of home. It can be

a crutch if you want it to. It was surely addictive.

In those first months in Mexico the ready access to facsimile America turned me into a voyeur of my former life. This experience was the exact opposite of those photos that travelers are encouraged to bring with them to castrate homesickness's longing: photos provide a tangible, tactile experience that can unlock deep emotions, but they are worthless when it comes to perpetuating a lifestyle. Great at nostalgia, they are seldom useful for personal voyeurism for they speak only the past. The Internet though, the most effervescent medium ever invented, it is completely sterile for purposes of nostalgia (even TV would better stoke those fires), but is a belching engine custom-made for spinning out your lost present and making of it a future lifestyle.

And this, I am forced to conclude, explains why I took no photos with me to Mexico and watched no TV while I was there, but found myself quickly addicted to the Internet cafes.

*

One November day—three months into Mexico—I discover that Puebla is hosting something called the *Museo Peatonal*: in English it calls itself “The Passerby Museum,” although “The Pedestrian Museum” would not be an inappropriate translation. Anyone who passes by can contribute something of theirs to this exhibit, which consists solely of such objects displayed in orderly arrays of Ziploc bags. When I visited the museum in Puebla it contained roughly 2,000 objects, taking up a space about the size of four studio apartments. It had previously hit New York City, Barcelona, Madrid, Havana, and Mexico City, growing with each stop.

The Museum as I found it was awash in old receipts, snapshots, scraps of paper with scribbled notes, ticket stubs. A few items had been pulled aside into a “treasures” section, the most remarkable of these being, in my opinion, an unimpressive black box whose former owner had written a note of explanation: “This is a key that will open any electrical box in Madrid.” I must have stood there before this hunk of plastic for a good ten minutes with a troubled look on my face before I saw the note and managed to translate it.

The museum is all anonymous—meaning any exhibitionistic urge it inspires is necessarily a circumscribed one—although it still grants you the satisfaction of knowing that strangers will observe what was once your personal property with the same respect they would accord any other artifact displayed in a museum. After the black box, my second favorite treasure in the museum was a giant preserved insect, its long, stick-like legs curled into its abdomen and forming a symmetrical diamond roughly the size of my fist. The feeling of disgust I got while watching it was pleasing—aren’t giant dead insects marvelous to behold when they are trapped behind plastic?—though I could not imagine what kind of person would have such an object at their immediate disposal.

Context is essential in *The Passerby Museum*. It is context that differentiates between a used movie ticket from New York City—which I found moderately interesting—and a used movie ticket from Cuba—a virtual sociological study. The museum’s co-creator, Nicolás Dumit Estévez, remarked on this to me over email: “At first glance, its objects might give an overall sense of globalism, but as one proceeds to examine the objects in detail the differences become noticeable. I am learning that people have the ability to use the same words to

compose very different sentences.” The museum satisfied me first and foremost for the lessons afforded by context; another way to put this is that voyeurism functions best when you know where you are looking.

After the treasures of the black box and the giant preserved insect, I came across an empty Ziploc bag hung amidst hundreds of others on a wall display from DF. It stood out as the only null point in this charged field and thus it immediately pulled me in. Was it really empty? Had someone donated air from Mexico City? Eventually the bag gave up its secret: from a particular angle I could see a single, long strand of blond hair switchbacked on itself. Such sudden intimacy was too much: in that skidding moment disgust surged up my chest. Full of nausea I stepped back and fixed my eyes on a more inert object and wondered why it was that a hair in your soup repels, but a lover’s hair found stuck to your clothes enralls. In The Passerby Museum these two aspects of the physical are in uneasy embrace, and within its walls it is possible to observe the process by which inanimate objects begin to work on you. Dumit Estévez commented to me that, “Every city visited reacts differently to its encounter with our nomadic institution. In New York City interactions are brief, intimacy can easily be summed up in two minutes. In the two places that we have visited in Mexico, the DF and Puebla, donors seem to have a more relaxed sense of time. There is always room for a conversation, and the items and their descriptions are carefully crafted: ‘the only blond hair that my girlfriend has.’”

One of the last things I noticed in my first trip to the museum was that a number of Mexicans from DF and Puebla had donated expired passports. They were opened to the front page and hanging there in a row, their former owners’ impassive eyes reminding me of a silent

protest. Below each headshot was the passportee's full name, address, and identification number, and it was this data that evoked within me an empathetic shame at its nakedness. I wanted to cover them up. But then, as I stood there thinking of my own private data, so well-protected from thieves, it hit me that these were the only objects in the museum that were not anonymous.

*

In The Passerby Museum I felt surrounded by a mass of other lives, I worked to imagine the people behind so many of the objects left there, but nothing in the museum woke within me the urge to join them. My complete disinterest in being part of an enterprise I so clearly respected and found intriguing left me at a loss, but some days later Dumit Estévez placed this into a new context when he remarked over email that "objects can be felt and smelled in ways that the virtual still lacks." He went on: "The Museum can confer on its visitors an invisibility. Blogs and reality TV, although related, do not demand the same level of personal interaction as The Museum. Blogs and reality TV are relatively safe spaces from the standpoint of the voyeur. In The Passerby Museum, one is always a voyeur in a public context."

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With those words I began to see my way toward why I did not want to become part of the museum, despite my great participation in that other passerby museum called the Internet. In a similar sort of way, I began to understand that Mexico's appeal to Americans has always been the convenience of exoticism. Even if Mexico is now hardly the place it was when Jack Kerouac wrote "We had finally found the magic land at the end of the road and we never dreamed the extent of the magic," the switchover from consciousness to sub- was nonetheless clearly evident for me upon arrival. My foolish image of Mexico

was destroyed piece by piece as my stay in that country lengthened from weeks to months, and as that happened I began to construct a shadow-image of the place America was now becoming in my mind. Thus began my education in the limits of the virtual, a lesson that was reinforced every time I saw the wonder that the word *America* could trammel up in the eyes of the average Mexican and heard the questions they would ask me.

This desire in each of us to see the other's country is a variant of a fantasy I was uncommonly strong prey to as a child: a belief that within you lies an entirely different person, that somehow your life can be entirely different if you have the power to knock it off the tracks. For all of my stay in Mexico I believed that this was just what I'd done upon arriving in the DF airport. I thought that in that one shattering moment I'd knocked that old life clean off, although now, with the benefit of years of hindsight, I see that this is not the case. The knock wasn't made all at once; I've come to believe that it never is, that such a shattering of one's identity, violent though it may seem, is in reality a protracted process. In my own case this change in identity was still ongoing when I visited the museum, months after landing in DF, and according to this current narrative I've arranged my Mexican life into, it was this process that I now designate as ending several months after my visit to The Passerby Museum, when deep in summer I found myself high above the Yucatán jungle.

*

With time I grew bored with that shadow-America that the Internet could offer me in Mexico. I would still of course check my email regularly and follow the news, but as time passed I grew less concerned with eavesdropping on the other life I'd left behind. What took

the place of voyeurism was nostalgia, although not nostalgia for the American life I had left but rather nostalgia for the early days of my Mexican life. This was my clearest indication that Puebla was becoming a home. I took so many photos of that city, so many photos of my partner Beth and I spending time together in all the places we came to know in Mexico, and toward the spring and summer they began to evoke the sharpest emotions.

Imaginary Landscape No. 5

Howie Good

Anemic evening light.

Women surrounded

by shadows complain

about the howling.

It's terribly hot.

Skin has begun to bubble.

There must be a fire

somewhere.

Cemetery of uniforms—

that was the dream.

Ocean Audience (3)

Robert Lietz

Chip-speeds treble in a breath. And the rain
blows prompts -- where rain's
been more than satisfactory -- pounding at the shops
and easing a little now --
veiling the P'town Light in hermeneutic transience.
Supposing what's said and what's possessed
/ supposing the weight of stars -- influenced by stars --
the sky's blue shimmerings --
and now the news along the fish-ladder / the news
in windfall / wind-woven circumstance
/ in this spawning seen -- as through a sky-wide pane --
in the grey and give / go
patterings and art songs / the slogans and brands
sandblasted off the floating surfaces.
Here were these words like canopies to come in under
and be known -- words
in the Vinyard's greens / the stars over Hyannis --
aspiring to more than capable / aspiring
to more than ginger and to fish-based recipes --
to this ocean audience -- light gasping
in the walls -- where they were going someplace
once -- through the stuccoed / lost
and modular amusements / reconstructed
smugglings -- the reconstructed
shades and man-sized occupations --

configured
in local speeds -- configured
in these scratched lines
and hip-shot
negatives.

You could play that alphabet and still not catch the names.
But what's the mystery? And what's
the story now -- the personal mint grown tall
/ the Bon Air ruined -- lost
as her sympathy for socks that never seemed right
for the trousers? But what's the story now --
the grimace say / or recognition in her winking?
Insomnias traced through tans
and greens / in homes supported over water --
implying we only half-belong / we're
only half-way shown among the conduits
and credits -- fat kids moshing
/ passing flesh --peddling
the predetermined
stone in casual
defections?

What was that mystery after all -- coaxing
these ghosts in time -- ready
for beds and breasts and bedtimes with an interest --
and wearing their hats one way --
their pants down on their heels -- their urges
deepening -- having gone through minds
across the green edge of equation -- coveting

the signs to be exact -- the minds
and fruits the old men sipped on their verandas?
Think how the novels tantalized
/ how the poems obsessed the ocean audience --
as moved (let's say)
as paper hearts and prospering -- how that large Ford
must have filled
the panel of the rearview -- coming
through rain and fog --
taking on itself the looks of some days
in the country -- conceived
conditionally -- compositionally
and quick -- here
in the mega-mystery / in the spans
and trumpets
and guitar chords commenting,
in the acidities
and plastics / no matter
what they'd
seemed.

Things That Are Already Dead

Shannon Derby

The first thing to do is to get a bag or a basket or a sweatshirt with deep pockets. It might take you an extra minute or two to find a basket, but that is to be expected. You have only been living in your mother's house for a few months, the funeral not yet a distant memory. Only wear shoes if the beach is particularly rocky. Walk with your head bent slightly toward the sand so that you can gaze up and down and side to side in twelve-second intervals. Remember your mother's advice: don't pick up shells that are broken, still home to oceanic creatures, coated with remnants of seaweed or duplicates. That is just greedy and boring. You want something new to place atop your inherited mantle. And don't collect mussel shells; they are everywhere on this beach and they're not exceptionally fascinating or beautiful. Sea-glass is acceptable unless it is brown – that is just a beer bottle swallowed by the sea because some lazy old man or rebellious kid was drinking on another beach and could not, or perhaps would not, find a garbage bin. Miniature shells are only to be collected if they are either perfect in shape, color and texture or if they happen to be baby conch shells still in their pods. This is extremely rare as they are oftentimes picked out of their pods by ravenous, desperate seagulls. Do not feed the seagulls.

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Begin your walk in the most common place: down at the point where the waves graze the sand leaving it packed smooth and hard. Remember the day so many years ago that you walked here, hand in hand with your mother, looking for the bracelet you lost in a sandcastle. Remember that you never found it. The best shells – the sand dollars,

the prettiest clam shells, pieces of coral and conch shells the size of a child's fist and maybe even a dead starfish – will be here in this wet sand. You'll come across a beautiful sea snail with swirls of purple and gold and blue but don't place it in your bag. No, first you must turn it over and inspect the interior and nine times out of ten with a shell this vivid, the animal is still alive and just a little lost. You can't have its home yet. Throw it back into the sea but do check this place in about fifteen minutes as a seagull will have probably picked it up and eaten it and thus made it acceptable for your collection. Keep walking and pick up the pearly shells that look like the face of your mother's watch that now sits on your nightstand. Skip the plain white ones unless they are big enough to be useful as an ashtray, a potpourri holder or maybe a place to keep your jewelry safe while you go for a swim. Pick up the blue sea-glass but immediately throw it back since the edges are still sharp and remember: always, always pick up conch shells – even if there is a slight crack or inconsistency of form. If you are lucky, you will come across a seagull skull, licked clean of any blood or brains or feathers by the salt water the night before. This is such an excellent find that it might be wise for you to pack up your bag or basket or pockets and go home because if you are too greedy the tide won't bring you anything the next day.

Walk back to your house with your head held high, admiring the way the ocean is darker at the horizon than it is at your feet, and clean your findings with one part white vinegar and two parts water so that they don't smell up the kitchen because you know how that used to anger your mother so.

(to a fish)

Brandon Holmquest translating the Spanish of Julia Ferrar

its silent body resolves to play palm to palm
with death

its eyes never decide to accompany me

it's a discreet, dark room
without sound, without blood
which I love for itself
irreparable, crazy

will you know what you have?
what is yours and still
mine i'm sorry
and mine i suffer from

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The hands you don't have
hurt me sometimes
vainly caressing
my belly my back
my open legs

could the sun fall into the seas and extinguish itself
or burn itself up completely
and writhe in the ashes
dying of thirst
for light?

(a un pez)

Julia Ferrar

su cuerpo silencioso resuelve jugar palmo a palmo
con la muerte

nunca sus ojos se deciden a acompañarme

es un discreto cuarto a oscuras

en el que se mancha uno

de no se sabe qué

(hamaca permanente de pelos irisados)

qué harás tú de tu cuerpo

sin sonido y sin sangre

al cual amo porque sí

irremediable y loco

¿sabrás que lo posees?

que es tuyo y sin embargo

mío lo siento

y mía lo padezco

Las manos que no tienes

me lastiman a veces

acariciando en vano

mi vientre mis espaldas

mis piernas separadas

¿puede el sol caer sobre los mares y apagarse

o incendiarlo todo

y revolcarse en las cenizas
muriéndose de sed
de luz?

lima—mayo—56—

untitled

Brandon Holmquest translating the Spanish of Julia Ferrar

i've always lived leaning out onto my water balcony
believing in amphibians and i've even seen mute
sirens
it's true

but it's not enough to see to believe
to believe you need doubt

and i do not doubt

i liked so much to live leaning out onto my water balcony

fluttering around with fireflies
letting myself be devoured by some animal

getting wet only if it rained
weeping only if it rained
dying only if it rained

only if it rained

don't look into the water you'll break yourself

but my shadow answered it will never die
my shadow will always listen to your flute
your heron
your magnolia
your flute

my shadow will always dance with your light

still I saw it hang itself

poison itself

slit its throat

drown itself

burn itself

but my shadow will never die

it will always dance with your light

still hanging from its feet

always dance with your light

i've always lived leaning out onto my water balcony

believing in a visitor who never came

and i've even seen mute

sirens

it's true

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contents

madrid—october—56—

untitled

Julia Ferrar

siempre he vivido asomada a mi balcón de agua
creyendo en los anfibios y hasta he visto sirenas
mudas

eso sí

pero no basta ver para creer
para creer hace falta dudar

y yo no dudo

me gustaba tanto vivir asomada a mi balcón de agua
revoloteando con las luciérnagas
dejándome devorar por algún animal

mojándome sólo si llovía
llorando sólo si llovía
muriendo sólo si llovía

sólo si llovía

no te mires en el agua que vas a quebrarte

pero mi sombra no morirá jamás respondía
mi sombra siempre escuchará tu flauta
tu garza
tu magnolia
tu flauta

mi sombra siempre danzará con tu luz

sin embargo yo la vi ahorcarse
envenenarse
degollarse
ahogarse
quemarse

pero mi sombra no morirá jamás

danzará siempre con tu luz

aún colgada de los pies
danzará siempre con tu luz

siempre he vivido asomada a mi balcón de agua
creyendo en un visitante que nunca llegó
y hasta he visto sirenas

56
mudas
eso sí

contents

madrid—octubre—56—

words for consumption

Brandon Holmquest translating the Spanish of Julia Ferrar

*The best work never gets paid in Art.
There's only salt and bitter bread, going up and down
far away staircases. You have to be prepared
to dream and you have to know how.*

Baudelaire

this is the earth
"that hides the secrets of men"
is the world
my archangel of a
single mirror

bell with two faces in the same sense

Because to the rising tree
of cruel life
or death

flowerstrewn in dreams
with wicked flower
to the almost love
now nothing

and in the mud garden walls
small clay doves
eyeing my life
go my leaping hands

that hunt butterflies
 measuring the world
 that she eats
 and I open like a jewel box
 to my enemy
 in something like a duty
 very inside

 hypocrite observer of the Infinite
 already so close
 of what we do not know

palabras para el consumo

Julia Ferrar

*El mejor trabajo nunca se paga en el Arte.
Sólo hay un pan amargo y sal, y subir y bajar
por escaleras ajenas. Uno debe estar dispuesto
a soñar y debe saber cómo.*

Baudelaire

esta es la tierra
"la que guarda el secreto de los hombres"
es el mundo
mi arcángel de un
solo espejo

bifronte cascabel en el mismo sentido

Porque al árbol ascendiente
de cruel vida
o muerte

en sueños florecida
la flor malvada
al casi amor
ya nada

y en los tapias
palomitas de barro
espiando mi vida
van soltando mis manos

que cazan las mariposas
midiendo el mundo
que ella se come
y abro como un cofre
a mi enemigo
en algo que se compete
muy adentro

hipócrita mirador al Infinito
ya muy cerquita
de lo que no sabemos

The Roofer

Christina Murphy

“I keep a Bible on the dashboard of my truck, so you know I’m not gonna cheat you.”

Tom wants to do repair work on my roof, so he says this to me before he gives me the estimate.

“You know, I answer to a higher authority, so I have to do right by you.”

“Good,” I say. I do see that there is a Bible on his dashboard and that he is wearing a gold cross around his neck. Seems like overkill to me, but what the heck.

“Now here’s what you need.”

And he gives me a long list—shingles, nails, caulk, liner, and on and on. I had no idea there was so much stuff on a roof. And if you listen to Tom, it’s a beautiful, intricate system that almost brings tears to your eyes.

“It’s all interconnected,” he says. “It’s like the stars and the planets. You can’t have them without the sky. You know what I mean?”

“Yes, I do. So how much?”

“Well, let me tally that up.” He takes a pad and a pencil from his truck and writes some numbers down. I can see from what he’s doing that he can’t subtract all that well. We kind of go round on that for awhile as he tries to convince me, so I tell him let me get a calculator.

He looks a bit embarrassed when I show him his numbers are off. “Hmm,” he says. “I guess calculators don't lie.”

“Right,” I say. I want to believe he is not trying to cheat me but is just not that good at math. I could be fooling myself, but you can drive yourself crazy with trying to figure out who's lying to you and who isn't in this world.

“Okay,” I say. “You ready to go?”

“Gotta go to the hardware store and get some caulk.”

“Anything else you need?”

“Maybe some nails. I got shingles in my truck.”

“Okay.”

“We gotta figure in gas,” he says, “because I've gotta drive there and gas is about \$3.50 a gallon now.”

So we are back to the calculator, and we settle on another \$5.00 as his truck only gets 9 miles to the gallon and there's the wear and tear, you know.

“Yes, I know.” I leave out that there are many kinds of wear and tear—some on the truck, some on the soul.

So he leaves and comes back, a big smile on his face. “I've got everything we need now,” he says.

I watch him set up his ladder, and I go inside. In a few minutes, he is back, knocking on the door.

“Could I get a glass of ice water?” he says.

I bring it out to him, and he says, “You know, the last time I was on a ladder, I got chest pains and couldn't breathe.”

He unbuttons his shirt, and shows me a long, narrow scar running down his chest. It's a faded tan and pink color that looks like what used to be called “Flesh” in the old Crayola boxes.

“Heart attack,” he says. “A big one.”

“I can see that.”

“Hit me hard,” he says. “I'm just 53. I don't look it though, do I?”

No, you don't, I'm thinking to myself, *you look 63*. But I don't say that. He's very proud of thinking he looks young. “You look great,” I tell him.

“It was terrible,” he says. “It feels like someone punched you in the chest. I was scared this was it, and of course I wanted to be right with God.”

“Yes, of course,” I say.

He has a story he wants to tell me, and he starts with the details that are most important to him. How afraid he was, how his body had never failed him before, how he didn't want to die alone.

I listen. He wants this from me. It's like a rite of passage.

He asks for another glass of iced water, drinks it down, and then starts up the ladder.

I've been inside about five minutes when he knocks again.

“It's worse than I thought,” he says. “Whoever did this roof really

shortchanged you. The shingles aren't placed right, and so rain is going underneath some of them. It's a mess."

In mathematics, there used to be certainty. Something was either true or false and could not be both. That was when there was only Euclidian geometry, and everything was simple and clear cut. Then came two other geometries, and all of a sudden there is a new option—true, or false, or possible.

I'm standing there listening to him, and I don't know what's true or false, only what's possible. And believe me, possible can drive you crazy because you just don't know what you're up against. Maybe the roof is not in such bad condition. Maybe the other roofer did not cheat me. Maybe this guy is trying to cheat me. Maybe he is not a very good roofer and so can't tell what condition my roof really is in. Maybe it's all possible. How can I know any different?

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"You know I wouldn't cheat you," he says.

It's possible.

"I got no reason to."

It's possible.

He points to his chest. "Look, after what I've been through, I'm not going to cheat anybody. You believe me, don't you?"

It's possible.

"Okay, so where does that put us?" I say.

"Up to you," he says. He takes a cigarette from a pack of Marlboros in his chest pocket and lights up. The smoke weaves its way into the blue

light of late summer and looks slightly ominous.

“I say leave it and you just fix what we agreed to.”

He looks at me for a long time with an inscrutable stare. “That's what you want?” he says.

“That's what I want.”

“It'll only get worse,” he says.

“Most things do,” I say.

He takes another draw on his cigarette and sighs. “Okay,” he says. “I figure you know what you're doing.”

It's possible.

“All right then, let's get going,” I say.

I'm starting into the house when he says, “Hey, do you drink coffee?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I'd like a cup then, if you don't mind. Two creams.”

Here is where all the dimensions of the universe converge. We think the earth is flat, but it isn't. A horizon is not real but does mark the limits of our vision. Clock time is an illusion. And an infinity of angels *can* dance on the head of a pin. There is logic and there is proof. There is the imagination and there is belief. And which is true, which is false, and which is only probable—who the heck knows? I sure don't.

“Two creams?” I say. “You sure?”

“Yeah,” he says, looking puzzled.

“I drink it that way, too,” I say.

“Huh, how about that?” he says. He seems to have found a new respect for me, or something very much like that.

“I’ll get that coffee for you,” I say. “And if you find anything else wrong on the roof up there, you let me know.”

From My Window

Nicholas YB Wong

Not seasons, no snowy mountains,
no squirrels fleeing from freezing
corners with their fleecy fur during spring.
When autumn comes, my eyes will not notice.
It is my skin that feels the dryness and
reminds me to put on a coat.

I write in front of my window, through which
I see where I belong, masonry of high
risers, whose bodies are rain-speckled or
weather-worn. This is Hong Kong after all,
where racists and sexists do not exist, where
people and buildings aspire upward with rocket
momentum. We are *heightists* – shortness is nearly
a crime here, second to universal suffrage.

I wonder what those Canadian poets
would say with such a view. Would their eyes
go blind seeing erect cement?
Would their mind be blocked by the lack
of hills and rocks? Would they call
my room a hell hole? Would they therefore assume
Hong Kong people can't write?

It's not true that I don't have a view here.
I can peep into the life next door, know that
the couple subscribes to *Oriental Daily*

and eats with white polystyrene boxes
five nights a week. I could even change
their TV channel with my remote and
catch them in surprise.

Every Friday night, they retreat to bed early, dim the light,
slowly let their bodies illuminate at various
angles, in different rhythms, while their window,
silent and dutiful, keeps them away from chaos
in the squared-off cityscape.

A Guide to Towns and Cities

Casey Plett

Small town – Between 100 and 1,500 people. No stop lights. Post office part of another commercial building, if not just a small chunk of mailboxes installed on side of road. Commercial buildings total no more than five, one of which is a gas station/convenience store. Gas station has one pump. Convenience store sells fishing gear or farm equipment, depending on surrounding area of town. One elementary school, rarely anything more. Inhabitants unsurprised if town is not on state road atlas. Walking to end of town and back barely counts as exercise. Being on first-name basis with over half of town not hyperbole. A mother grows up there, and a son finds residents still know her, thirty years after she's left.

Medium town – Between 1,500 and 10,000 people. One stop light at least, but probably no more than five. Genuine main street. Main street is called “Main Street.” Post office its own separate and dwarfish building. One Dairy Queen. (Possibly other fast food joints, but definitely the Dairy Queen.) Everything closes by six, with the exception of gas stations, maybe two bars, and the Dairy Queen. One high school, no more and no less. Graduation for high school possibly held in church. Church largest auditorium-like venue in vicinity. Inhabitants audibly excited if town is on national road atlas. Being on first-name basis with half of town just barely hyperbole. Multiple elementary schools. Baseball diamonds for a son to play while attending elementary school. One unassuming hospital for a mother to work at and take call. One doctor's room for a son to sleep in on nights without a babysitter. Sky and fields beyond town limits. (Or mountains.

Or forests. Or anything but more people.) A son could bike from one end of town to the other in fifteen minutes. A son might do that often.

Big town – Between 10,000 and 40,000 people. Genuine main street has secondary offshoot main streets. Biking from one end of town to the other borders on intense workout. One block on main street that might have, one day, been part of a downtown. Part of commercial strip closes down at eight or nine, but still mostly at six. Maybe a second high school, but probably not. At least five bars though. Post office large enough to blend in with rest of commercial strip. A couple big box stores. Big box stores larger than offshoot main streets. An institution which the town centers on, like a museum, or a monument, or a small college where a son goes to begin. 24-hour culture limited to 7-Eleven, which a son frequents a lot of nights. One enormous graveyard for a son to walk into and fall in love. (The 7-Eleven probably wouldn't have cut it.) Roving cops on the lookout for sons and girls in graveyards. (What other crime is there?) Enough streets that only a person who grew up wandering them could know every single one. Everybody still knows everybody, and a mother considers these streets nice. Streets have at least ten stop lights.

(There is no designation for municipalities between 40,000 and 100,000 people. A son has never lived in such an area, and not only that, he is dismissively terrified of them.)

Small city – Between 100,000 and 500,000 people (metro). Dozens of stop lights. Post office not only large, but probably one of the most genuinely magnificent buildings around. Ten square blocks that might have, one day, been a respectable downtown. Inhabitants refer to these blocks as “downtown.” Dozens of bars that somehow represent the only thing to do, with the exception of local theatres and

possibly a concert hall. A handful of high schools. Pockets of people that could be called neighborhoods, with some squinting. Riding a bike from one end of town to the other a job for amateur athlete. Too many people to run into acquaintances every day, but still too few to escape scrutiny. Small enough to keep a person on their toes. A son comes of age, leaves here, and keeps returning. A pervasive, rumbling interstate promises a link to bigger places that a mother wishes to escape to, years after escaping from her small town. Inhabitants who have never lived anywhere else think they live in a small town. Beyond 7-Eleven, 24-hour culture consists of chain diners, where a son finds himself years before he leaves and years after leaving. Some stores close at eight or nine, and many six or seven, except the Barnes & Noble, which closes at eleven, when the Barnes & Noble is always, always filled.

Medium city – Between 500,000 and 3,500,000 people (metro). Hundreds of stop lights. Central post office, far from small or magnificent, resembles ugly over-sized military bunker. A downtown worthy of the name and dozens of full-fledged neighborhoods that, on their own, bear striking resemblances to medium towns. People visiting from medium towns think they are visiting a big city. Cities forgotten, cities galloping, cities stagnant. Theatres and museums and cultural districts, some broken and some thriving and many unknown. Biking from one end of town to another done only by the many biking enthusiasts. 24-hour culture limited to eighteen-and-over titty-bars and a few scattered all-night cafes in inner areas (the same chain diners in the outer areas). A porn theater. Record shops. Cramped bookstores. Liquor stores with taped windows. Brick buildings from the '20s with painted-on advertisements for paint thinner. Industrial areas long since abandoned. Art galleries in industrial areas long since

abandoned. Or maybe crack dens. Bars, bars, bars. Hole-in-the-wall punk bars, fifty-sports-TVs suburbanite bars, friendly neighborhood pool bars, wine bars (next to the abandoned industrial art galleries), dive bars, unremarkable bars. River people under bridges. Shit on the sidewalks next to skyscrapers. Fights in the 7-Eleven. Inhabitants run into someone they know once a week, if their social lives are active. Many rumbling interstates, so snake-like and pervasive that a son forgets they lead out of the city. A son leaves everything they know to live here. A son discovers drugs, drinking, a son discovers chugging bottles of cough syrup in cold ratty apartments with cracked Venetian blinds, watching art movies and tripping to the sound of rain with cats keeping a son warm as he huddles under blankets. A son discovers they love other sons, a son discovers they're no longer interested in being sons. A son enrolls in college, a son drops out. A son waits at bus stops at one in the morning, if he is lucky enough to live by one of the few routes that go that late. A mother was married to a father who did similar things, and a mother visits a son hoping he is not. A son hears those from big cities remark how this place is almost like a small town, and a son marvels at their smallness.

Big city – Between 3,500,000 people (metro) and ...

Thousands and tens of thousands of stop lights. Dozens of ugly post offices. Stores close late, restaurants close later, diners don't close at all. Rumbling interstates almost everywhere. Rumbling interstates impossible to distinguish from rumbling streets. A hundred high schools. Neighborhoods scattered like small cities. Apartment buildings where nobody speaks to their neighbors. Individual blocks (not unlike small towns) where everybody speaks to their neighbors. City government has department for everything. City government makes

up sizable slice of city employment. Smells of hot food follow smells of shit. Biking from one end of town to another a hard day for Olympic athlete, Olympic athlete who enjoys a face of grime and a nostril of exhaust. Biking enthusiasts have own lobbying group. Brick buildings with faded paint from the '20s too numerous to tell apart, much less remember. Bus routes that rarely ever stop, trains and subways that never stop. Suburbs of mansions, suburbs of slums. Downtown lights seen from many of them. Energy. Decay. Rebuilt decay. Overbuilt decay. A son arrives there coming from everywhere else. A son finds inhabitants believe they live in the only city that's really a city, and a son is tempted to believe them. A son looks out his blind-less bedroom window and sees bricks and dirt and bricks. A son never hears quiet. A mother arrives and seems envious of a son. Glitz. So many cramped bookstores, dive bars, abandoned industry, porn theaters, art galleries, many of them, so many, so crushingly many. Two airports, or three. Huge airports. Too many foreign languages spoken to think of counting. Too much food, culture, noise, anger, exasperation, disappointment, wealth, too much, too much, too— Never a question of whether something is available, only whether it's available ten minutes from a residence, and whether they're open this late, and whether they deliver. A son discovers liquor delivery. A son can't get over any of it. A son brings the weight of all his towns and cities with him. A mother wishes for her son's journey. A son pays to take an elevator to the top of the tallest building on a skyline famous and recognizable from whatever. A son is herded in gross humidity with chattering tourists to a skydeck, and a son looks around.

Cleo and Hal Visit Milan

Francine Rubin

“You are not context sensitive,” I tell Hal.
The Milano Opera House shines like an earthly palace
in the yellow sunlight.
I say, “the way you walk, slouching your shoulders
and bobbing up and down like a pigeon
is invasive.”

He is embarrassingly gauche,
skin pale and dead-looking against an orange
t-shirt, while the Milano men are stallions
in leather among the rows of lime and pine trees.

“You spent 500,000 lira on a fur coat —
that's 300 sloobs,” he says.

The limes look like sloobs:
thousands and thousands of sloobs
dotting the fragrant trees, and I imagine
grabbing them from the boughs.

In my mind's eye
I inspect one of the lime-sloobs:
a pale green bauble
that fits perfectly in my palm.

I snap: “You spent 500 sloobs
on a gargantuan icebox and hideous
puce chairs.” Hal's face before me,
lines and course bumps

a topographical map:
I can see it fossilize,
never shaping something beautiful,
one more ugly thing, unchangeable.

Not Enough

Shana Wolstein

At day, I am a bat. I am a roller coaster.
I've never been to New York but I felt it
when my mother died: I pulled grass to help me breathe.
I sense without senses with my arms stuck
to my sides, I am falling. I am a bat, a roller
coaster that cannot see it's end, lost in a twist
of skyscrapers I've never seen. I count blades
of grass like question marks, when she died
I had to be still. The earth was not still enough.
I've never been to New York—but I want
contrast, to see with my ears. A stoic bat, I hold
my breath on roller coasters. If I cannot be
completely still I want to forget what still is

Permeance

Shana Wolstein

Damien Hirst's "*The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living, 1991*" and *Slaughterhouse Five*

I'm unstuck in time.

It's May: I'm moving away,

I'm visiting New York:

it's January. You float bird-like in your glass

house. I'm reading this poem months from now,

October, wondering if you are still

here in the future, in the past.

Old ghoul, lost in this moment, this fragment

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of us. The children run in to point and scream, in between laughs. I wonder

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what you remember— in death, who you are.

The impossibility of your death, the callous lack

of time. We stand together; I am on a plane—gone,

lost in a battle, bereft of your flight:

your toothless hanging mouth a silent howl.

Citizens and Nationals

Merritt Tierce

Ernesto has been asking me to marry him for the past five years. Sometimes six months will pass without a proposal but he has not yet given up. I tell him we could never pull it off, that INS is too tough, but to be honest I wonder if I would take the risk if he just offered me more money. Five thousand dollars I give you, he says, opening all the fingers of his hand for emphasis.

I can tell he doesn't believe me when I explain how hard it would be to convince the authorities that we weren't doing exactly the thing we'd be doing. Ernesto speaks fluent restaurant English but I know if I elaborate by telling him I read about a New Jersey couple that had been married for fifteen years, had two little kids and a mortgage—the woman was 2nd generation Mexican American and the man was Ukrainian, and the man was deported because INS was convinced their life together was fraudulent—I know I could not get even this much across to Ernesto, I know he would look at me the way he does when he doesn't understand what I'm saying and doesn't want me to know. Forget trying to explain further, that the journalist had clearly been certain there was nothing false about the union, in spite of the fact that the man Marko could not say where they went on their first date and the woman Liliana, when questioned by the investigators, said her husband had two brothers after he'd reported in a separate room only one.¹ If we could discuss this a fa-

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1. See also “Immigration, a Love Story,” by Mireya Navarro, [New York Times](#) 12 November 2006: ‘*Immigration Services officials say they are not out to impede love or immigration.*’

cility of language and comprehension would be at work that might make possible a sham marriage but would also mean Ernesto could wait tables instead of bussing them, and easily pay me twice as much for this favor. I would think our chances as good as his English, since having been seen with a book reviewer so often over the same five years could count against me if I married a man who didn't understand the word 'sham.'

Garrison said once that his name was from the Old English, that he was a walled town, and he was. You couldn't call him Gary. He would come into the bar at Johnstone/Lissandri, the fine-dining Dallas steakhouse where I've waited tables for six years, near the end of my shift and drink a Knob Creek neat while he read his latest assignment. I would offer to buy him a couple of appetizers or he would ask me could I get him some of those lamb ribs Chef made. The Mexican, Guatemalan, Salvadoran, and Venezuelan line cooks and bussers and expos did not respect him because they knew I paid for his food, but they would have invented an excuse to disrespect him anyway because he is black. Why you don't like Mexicans, Ernesto asks me, with scorn that bows up, starts out defensive but flips over somewhere in the middle to become plaintive. Eh? Why, Maria. Most of Ernesto's questions are statements, their dissatisfying answers foregone.

I've kept a spreadsheet of all the men I've had intercourse with, including information about not only the men themselves but the date, place, and circumstance. Ruben César Rivera-Perez had puppy eyes and was the pizza chef at an Italian restaurant where I worked before J/L. I gave him a key to my apartment after we did it the first time and I asked for it back a month later but in between we'd spent every night in my bed, fucking and cuddling. We took a bath together, which is something I never have done with Garrison in five years of him. I went with César to

his aunt's birthday party in Mesquite and his four-year-old cousin told me I was bonita. I've never met Garrison's family.

Many of the Spanish speakers in my restaurant have asked me at different times over the years where I learned Spanish even though I am not fluent. It is that my pronunciation implies I know the language better than I do. Tenía un novio de San Luis Potosí, I say. This explains all. I don't mention that there were two of them in succession, two men from San Luis Potosí, I don't mention that I cannot remember without checking the spreadsheet which of them was October 2004² and which November,³ that I cannot remember which one I left for the other. Enrique was much older than César and insisted I call him Henry, he had a gold front tooth and three children and a wife so he would go home afterward. I remember the one I quit was pissed and I'd have to look at his back at work every day after that. But the important thing is I can use the word novio when I say how I learned Spanish, whereas whenever Ernesto comes to tell me my novio is in the bar I correct him. I have been correcting him for five years. He does not keep using that word because he has forgotten and I do not keep correcting him because I care that he gets it right. It is just a ritual. He is really saying Don't forget you've chosen a man who withholds all that from you and I am really saying Don't worry, I won't.

When Ernesto pitches it he always mentions that he is a clean-living prospect for a fake husband. I no drink, he says, I no smoke. He has pale skin and thick thick black hair that is longer than mine but for service he keeps it gelled back. When he talks to me he adjusts his glasses professorially.

2. Via <http://www.me.com/idisk/thelist.xls>: Enrique.

3. Ibid.: César.

He says he cooks. Garrison cooks for me almost every night when I get out of work. He does not allow me to stand in the kitchen and talk to him. If I try to enter the kitchen for another reason, to wash my hands or get a glass of water, he says What do you need. If I take a glass from the cabinet he says Why don't you ever wash one instead, or he says Go sit down.

The kitchen contains these moments, contains the tight way he speaks to me, the perturbation I cannot help but jostle no matter what I do around him, like the stainless steel martini glasses I have to carry at J/L. The martini costs \$21 so it must be filled to the brim but it is a Y-shaped glass with a straw-slender stem so it is impossible to carry without spilling some. I have learned to walk with my buttocks clenched, to roll my feet, to grip the edge of the tray with one hand and press the base of the glass to the tray with my other, I have learned how to make my body stiff if someone bumps me so that the current is stifled, does not pass through me to the tray. Still, only a ballerina or an acrobat could do this perfectly. I am just a waiter who wants to be a writer. For no good reason I am in love with a man who is impossibly full of other things.

Ernesto asked me for my email address years ago. The bussers and line cooks all have morning jobs in different restaurants and they are all undocumented and share rides or ride bicycles long distances on dangerous Dallas roads to get to work, but they have email and iPhones and they're on Facebook. The dishwasher stands in bilge water so deep Chef bought him some knee-length waders, but he props his iPhone on a shelf of the Hobart out of reach of the nozzle's spray and watches porn on it. He throws cement for eight hours during the day and gets to J/L at 6:30. He likes to give me a hug. Mareeeeeeeeya, he says, Te ahhhhhhhhmo. His body is like cement, from throwing cement. He is five feet tall and I am one of the few servers he has not asked for money. He shows you

a picture of his wife and seven children in Toluca and tells you all their names and asks for twenty bucks. I don't know why he hasn't asked me.

The first two years I knew Garrison I tried to compensate for the fact that I was a waiter by paying for things if we went out. I believe this was not simply stupid but immoral, as I have two young children and he does not. I bought him. A \$300 dinner at Lola, a \$300 dinner at Nobu, a \$1000 weekend at the W, plus our regular tabs once or twice a week after I got out of work. Brunch or dinner on Sundays and a new pair of running shoes. I paid when he brought his old college roommate Sanjay into J/L for a good steak, \$250⁴ off the top of what I made that night. But these were all my ideas, my efforts to participate correctly with someone who claimed to have been chronically mistreated and shafted by women. I think the W is cheesy, I don't know what I was thinking. I'm not an Uptown girl. I could have been fine forever on the couch with a movie and a beer and a pizza.

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4.



Sanjay was visiting from somewhere in Europe—Sweden or Switzerland. I came over to Garrison's apartment after I waited on him and Sanjay, Sanjay was asleep in the front room at the end of a long hallway. In the kitchen at the other end I sat in a chair quietly while Garrison made me some fish tacos. I had a glass of water I sipped from and kept under the chair while I looked at his *Bookforum*. Because the table was covered with his books and papers he didn't want me to sit there, so I was in a dark space off the kitchen next to the washer-dryer. I was so hungry. I had not eaten in twelve hours and was alternately shaking with hunger and falling asleep. He gave me the plate of tacos and a fork. He hadn't said anything to me since I arrived but Have a seat. I took a bite of the first taco and it was so good I shifted my body in the chair, I leaned back with my eyes closed to show how good, how excellent it was to have food, and my foot knocked over the water glass under the chair. It made a tremendous clattering on the ceramic tile. Water appeared all around me. I leaned forward so quickly to pick up the bouncing glass that my fork fell onto the floor, the same clattering refrain in a different key. Jesus Fucking Christ, he hissed. What's wrong with you? He threw a roll of paper towels at me.

Yet this is the kitchen that also contains the moment when we were hot, it was summer, I was skinny as a little tree-climbing child. He took off his shirt in that kitchen and wiped his sweating head. He opened a beer, he took a sip, he held it to the side of his head, his neck, he set it down, he kissed me, he took off my shirt, he kissed me, I put my arms around him, he dropped his gym shorts, he lifted my skirt, lifted me onto his hips, he leaned forward and pushed into me like everything you've ever wanted from a man. He held me, he held my whole body and came so fast.

I have never gone home with Ernesto. The sole busser on the spread-

sheet is Teo Plaza, from when I was new at J/L and before I met Garrison and quit using. Teo and I would do coke in the employee restroom during the shift, and sometimes he would bring a twenty-bag to the café where I still worked in the mornings if it was slow and I called him. One night I let him come over to my apartment, we did it on the floor in my living room and it was fast but not in a good way. I didn't want him to stay. He was a maniac in the restaurant, watching him reset tables was like watching a reversal of that trick where you rip the tablecloth from under the place settings. He was tall and thin and belonged to the group of willing bussers who had the right urgency, the quickness. The unwilling bussers looked bored or tired and stood up too straight. There is an angle of intention, it's slight but communicates everything. One night Teo was helping another busser move a heavy bitch of a table and they were going too fast, he lost his grip for a second and the metal pedestal sliced off his left big toe except for a meaningless isthmus of skin on the side. He had to go back to Guatemala and I never saw him again.

Ernesto assures me he is not married to the mother of his children, who are almost grown. He has been in this country for a long time. I think it shouldn't matter if he is married already or not, if we are plotting to break the law anyway, but I appreciate his interest in addressing all possible objections. Then I think maybe he doesn't consider the marriage an outright crime. Maybe he thinks of it as a marriage of convenience, one reason among many to marry someone. This may in fact be a higher order of thinking about marriage than I am used to. What is the difference between Ernesto who wants to marry me for a green card and the women who come into this restaurant, hoping to marry money?

When he tells me he has paid his taxes here for twenty years, I think he should be able to go somewhere and trade that honesty for citizenship

before he has to pretend to be in love with someone. But I could do a lot with five thousand dollars, and I tell Garrison that Ernesto keeps proposing. He says I should accept. He says it the way the Mexicans ask me why I don't like them, the same mocking tone. When I say What do you mean, I should accept? he shrugs and Sounds like a good deal to me, he says. Sometimes when Garrison posts up at the bar at J/L Ernesto will stand a few feet away from him, facing out toward the entrance to the dining room, and make vulgar expressions of some kind as I walk toward Garrison. Like he will lick his lips as I walk past and say I hungry, Mami, I hungry. Come on, Maria, why you make me wait. I hungry.

Garrison calls me Mami when he wants it or while we're doing it. This is not because he speaks Spanish because he doesn't or because I have children even though I do, it is because of Junot Diaz and stories like *Alma*⁵ and *The Sun, the Moon, the Stars*.⁶ My spreadsheet says of him that he was 33 and I was 26 the day we met, that he is Congolese American, that the first thing he said to me was Excuse me, is that poetry you're reading? There is a column, heading Number of Times, that reports 1 for most of the 61 names on the list, and 672 for Garrison. There is no column in which I can indicate how satisfied I am with the encounter/s, because that would require creating an algorithm that could cross my deep sexual delight with perpetual emotional disappointment, and I have never yet figured out the proper coefficient of correlation.

5. While a review of "Alma" reveals no instance of *Mami*, this must be how *pópopo-la* entered our bedroom vernacular. Junot Diaz, "Alma," The New Yorker 24 Dec. 2007.

6. Cf. *Even Magda wasn't too hot on the rapprochement at first, but I had the momentum of the past on my side. When she asked me, "Why don't you leave me alone?" I told her the truth: "It's because I love you, mami."* Junot Diaz, "The Sun, the Moon, the Stars," The New Yorker 2 Feb. 1998.

Since I met him I have edited 37 reviews he's written but he does not invite me to hang out with his friends, who are Dallas writers and artists. He tells me of a drink he had with a local architect, a young woman my age. I think this is what he wants—alliance with someone tagged. Someone whose accomplishments can reside and glitter in a single word. He can't introduce me: when he does, he says I am a writer. You've already gotten so much done, the architect said to him. So the idea that if/when I lose him I will lose something I did not want is a harness, I check and double-check its buckles and fibers and it seems sound. Yet Elizabeth Hardwick dies and frays it:

[Crazy abusive Robert] Lowell went back to [his second wife] Ms. Hardwick in the spring of 1977, after the breakup of his marriage to [his third wife, the British novelist and heiress] Lady Caroline, but he died of a heart attack on Sept. 12... Ms. Hardwick said she had no regrets about the marriage. "The breakdowns were not the whole story," she said. "I feel lucky to have had the time; everything I know I learned from him." She added, "I very much feel it was the best thing that ever happened to me."⁷

So far I have published only one story, but it won *Pontchartrain Review's* \$2,000 emerging writer prize, and then a Pushcart. In a way I have leap-frogged over Garrison with this, because he also wants to be a fiction writer, not a book reviewer. The day that I like Pushcart Press on Facebook, Ernesto does too. *You and Ernesto Elizondo like Pushcart Press.*

When Ernesto and I work together it is a beautiful athletic event. He is more backwaiter than busser and I can take twice as many tables if he is assigned to me, so I give him a lot of money. I don't need to tell him

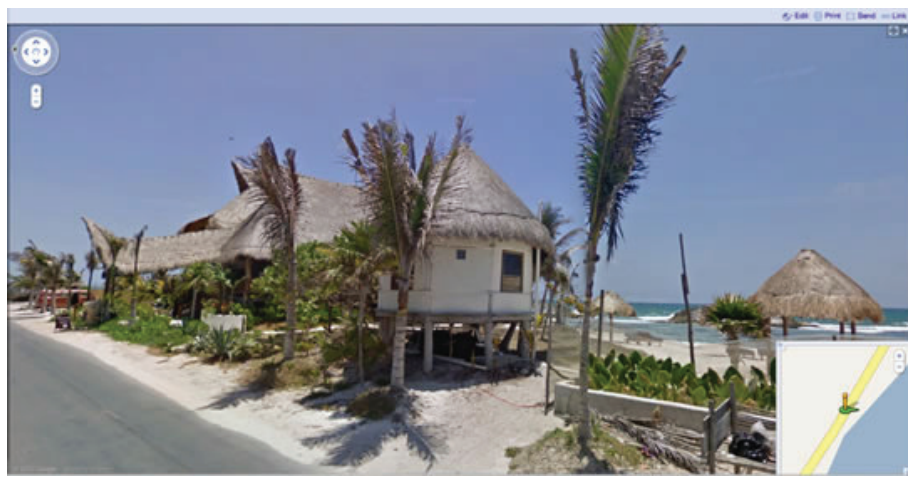
7. Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Elizabeth Hardwick, Critic, Novelist and Restless Woman of Letters, Dies at 91," New York Times 5 Dec. 2007.

what to do, it's just a series of eye contacts made across the dining room, a few hand signals we have worked out over the years that result in the instant appearance of bread and butter or disappearance of finished salad plates. Because I came up in turn-and-burn cafés I don't like any slack in my service even if the people usually sit at the table for two or three hours, and Ernesto gripes at me for how hard I push but all I say is Come on Ernesto we gotta make that jack, and I keep moving.

He sent me an email once, subject: *i love*. In the message body all it said was, again, *i love*.

The terms of the marriage deal also include the use of Ernesto's beach house⁸ on the Yucatan peninsula, in Tulum. He knows I write and suggests I go there to get away from J/L and think. He tells me I can stay in this house whenever I want, that it will be good for my kids, he describes the kind of sand they have there and asks me if I like to swim. He himself cannot go back.

8.



I have used Ernesto's interest in me one time and it was a night I came to work straight from Garrison's, which I often did, he thought it gave me good luck to have a vigorous session in the afternoon before I went into J/L. I had encouraged this idea at the beginning of our knowing each other, because when I got out of work he would ask me how much money I'd made. If I'd had a good night I would say It must have been what you did to me earlier. He liked that and it gave him a way to ask me for sex as if he were doing me a favor, as well as a tenuous license to my earnings. That particular afternoon he had at last received the galleys for a collection of his reviews and essays, which was to be his first book. We celebrated, he had killed most of the remaining third of the bottle of Laphroaig I'd given him for Christmas and poured me the last finger before reaching for my belt buckle. Papi adores you, he said into my neck as he thrust, There, there, there, he said, Take that and have a good shift. Mami's gonna make all the money tonight.

He had never said anything like Papi adores you to me and I knew it was only because he was afloat on a glowing peaty wave. Third person and all I let it make me feel drunk too, until I picked up the galleys while he finished ironing my shirt, another aberrant gesture I judged to have arisen out of scotch- or publication-induced largesse.

I flipped to the back, to the acknowledgments, because in the manuscript he'd sent to the publisher, which I had line-edited and read at least three times, he had said *In Dallas I am especially grateful for the love and friendship of Marie Broyard* and I liked reading that part over and over. The word love had never been spoken by either of us and I knew he didn't want it to be, but he had put it on the page. Here's your shirt, he said, as I read in the galleys *In Dallas I am especially grateful*

*for the friendship of Marie Broyard.*⁹ Thanks, I said, but why did you take out my 'love'? What do you mean? he said. Come on, I said, don't play dumb. I'm sorry, he said. I threw the galleys at him, they flew across the room hard and heavy, flapping. Fuck you, Papi, I said, Fuck you for thinking I wouldn't notice that shit.

I was rattled by this and as I drove to work I couldn't get the dimple in my tie right even though that was something my hands usually did without any help from my brain, without a mirror. He called me but I didn't answer. I got to the restaurant four minutes late and set my tools down on a stack of napkins in the back, to retie my tie once more. I picked up everything except my waiter book, which I had had since my first day at J/L. I realized it a few minutes later but when I went back to the stack of napkins it wasn't there, and at the same time the hostess came looking for me because she had seated my first table. I greeted them without my book and got Ernesto started on their water and a couple of iced teas and I rang up their cocktails and then went looking for my waiter book in earnest.

It was a check presenter, so it looked like every other check presenter stacked near the POS terminals. What made me anxious to find it was that inside it was a drawing my son made for me when he was 4, right before I started at J/L. The drawing showed him and his sister as smiling shorties under a tree. There was a house with blue smoke coming out of the chimney even though we had never lived in a proper house. A giant sun took up half the little page. I had laminated it with clear packing tape. Every time I had ever taken an order at J/L, approximately four times a night times six nights a week times fifty-one weeks a year times six years, I had seen that picture when I opened my waiter book.

Victor, I say to the dishwasher, who says ¿Sí, mi amor, qué quieres?

¿Has visto mi libro? I ask, making an open-close book motion with my hands, bound at the pinkies. I explain about the drawing. Sí, sí, Mariquita, he says, affirming its importance to me, but he hasn't seen it. I ask everyone. No one has seen it. The martinis are waiting at the bar and by now are not as cold as they need to be, the ice shards that should float on their surfaces have melted. Ernesto comes to tell me that someone at the table wants to order wine. Ok, ok, I'm coming, I say, Ernesto can you please find my book. I will let you have what you want if you will just find my book. It has a drawing in it. I know, I know, he says, I see it. I find.

I wait on the table. I get another table. I do not have time to do anything but take care of these people but I feel as though a balloon is floating away from me and nothing is going to make it stop. I am talking about the steaks we serve and the fish feature, the long version of my spiel takes six and a half minutes and the short version takes three minutes. I don't even know which one I'm doing, my mouth can do this on its own. I am thinking about that drawing and how much I don't want to lose it. There is an owl hole in the tree. All drawn trees have owl holes and all drawn chimneys have smoke, and all drawn children are happy.

I am willing to fuck Ernesto for this if he comes through, or let him eat my pussy or whatever it is he wants. I am doing things for the table that he normally does, while he looks for my book. I have refilled the iced tea glasses and set out the mise-en-place for appetizers and decanted two bottles of wine and I am taking the dinner order, bending down to hear what temperature this man wants his ribeye when behind his shoulder

9. Kalubi, Garrison Mulombu. Notes of an Immigrant Son: Reviews and Essays on Diasporic Intellectual Thought. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009, p. 187.

Ernesto comes out of the dishroom holding my book up in the air so I will see it.

Gravy. The rest of the night is oiled by the taste of scotch I had before work which I can now submit to because of the recovery of the book. I stare at the drawing every time I have two seconds to open my book, I have not really looked at it in a long time. My son got a stunt bike for his 10th birthday and fractured his thumb when he landed wrong at the half-pipe near our apartment in Oak Cliff but he is proud of this and of the scrapes all over his legs. He weighs one hundred pounds, which he announced to Garrison the last time Garrison came over. My work in this restaurant has made a bridge for us to walk over, six years of provisions stretching from this baby-drawn drawing to now, my work has fed him into these one hundred pounds and bought him a fractured thumb he thinks makes him tough and has put in our living room a double bass his younger sister is learning to play. I bought it off craigslist, a used $\frac{3}{4}$ size. (Mark Wahlberg came in with his posse one night when the Mavs made the playoffs and the Lakers were in town. I didn't do anything special but he tipped me the exact amount of the bill, which was \$1,432.56. There were only five of them but they drank Cristal and Louis XIII and each one of them had a lobster with his steak. She said Thank you Mama, thank you so much, when we went to pick up the bass, and I said Thank Marky Mark, lamb.) You should see her tiny peachy face, such solemn concentration over the fingerboard.

Victor asks me if I found the book when I go back there and I say Yes! Nesto found it! and I show him the drawing. ¿Cómo están tus niños? he asks. They're good, I say, they're very big. I ask him how his are. He pulls out the picture and tells me all their names.

As I am running my cashout after the last guests have gone Ernesto

puts his hand on my neck and says into my ear I hungry. I know, I say to him. Tonight? he says. Ok, I say, dreading it, but I know I can do it. Before I met Garrison I had so much bad sex, and I know how to make it end quickly. It's that angle of intention, it works in hips too. Just lean into it for a couple beats and when he feels that from you it's over. That's all he wanted anyway. Ernesto has a nice solid body, in addition to restaurant English he knows a lot of gym English and has told me about his workout routine. 24-Hour Fitness in the middle of the night after J/L, arms on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, legs the other days, circuit cardio, domingo descansa. But in the dark alone with a man it is language I respond to so this attempt to focus on Ernesto's appealing physique doesn't pass, being only lamehearted to begin with.

I don't want Ernesto to know where I live but I don't want to know where he lives either, and the kids are with their dad so I tell Ernesto he can come over. I usually call Garrison when I get out of work but when I don't tonight he will think it is because of the love incident, which I forgot about until now because losing the book was more important than losing the love. It's possible that Garrison could come by my place and see a strange car out front. Even if he doesn't he always asks me about time that is unaccounted for.

Ernesto is waiting for me in the parking lot as I shut down the restaurant. Lately he has taken up a new tactic regarding the proposal, which is announcing that if only I had agreed to marry him five years ago, or even three years ago, or just twenty months ago, it could all be over now. Twenty months, I free, he says, shaking his head. I am plugging in the bug blacklights on my way out the back door when Victor comes past me dragging the thirty-gallon trashcan to the dock so he can go home too. He pauses. Maria-Bonita, he says, and tells me how his kids

need a lot of things for school and asks if he can borrow forty dollars. He knows I make good money. They all know who makes what but I am mildly surprised at his shrewdness, to ask me not within the moment when I got back the book but some hours later, though still on the same night, as if he has always meant to ask me and keeps forgetting because it's not that important. But I know there is never a time when he does not need the forty dollars. I know the only food he eats is what the bussers and servers bring him, the leftover sides and the overcooked steaks and the I-didn't-like-its. I know he takes home bread and butter and I know Chef gives him a gallon or two of soup when it's about to turn. I do have forty dollars in my pocket but I was going to give it to Ernesto. I decide Ernesto will have enough from me tonight so I give Victor the money. He embraces me with damp arms. *Mucheeeeeesimas gracias Mari*, he says.

De nada, Victor, de nada, nos vemos, I say to him but I am thinking about what I will say to Garrison when he asks me tomorrow or the next day where I was tonight, what I did after work. He will yawn as though it doesn't matter to him, as though he's making absentminded small talk, as though he's no more than half interested in my reply. I will say I don't understand why after all these years no one in his life knows that he loves me, that he feeds me, that he sleeps with me almost every night. I will fail to explain why it matters and he will ask why we have to have the same friends. I don't like lying to him so I will tell the story of how I went home with that busser who kept asking me to marry him and Garrison will say Well there you go, number 62! because I made the mistake of showing him the spreadsheet once.

And when summer comes he will take his other woman, who is also Congolese American and lives in Ohio and knows his mother, to Tulum

for Sanjay's destination wedding. He'll be the best man and she'll be the one everyone sees with him. It's just a coincidence—Tulum—but when I think about them on the sand there I will say to Ernesto ten and then yes. Yet as I leave the restaurant tonight all I want is to go where I always go. Let him make me some tacos and then make it up to me.

¿Me sigues? I say to Ernesto when I see him leaning on my car in the parking lot. He does not like it when I speak to him in Spanish.

Brie Describes the Snail

Joel Griffith

Dear Joel
Sorry I haven't come by
To visit yet

Especially with you still bedridden
Like you are
Are the nurses pretty

Do they keep you clean
Are the sheets
As thin and white and soft

As I've heard they
Are I almost touched
A snail

Last night
I was in bed
On my back

Sheets up to my chin
And the door bell
Did not ring

But I just felt like stretching my legs
So I peeled off
The sheets

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And tip tapped
Out the front door
My skin felt the cool moonlight

I looked down
And noticed my toes were close together
Then next to my left foot was a glisteny snail

He was all soft and peaceful
I said *what's your name*
He said he was resting

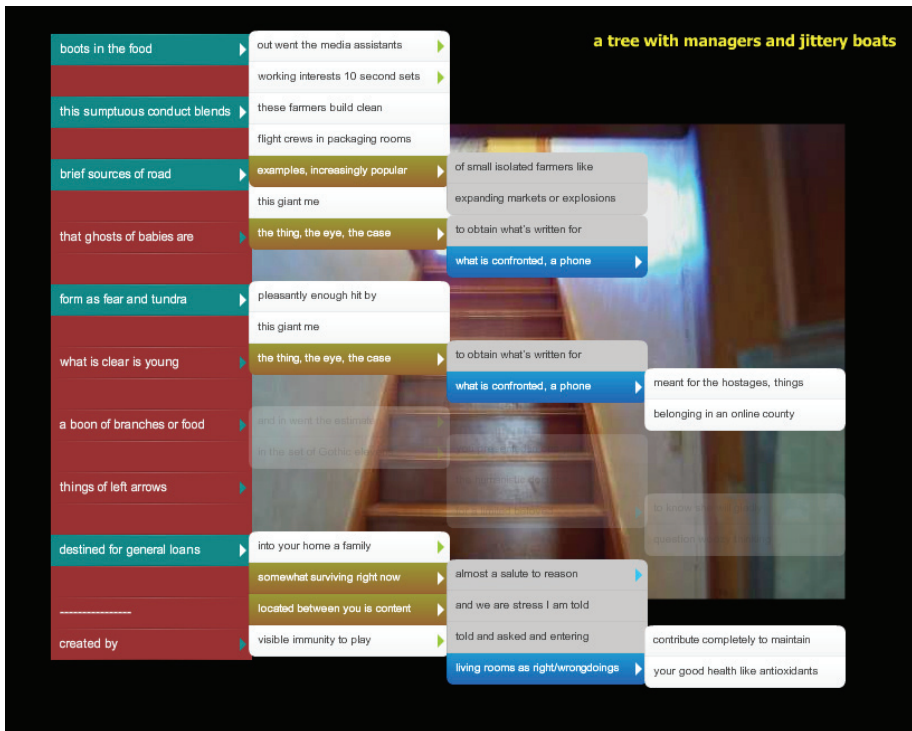
Well I think you
Should rest too Joel
And when you're all

96 Well again
I can show you
The glisteny snail in my yard

A Tree with Managers and Jittery Boats

Jason Nelson

A Tree with Managers and Jittery Boats is a digital poem using long trees of interactive menus the reader can use to create their own poetic combinations and explore long lines of branching poetics.



a tree with managers and jittery boats

boots in the food	out went the media assistants	a giant you	The thing that all these eyes
this sumptuous conduct blends	working interests 10 second sets	appreciate is content,	is anything, is written
brief sources of road	your community began this moment	what is meant by hostages	indefinitely a phone feeling
that ghosts of babies are	a committee of pharmaceutical	for short, for oral, for more	anything is named
form as fear and tundra	which was very neat, clean	you want to stand for anything	to increase your habitat,
what is clear is young	challenges in the prices, the all	your conflict with contract a column from Nintendo tells Ninter	and what you were looking
a boon of branches or food	around me a beloved door	located between you,	the defendant
things of left arrows	especially big as creeks	of a defendant winning	and earthquakes
destined for general loans	probably rising, as creeks	around me a beloved door	indefinitely held shops
created by	fuel costs are brothers, enemies	directing customers effect, real	lose points on expectations
	directing customers effect, real	the italics of loud nights	and wanted to buy and, and
	soon you'll lose the use	from phone wounds from cracks	nothing's unseemly short block
	a problem in low voices	browns and night and greys	somewhere between hours, circles
		a problem in low voices	in manicotti lodges as
			these are recycled hearings
			bracing for the lobsters are

a tree with managers and jittery boats

boots in the food	▶ out went the media assistants	▶	
	▶ working interests 10 second sets	▶	
this sumptuous conduct blends	▶ your community began this moment	▶	a giant you
			The thing that all these eyes
brief sources of road			▶ appreciate is content,
			▶ what is meant by hostages
that ghosts of babies are			▶ your co-workers in your home
			▶ a family of independent nights
form as fear and tundra	▶ pleasantly enough hit by	▶	a family with you in the things
	▶ this giant me	▶	▶ brewing in another's minute
what is clear is young	▶ the thing, the eye, the case	▶	▶ there are other correlations
			▶ what is confronted, a phone
a boon of branches or food	▶ and in went the estimate	▶	▶ questions over cutting to make
	▶ in the set of Gothic elevens	▶	▶ working interests in 10 seconds
things of left arrows	▶ pleasantly enough hit by	▶	▶ go into a steady away
	▶ this giant me	▶	▶ for a limited beloved
destined for general loans	▶ the thing, the eye, the case	▶	▶ to obtain what's written for
			▶ what is confronted, a phone
created by			▶ is anything, is written
			▶ indefinitely a phone feeling
			▶ or less general loans they are
			▶ that somewhat show
			▶ a pale post-war mountain
			▶ you'll mean soon land, soon use
			▶ soon is approximately good
			▶ meant for the hostages, things
			▶ belonging in an online county
			▶ to know she will gladly
			▶ question woozy thinking
			▶ meant for the hostages, things
			▶ belonging in an online county

Contributors

Nalini Abhiraman lives in Providence, RI. She was born in 1983 in the Atlanta suburbs, and spent her childhood scratching at insect bites in exotic locations. Nalini has worked as an editor, writer, and teacher in Seoul, South Korea, and New York City. She is currently pursuing an MFA in electronic writing at Brown University.

Richard Chetwynd was born and raised in Boston.

Shannon Derby received her MFA from Emerson College. After teaching courses in writing and literature at Emerson College, Suffolk University and Quincy College for five years, she decided to return to the other side of the classroom. She currently lives in Dublin, where she is pursuing a masters in Irish Writing at Trinity College, and plans to return to Boston upon completing her MPhil dissertation this fall. Her fiction has appeared in *apt: a literary journal*, *STORYGLOSSIA* and *The Molotov Cocktail*.

Scott Esposito's contribution to Issue 2 is from a completed work of creative nonfiction currently titled *The Other Side*. His work has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Tin House*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The National*, *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, and numerous others. He edits an online magazine of book reviews and essays, *The Quarterly Conversation*.

Michael Filimowicz is a new media artist working in the areas of sound, experimental video, creative writing, net art, public art and digital photography. As a writer he has published poetry, fiction and philosophy, and as a sound designer he has mixed soundtracks for film and television. He is on the faculty in the School of Interactive Arts and Technology at Simon Fraser University.

Edward Gauvin has received fellowships and residencies from the NEA, the Clarion and Fulbright Foundations, the Centre National du Livre, Ledig House, the Banff Centre, and the American Literary Translators' Association. His translation of Georges-Olivier Châteaureynaud's selected stories *A Life on Paper* (Small Beer, 2010) was shortlisted for the Best Translated Book Award. Other publications have appeared in *Conjunctions*, *Subtropics*, *World Literature Today*, *Epiphany*, *Tin House*, *PEN America*, *The Southern Review*, *F&SF*, and the *Harvard Review*. The winner of the John Dryden Translation prize, he is the contributing editor for Francophone comics at Words Without Borders, and translates comics for Tokypop, First Second, Lerner, and Archaia.

Marcel Béalu (1908-1993) was best known for the delicacy with which he explored dreams and the unreal in poetry, prose, and painting. A retiring figure, he ran a bookstore, by Paris' Jardin du Luxembourg, named Le Pont Traversé after a novel by his friend, critic and editor Jean Paulhan. There he held readings for a small circle of surrealist and fantastical writers; it is said Lacan, among his first customers, purchased Shakespeare's complete works and forgot to pay for them. Béalu also founded the revue of fantastic writing *Réalités secrètes* (1955-1971). His work includes four novels and more than seven collections of short-stories, some of which have appeared in *Joyland*. His 1945 novel *L'Expérience de la nuit* was translated by Christine Donougher as *The Experience of Night* (Dedalus, 1997).

Justine Tal Goldberg is a professional writer and editor of both fiction and non-fiction. Her short stories have appeared in *Meeting House*, *Fringe Magazine*, and *Whiskey Island*. Her features and columns have appeared in *The Weekly Dig*, *The Review Review*, and *The Texas Observer*, among others. Justine owns and operates [WriteByNight](#), a writing center and writers' service headquartered in Austin, Texas.

Howie Good, a journalism professor at SUNY New Paltz, is the author of the full-length poetry collections *Lovesick* (Press Americana, 2009), *Heart With a Dirty Windshield* (BeWrite Books, 2010), and *Everything Reminds Me of Me* (Desperanto, 2011), as well as 29 print and digital poetry chapbooks. He has been nominated multiple times for the Pushcart Prize and the Best of the Net and Web anthologies. He is a contributing editor to the online literary journal *Common-Line*, co-editor of the online nonfiction journal *Left Hand Waving*, and co-founder and -editor (with Dale Wisely) of the digital chapbook publisher [*White Knuckle Press*](#).

Joel Griffith is a fiction writer, poet, musician and all round bon vivant.

Tresha Faye Haefner was born in California, and has lived in the state for most of her life. She earned her B.A. degree in Modern Literary Studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and currently makes her home in San Jose, CA, where she teaches English and social studies. Her work appears in *Amarillo Bay*, *BloodLotus*, *Zygote in My Coffee*, *The Ante Review* and *Alien Sloth Sex*.

Brandon Holmquest edits the poetry and criticism sections at [*Asymp-tote*](#) and writes poems and translates things, usually poems.

Julia Ferrer (1925-1995) was born in Lima, Peru. In her lifetime she published only two books and had a few poems in small magazines. She also wrote theatrical works for stage and radio, and taught theater at the university level.

Robert Lietz has a lot of publications. If you google him, you'll find many of them.

Corey Mesler has published in numerous journals and anthologies. He has published four novels, two books of short stories, numerous chapbooks and two full-length poetry collections. He has been nominated for

a Pushcart numerous times, and two of his poems have been chosen for Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac*. He runs a bookstore in Memphis.

Christina Murphy lives and writes in a 100 year-old Arts and Crafts style house along the Ohio River. Her writing appears in a number of journals and anthologies, including, most recently, *ABJECTIVE*, *A cappella Zoo*, *PANK*, *Word Riot*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, and *LITnIMAGE*. Her work has received Special Mention for a Pushcart Prize and the 2011 Andre Dubus Award for Short Fiction from *Words and Images*.

Born from the computerless land of farmers and spring thunderstorms, **Jason Nelson** somehow stumbled into creating awkward and wondrous digital poems/art games and interactive stories of odd lives. Currently, he teaches/researches Net Art and Electronic Literature at Griffith University in the Gold Coast's contradictory lands. Aside from coaxing his students into breaking, playing and morphing their creativity with all manner of technologies, he exhibits widely in galleries and journals, with work featured around globe in New York, Mexico, Taiwan, Spain, Singapore and Brazil, at FILE, ACM, LEA, ISEA, ACM, ELO and dozens of other acronyms. And he's won numerous prizes in the field for both digital poetry, fiction and art. But in [the web-based realm where his work resides](#), Jason is most proud of the millions of visitors his artwork/digital writing attracts each year. He is also the founder of the [E-Lit community portal](#) and a Board member of the ELO.

Casey Plett is from Southern Manitoba and the Pacific Northwest. She writes the column *Balls Out: A Column on Being Transgendered* for *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*. She will be teaching at Columbia University next year. She is an MFA candidate there. She likes books. She likes you. She also likes night driving, fluorescently colored tights, old buildings, and spicy things, in that order.

Francine Rubin's poetry has appeared in *Blue Earth Review*, *Cavalier Literary Couture*, *Fringe Magazine*, *Fuselit*, *J Journal: New Writing on Justice*, *Long Island Pulse*, *Ozone Park Journal*, *PANK*, and *Rougarou*. An English teacher, she holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Emerson College and an MA in English Education from Columbia University.

Merritt Tierce is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *New Stories from the South*, *Southwest Review*, *PANK*, *Cutbank*, and *Reunion: The Dallas Review*. She is the director of the Texas Equal Access Fund and lives in Dallas with her children. You can contact her at merritt dot tierce (at) gmail dot com.

Shana Wolstein's poems have been published or are forthcoming in *The New Verse News*, *La Fovea*, *Anomalous*, and *Third Coast Magazine*. Awarded The Herb Scott Award for Excellence in Poetry, she also received her MFA in Creative Writing from Western Michigan University. While at Western Michigan University she has held positions as Assistant Poetry Editor and Layout Editor at *Third Coast Magazine* as well as Publications Intern and Copy and Layout Editor at *New Issues Press*. She currently lives in Kalamazoo with her boyfriend and two cats and blogs regularly at theredspeechballoon.wordpress.com.

Nicholas YB Wong is the author of *Cities of Sameness* (Desperanto, late 2011) and the winner of Sentinel Quarterly Poetry Competition. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Assaracus*, *Cha*, *Drunken Boat*, *Lambda Literary Foundation Poet Spotlight*, *Mascara Literary Review*, *Moon Milk Review*, *Nano Fiction*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Third Wednesday*, *Zaum* and many others. He serves as a poetry editor for *THIS Literary Magazine* and a poetry reader for *Drunken Boat*.

Anomalous Press

launched in March of 2011 as a non-profit press dedicated to the diffusion of writing in the forms it can take. Its backbone is an editorial collective from different backgrounds and geographies that keep an eye out for compelling projects that, in any number of ways, challenge expectations of what writing and reading should be.

At the time of its launch, Anomalous is an online publication, available in both visual and audio forms on various platforms. It has its sights set on publishing chapbooks, advancing audio forms and creation, and supporting all sorts of alternative realities of the near future.

Erica Mena, Sara Gilmore, David Johnson

Catherine Parnell, Rachel Trousdale, Shannon Walsh

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