

# REED·COLLEGE·CREATIVE·REVIEW



2·0·1·2

A LITERARY MAGAZINE



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## dear reader,

This year marks one hundred years of Reed and nearly as many incarnations of literary magazines on campus. Fittingly, *Prologue* was one of the first, along with the *Gargoyle*, in the 1940s. They were quickly usurped by *Janus* in 1950, which brought with it a constellation of poets, among them Gary Snyder and his Beat contemporaries. The next few decades saw bursts of short lived literary magazines with colorful names—*Gurgle*, *Gorgon*, *Exile*, *BIGWORD*—followed by the Small Press Collective, which published from the 1980s until 2002. The stage was cleared for this humble little publication, *The Reed College Creative Review*, in 2004, and we have been celebrating the literary, visual, and photographic talents of the student body ever since.

Although Reed has historically (and perhaps notoriously) been a focus of intellectual endeavours, publications like the Creative Review attest to the thriving presence of the arts on our campus. And though the internet offers instant publication to most anyone, the hundred-odd submissions we received this year attest to the fact that no number of pixels can replace the satisfaction of holding one's work in printed form. Unfortunately we lack the space to print everything submitted, but we are pleased to provide the talented students featured in these pages with the chance to hold their work in their hands.

In honor of Reed's Centennial, the magazine was designed using elements culled from the first student yearbook, printed in 1916, whose title page is honored in the layout of our own. The florals and flourishes featured were hallmarks of the Art Nouveau style; the past century has seen no decline in its classy aesthetic. Similarly, the fonts selected are from the same family of old-style serif typefaces as would have been used at Reed's founding: Garamond, which has been in use since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and Bell, an 18<sup>th</sup> century Scotch Roman typeface that experienced a revival at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Of course, this publication would not be possible without the generous support of the Student Senate, Student Activities Office, English Department, and President Colin Diver: thank you. We are grateful, as ever, to Mara Thrush and the team at Bridgetown for publishing our magazine for so many years now. Further thanks are due to the students on the Review Board, who devoted their Sunday evenings to selecting the fine work you hold in your hands, and to our team of editors, who shaped it for publication. And to you, dear reader, for spending a moment with these pages.

This document would not exist but for you.

THE EDITORS



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## APHASIA

ERIN KLEINFELD

Yesterday I owned two voices. My English voice mouthed vowels Americanly, pronounced ah uh sounds and let my t's slip to d's as I helped Swedish tourists navigate to La Sagrada Família, that demonic sandcastle of a cathedral whose stained glass casts puddles of liquid Pantone light on the holy floors. My Spanish voice—*mi voz castellana*—was louder and more smiling, accented and flawed but conversational at 10 p.m. dinner with the lonely *señora* whose apartment I often return to very late. Yesterday my two voices fell from my mouth, but today when the afternoon city sunlight pulls me out from under my pillow, I can't find this new Spanish voice I've been cultivating these past months.

I strip the sheets from my bed, searching in every fold for my conjugations. I find the present tense in last night's clothes rumpled on the floor, pieces of the imperfect in the corners of the bathroom mirror, the preterit tangled in my hair. The pluperfect: gone for good. The subjunctive: disappeared. Now I'll have to say to restaurant waiters *I want that you to bring me pan con tomate*. I've grown accustomed to sounding like a developmentally disabled child with my Spanish voice. I never liked the subjunctive anyway.

And why should I need to speak when I'm muted daily by the brutal gorgeousness of this city? Barcelona is woman in heels drinking espresso out of an impossibly tiny glass, smiling flirtatiously. I am in love with her. If men are shouting *¡Hola, Guapa!* as I walk down the street, it is only because my skin is a mirror of the city.

I always try to escape from the apartment without the lonely *señora* noticing—she wants to live pieces of my life that I'm not willing to share, and selfishly I stay out; I consume my days hedonistically, indulging in tiny cup after tiny cup of *café con leche*, sunlight, and the lips of nameless displaced

Venezuelans in bars. Today the lonely *señora* wants to talk and talk and I can't leave or live fast enough.

"*Buenos días, Guapa,*" she sings.

The lonely *señora* is a miniature Catalan woman who constantly wears a zebra-print housedress. Her daughter lives in the city with her father and sometimes comes by the apartment to argue with the lonely *señora* and drink all of the gazpacho.

"*Buenos días.*"

"What are you doing today When did you get home last night Can you take out the trash It's a beautiful day for the beach Do you want tortilla for dinner My little pink flowers are blooming on the balcony," she says in Spanish, her and my second language, though she hasn't lost her tenses.

"Tortilla pleases me." I fondle the handle of the front door.

"You're going out again?"

Please, yes, let me get out of this isolated apartment where we live stacked up on and around hundreds of people.

"Si."

"If?"

"Sí."

"¿Cómo?"

"Sí."

It's fine to forget my accents in text but losing my accents in speech makes me incomprehensible. I realize I'm losing the elements of this voice. So before I can lose *adiós*, I'm out the door and down the stairs, past the grimacing doorman and out onto the golden street.

I spill my adverbs on the sidewalk, and as I'm crouching down to gather them, they scurry into the cracks where my reaching fingertips can't go. I manage to extract only

*rapidamente* and force it back into my mouth. It tastes like sidewalk. Now I have lost my *—mente's*. *Mi mente*.

Rambla Catalunya is one of my favorite streets since the traffic's divided by a wide walkway lined by city trees and little restaurant patios. There are always models here walking vertically in black, and at this time of afternoon the children in matching navy blue uniforms get led home from kindergarten by their young *madres*, and all of the single bachelors are wearing scarves and walking their French bulldogs, and the old people sit on benches and think quietly about their lives.

A Gypsy woman sits on a corner in what looks like a torturous position—her legs twisted under her, her scarfed head kissing the ground, her hands folded in front of her in the beggar's prayer. Into her little paper cup, I place my spare change. When she looks up and nods, I find myself parting with half my adjectives. Into the cup they go—it would be rude to reach in to take them back.

Walking alone makes me feel free, so I walk. I walk every day for hours and sometimes I skip my classes at the university so that I can walk farther every day, reaching the secret alleyways and hidden corners of the city. I am always discovering. I find antique shops with sequined gowns from the 1920s and Moroccan butcher shops and intricate graffitied dumpsters and secret parks in the middle of city blocks and enormous, twisting public sculptures and little churches glowing with candlelight. I don't notice how much my feet hurt until hours after sunset when the walking has been walked. At the end of the street, I reach my favorite café where my lover, American, is waiting for me grumpily.

I know four people in this city: sexy Barcelona, the woman smiling and sipping espresso, the lonely *señora*, a quiet Spanish girl who likes to practice her English on me and dream about London and who says "bye bye" like a child, and my lover whom I despise and who doesn't know me or try to but needs me to make sure he doesn't follow his urge to walk into traffic, and who I depend on to interrupt my affair with solitude.

"Bwenos deeuhs." He always mumbles out his Spanish. I don't know how anyone can be depressed in this city, but he manages to feed and sustain himself on this sadness.

"Hi."

Speaking English—American English—takes the lonely away, distances me from the lonely *señora* and takes the distance out of the enormity of living in a country where I know four people. Here I've learned to be alone and to like it. But there are days when I don't speak to anyone and just walk the city all day with my eyes opener than ever before, and sometimes on those days I need someone to hold me and remind me that I am not just a mind but a body, too, and who is better to remind you of your body than a lover, and

your lover can never hurt you if you despise him, so it's best to despise him and not to love.

When he kisses me, he takes my prepositions—this time, the English ones. To, for, from, with: stolen. He licks his lips and they dissolve on his tongue.

"Give them back," I demand.

"What?"

"Those belong me!"

"What's wrong with you?"

"What's wrong me?"

"I haven't wronged you."

He only wrongs. I kiss him biting, struggling to reclaim my lost words. He kisses back because he needs to feel like his life matters to someone and I kiss to consume to, for, from, with. But all I taste is *a, para, de, con*. I've eaten his Spanish prepositions, as if they could even help me now to connect my newly limited vocabulary.

"What did you just do to me?" He suddenly wants to know.

Now I lose my pronouns, the I and the you, the *yo y tú*. And with *tú, usted* and *vosotros*. These words vanish into the Mediterranean sunlight. I can no longer speak on behalf of myself or collectively.

I try to say goodbye to them, but I find that goodbye is gone, and hello is gone and what is happening to me is gone, and where is my voice is gone, and please help me is gone, and this city has given me my life and taken from me my voice is gone.

Barcelona is a woman in heels  
drinking espresso out of an  
impossibly tiny glass, smiling  
flirtatiously.

I am in love with her.

In my mind, I have all of my words folded neatly like towels in the linen closet of my cerebral cortex, the space that keeps things like words stored safely and ready for whenever guests come to visit.

I look at my despised lover who is looking at me and making sounds I can't understand and I smile because now I am free from the trap of listening to his sadness and also from the sadness of the lonely *señora*, and I know that being alone isn't so sad after all when Barcelona the woman winks at me on the street and I know I've wasted my time feeling

isolated when I'm here in a city of over a million people all humming with life even if we don't speak to each other or can't understand each other or don't want to or just desperately want to hold on to someone, even somebody we despise just to keep the lonely away, but now that I've lost what I've lost, I am seeing clearly that an answer to loneliness isn't really an answer at all because loneliness isn't a question, and now that I can no longer do the asking, I only have to listen for my own response. All of the voices on the street and the traffic and the rumbling Metro underground are transformed into orchestra violins and cellos resonating to a deafening pitch, though I'm anything but deaf, and in fact, I feel like a child with a new cochlear implant whose nurse flips the switch and I am hearing the voice of the city for the first time, a voice beyond language.

I can now walk away from my despised ex-lover, so I walk through the city, past Plaza Catalunya, through Barrio Gotic and El Born, and I am just one person but I am surrounded by so so so many people in this crowded place. It's the last day in November and I feel the cold through my winter coat, but it's the most golden day I've ever seen. The light changes the character of every building—the colors are now so saturated they look like they're painted in by Miró himself.

I think people may be yelling to me, or at least speaking; maybe they're whispering to each other, but I can't understand any of them. All my words are lost but I don't miss them.

If you start from any point in Barcelona and walk east, you'll find the ocean. I walk east. At the beach, the water is the bluest blue and the sand is so golden-lighted it's like a tangerine.

I never wanted words—they were always a burden—they never described my experience in a real way or in a way that resembled reality—words were like ideal female beauty—I always wanted them and never really had them—they only made me want to be someone I wasn't—but now I can be free of words and all of the injustice they are responsible for.

Here I start to lose my mindwords.

Blouse in hand, sand, tourists' eyes. Shoes off. Sand crunchy feel. Light light light light sunlight sun gold gold light. Naked white skin. Skin, the air, light, ocean sound, cold. Barcelona softness, sound, wind, gold. Cold cold cold gold cold water. Teeth on teeth cold good good cold. Naked golden blue water. Spit salt. Weightless wet dripping sunlight. Barcelona alona alone. ☺



THE WAVES ARE A CONSTANT // DANIELLE JUNCAL // PHOTOGRAPH



COEXISTENCE // KAORI FREDA // LITHOGRAPH

## THE BEGINNING

The silverware sitting in my cereal screams  
as loudly as it did  
the day it was forged.  
I hear the hack of the axe  
that felled the timber that  
my chair is made from.  
The noise distracts me from my book,  
whose printing press smacks  
over the quiet.

My mind shakes with the entirety of morning

BENJAMIN WILLIAMS

## THE GARDEN

And this garden opens.  
The night arrives on a wave.  
The corporeal part knows this is a good place to lie,  
lie with horizons.

Among root and fern unfurling,  
this body would sleep  
as koi do, lips glistening out of water,  
skin encasing lightest silt.

Night deepens again.  
The magnolias wax;  
their tongues drip translucence.

I go to seed in the tuberous dark.

The garden accepts my spine,  
bearing me down through slick, black, leaves.  
Hands grasping,  
hands grasping earth to cover my eyes.

SAM GRENROCK

SUCCULENTS  
ALEX KRAFCIK // PHOTOGRAPH





## HAUNTED

Here's where I'm supposed  
to tell you a ghost story—  
something about the church,  
or a murder, a secret, something with a [cold tongue  
licking the soul of the place]—  
make the stale and quiet  
into eerie and looming.

I wake up  
sunlight poking at the shade  
in a town by the water's edge  
where a man goes out every day  
just before dawn and just after dusk  
to paint the ocean, always  
in the same colors.

Everyone is waiting by the ocean.  
No one can say why, but  
there they are, wondering  
why it never rains  
as the sun is setting,  
then one of them points at the sky  
and the others stir a little in their confusion.

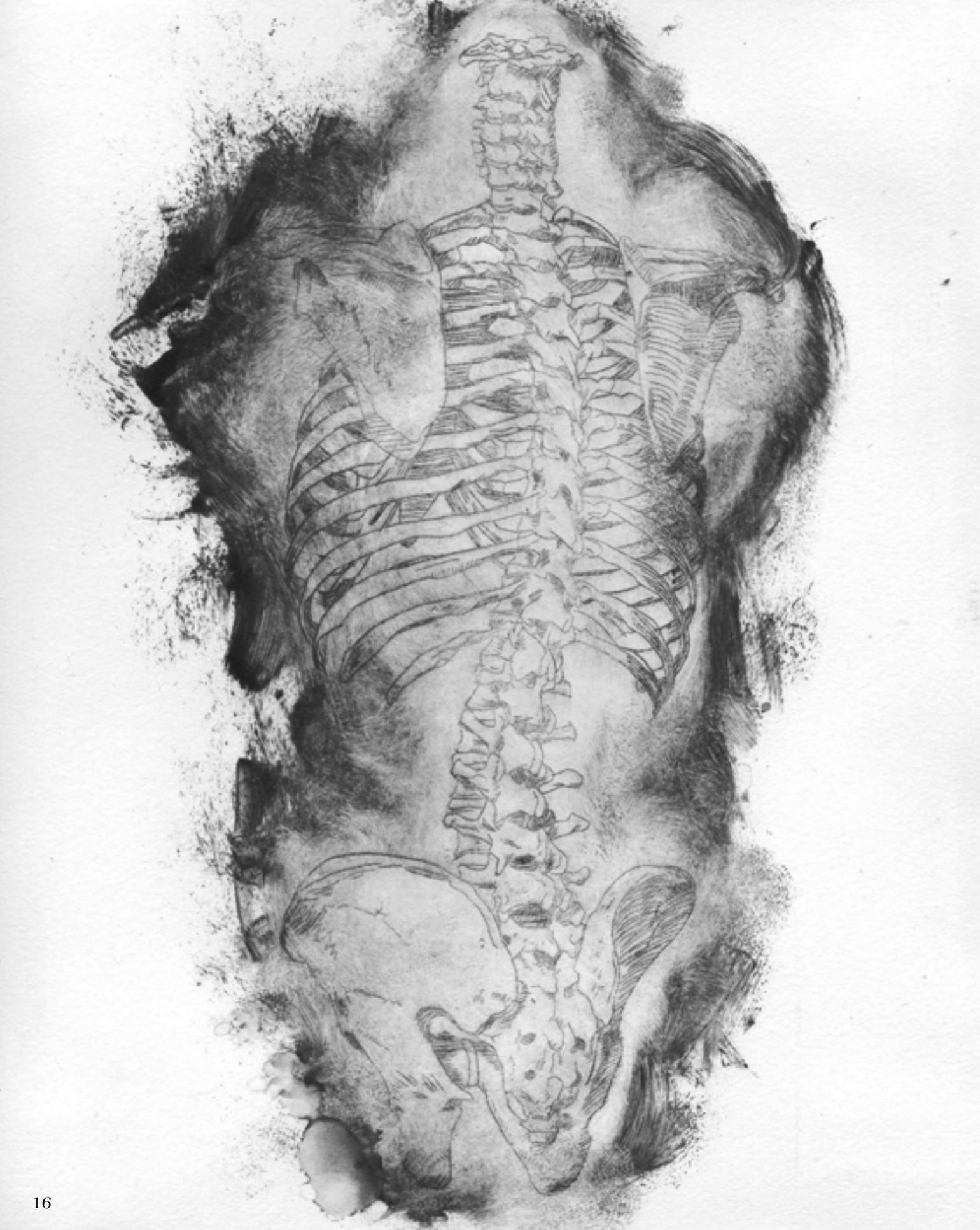
They know all the same ghosts  
and have different meanings  
for 'haunted'.

The painter—  
more than once I've thought  
of what I would ask him,  
as if something about someone  
staring at the sea  
begs a question.

Imagine my surprise to learn—  
one morning at the coffee shop  
overhearing a conversation  
that didn't go out of its way  
to be unheard—he had died,  
actually a while ago,  
and I'd been walking along  
the shore wondering  
if I would see him  
and if he would teach me  
a mystery about painting the ocean,  
and the answer had long been no.

N. PADINHA

A SORT OF THISTLEDOWN  
RACHEL COLE-JANSEN // PHOTOGRAPH



## CHOPIN:

oh god I beg you don't leave me astray Chopin is screaming to drive me insane for I hosting his hysterical horror shows and I hosting his holy Christ windstorms waltzing his whores off treble clef spouses screaming the shutters off sharp holy houses my god he is leaving them dead in the grotesque gutter dear Lord he is leaving us grotesque dead in the gutter drenching my spiny tritoned shutshutter and I can't the ruthless sputter I can't the soothing frigid rudder the preludes oh the frigid climes that soothe ah I remember his Stygian moods for in the minor mood for something finer he Chopin ate the ivory ice of a dryspell a-minor swallowing whole smooth ebony etudes a child with preludes to brood the impromptu mood thank you Chopin my vertiginous ears for you oh my Polish stew I want your boneless rhythm compute me now a rhythmless schism the haunting adagio algorithm

SAMMIE MASSEY

OUROBOROS #4 SERIES  
RENNIE MEYERS // LITHOGRAPH

## THE OFFICE

It's 4:15 am  
and I have woken (again)  
to read a chapter  
of *Lolita* and *The Metamorphosis*, two books  
that were never meant  
to be read together,  
and leave me dreaming  
of seven-foot cockroaches, waltzing  
with nymphettes in white, poofy gowns.

I know better by now  
than to leave magazines on the floor  
but, I like to leave my readings  
to mate.

The toilet is leaking again—  
a *New Yorker*, is commingling  
with a *Rolling Stone*.  
An editorial  
on the loss of Brooklyn's street cred  
and a picture of Bob Dylan  
have morphed into  
some sick half-breed,  
a pulpy mass of newsprint  
that I can never finish reading now.

This is my life's work,  
sitting under the fluorescent lights  
of this celery-green walled cubicle  
that smells, always,  
of stagnant water and ink.  
Losing hours  
trying to cure my bad dreams,  
give me the sleep  
that two dream catchers,  
and a small village  
of matchstick and wool  
Guatemalan worry dolls  
in my pillowcase cannot.

The dreams were worst  
after reading Bukowski and Faulkner.  
Earth-toned after reading Diaz,  
soft-focus and dizzying after Plath and Miranda July.  
Best, after Vonnegut,  
and a \$5 paperback  
entitled *Savage Thunder*  
that I got at a Goodwill  
in Washington state—already water-stained,  
so I didn't feel bad about leaving it  
face-down on the brown-flecked bathroom floor.  
The sopping bath mat  
dyed a third of its pages blue.

I have yet to get what I want most;  
to dream in poetry.  
To wake to find myself  
stenciled in ghazals,  
to my favorite words  
lunar, oblong, viscid  
inscribed into my eyelids  
like a mantra  
so they become  
the things I uncover in sleep.

DELALI AYIVOR



SORBET STORY // KAORI FREDA // LITHOGRAPH



LIMPET // ALEX KRAFCIK // PHOTOGRAPH

## LAKE, CALIFORNIA

I.

His body flexes, tuning an opal note  
between my hands.  
The trout has swallowed the hook.  
I squeeze so he can't oil out  
in an arc to water.

He loses the centripetal  
in the white of our kitchen sink.  
We sow him in the winter flowerbed.

II.

The body loses its truths to spring.

Anointed  
tiny lobelia  
push through  
blue density of hair  
quickenings.

The winds  
scratch us dry.

III.

Fire reaps the foothills.  
Water breaks.  
A safe distance from here  
oaks and barns catch  
horses flying  
to the canyons  
down to the sea.

IV.

I'm riding on my dad's brown back.  
His shoulders cloud with the force of a stroke.  
Water unravels its glass muscle  
to let us pass.

SAM GRENROCK

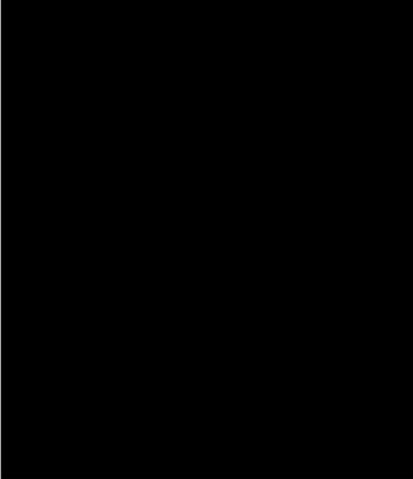
## UNTITLED



RACHEL SCHMERGE

I was born a few hours before sunrise. Life was still and silent and dark. I took my first fumbling steps, crawling toward the sound of my mother's voice. She taught me how to make scrambled eggs and told me not to be afraid when the world lit on fire. I never saw her before she grew old and withered away. When I began to walk upright, the room turned dark blue and I saw the table and stove and eggs that I had only known by touch. I explored the house and found a sister I had never known in the attic. She told me jokes and taught me letters. When everything became pink, I noticed new patches of hair and my voice sounded strange. It made my sister laugh. I took my first steps outside and watched the world turn orange and red, catching on fire just as Mother said. The bright colors hurt my eyes. People stood in the streets staring at the sky and a girl across the street smiled at me. I ran back in. An enormous noisy beast charged my house but died before it struck, birthing an old man who claimed to be my father. He said it was time for me to start my first job and took me to the grocer's where I bagged people's food. When my first wrinkles appeared, I was promoted to manager. The girl across the street came in, now a woman, and we made love on the flour sacks in the storeroom. She gave birth and we proudly strolled around the parking lot with the baby in the hot sun. The light was too intense so I went back to counting inventory. Raiders burst into the store and shot through the glass door with their rifle. They grabbed all the meat and vegetables and cans that they could carry. I tried to stop them but one stabbed me. The sight of red blood seeping from my leg amazed me, so I barely noticed the pain. I limped back to my house and met my wife on the sidewalk with an adolescent boy who was my son. Remembering my own father, I told him that life was short and work was a dangerous waste of time. My body began to slow down, so I sat in my chair and watched the familiar darkness creep over the sky. My wife disliked it and left to chase the last of the pink rays toward the ends of the earth. The darkness frightened my son so I told him it was a game to improve his senses and we played Marco Polo. I taught him how to make eggs in the dark, like my mother's. My legs had become weak and arthritic. I said it was time for him to go make his own way in the world and I sank down onto the cool floor. I couldn't distinguish the night from my blindness and the silence from my deafness so I rocked back and forth until I was finally still. ☞



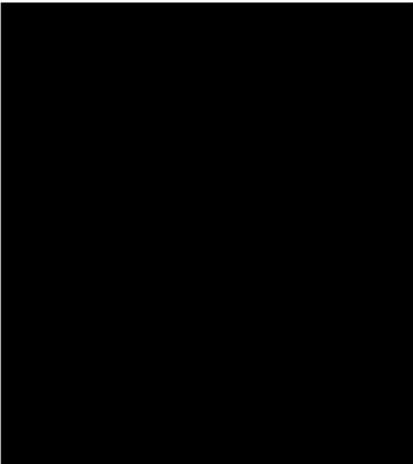


## PRESSURE

Jacob in my bed. The air conditioner turned off again. We are never naked enough. The way the window breaks the sky is meant to hurt.

His mother plants bulbs and windmills out back. Here we can do whatever we want but tomorrow the women from the state will take photographs of arms and backs. We will wipe dirt from palms to show up clean on video. We don't go to church. Our mothers chew nicotine gum. We check their breath at night with mirrors. It smells like whiskey. But here we listen to Billie Holliday—a girl with gardenias who knew what it was to strip down like a wire for someone, anyone, *please*. We watch the thermostat climb higher and beg the grass to split open. We know the windows will shatter all along this town. That nothing could stay so pressured, so whole.

LINNEA BLANK



## SIX SEATER



DELALI AYIVOR

I'm not sure what game my sister and I were playing the day that the helicopter came. We were in the pool—I know that much—an uneven octagon of short, awkward sides tiled in pale, tired blue. I wish I could remember if we played Marco Polo, pirates or princesses; whether we strove to escape the political climate were trapped in or integrated it clumsily into a game of mermaids. We'd spent a little over a year in Cote d'Ivoire and already the country had exploded into civil war. This is the way of western Africa: the entire region is in a constant cycle of civil unrest, then peace, civil unrest, then peace. But we were pampered expatriates recently emigrated from South Africa and we knew nothing. I did not understand what had happened to cause the coup d'état but my parents were so worried all the time, and the number of lockdown drills at school had gone up so drastically that I thought it best not to ask.

As such, I spent the time between the coup d'état and our subsequent evacuation from the country (a small six seater plane, one duffel bag each) more obliviously happy than I've ever been. This isn't to say that I wasn't scared by 8 p.m. curfews and stories about bomb scares; it just meant that I decided that happiness came through intense dedication. If school got cancelled again, it was another opportunity for me to spend the day at home, relaxing (indoors, just in case). When my former class of thirty dwindled down to twelve, I reminded myself of the merits of a more personalized education. I had almost managed to trick myself into complacency—but then the helicopter came.

"All right, dig down and grab the sack," my sister instructed, snapping a pair of goggles off of her head and handing them to me.

"Right," I said, ready to dive. My mission was to retrieve

one of the burlap sacks of salt that was disintegrating on the pool floor. My sister had thrown the sack into the deep end, where the water turned from translucent to a blackish dark blue. That side was always much cooler than the other and as I dove down I could feel my body rise into goose bumps.

Under the water I could see nothing. The lenses of my goggles were steamed up and I was disoriented. I was a chubby kid, the kind who wore bikinis that showcased a smooth, round stomach for slightly longer than was socially acceptable. I had a tendency to float, was never much of a diver. I started to run out of breath, felt the air escaping my lungs in bubbles that floated upward past my goggles and tickled my nose. I reached out blindly and felt the edge of the rough hide of the burlap sack. I grabbed it and burst to the surface of the water.

"Here!" I said, taking a quick, deep breath. "Look, I got it!" I exclaimed proudly, pushing the goggles to the top of my head. Lebene didn't respond. "Lebene?" I said and she turned towards me. "I got the—"

"Did you hear that?" she asked, cutting me off.

"What?" I was annoyed that she wouldn't acknowledge my achievement. She had thrown the sack in the deepest water on purpose. I deserved praise.

"I thought I heard... never mind."

"Oh-kay," I said, a little sassily, and my sister narrowed her eyes in response. She was in seventh grade, I in third, and the age difference between the two of us was just big enough for her to act like spending time with me was a favor.

"I got the sack," I repeated. Still, she wasn't looking at me.

"Do you smell that?" my sister asked, and I pointed my nose straight up in the air, took in a deep breath. It was almost summer and the air smelled like passion fruit. The smell was coming from the thin patch of lawn that led down from the

sliding glass doors of the TV room. A huge trellis covered the wall next to it that bore fruit year-round. We were never sure whether the fruit belonged to us or the neighbors next door, but either way our dog, a Rhodesian Ridgeback I named Mocha, would gorge himself on the decaying fruit until he had to place his belly on the cool of the patio tiles to recover, his breath wafting sickly sweet.

“No.” I said. “What is wrong with you?” Lebene kept looking up. She reached out and grabbed my upper arm.

“Listen,” she said. I shook the water out of my ears. In the distance I could hear the chop-whoomp chop-whoomp of a helicopter. And then I saw it, a big, black one that cast an inky shadow across the pool and stained the air with the scent of oil. It flew by fast and was gone.

It wasn't unusual to see helicopters flying by since the coup d'état, since the war. But they were normally army green, not black. And they didn't usually fly directly over our house. It was unsettling. My whole family suspected parts of our house in Abidjan were haunted—with the ghosts of what, we weren't sure. We chose not to question it.

Spending time outside in the year had always been a reprieve from the eeriness of the house, but that day it felt too much like climbing up the stairs to the attic, looking over our shoulders and cursing ourselves for making specters out of shadows.

We kept playing. We pretended to have fun. We laughed and splashed water at each other but even when we were underwater we were thinking only of the sky. The helicopter came back, a little closer to the pool this time, so we could see the scratches showing silver on its underbelly and feel a slight draft stirring wisps of our hair.

“It's black,” my sister said, stating the obvious.

“Maybe it's on the other side, a special kind,” I said. But as the helicopter got further away, we could see that there was no government seal.

“I think we should go inside,” I said.

“Let's play more,” Lebene said, a command, and pulled the goggles back down over my eyes.

The helicopter flew over three more times in thirty minutes. I continued to dive for the sack, but the helicopter seemed to know just when I was surfacing from the water and would appear then. Every time it got a little closer, seemed to hover a little longer so that the water of the deep end grew colder and our hair whipped around the damp straps of our bathing suits. The goggles I was wearing had formed deep, bloodless grooves around my eyes that stung and distorted the image of the helicopter as it flew overhead, making the center of it seem to bulge out. The house, separated from us by only a couple feet of terracotta tiling, seemed to move farther and farther away. There was only the sound of the helicopter

coming and going, the smell of petrol and passion fruit.

“We should get out,” I told Lebene.

“Hold on.”

“I don't want to be in here anymore.”

“I know,” she said. “Just wait.” So we did. We waited for the helicopter to come back one more time. We treaded water until we heard the sound of the propeller and then we tilted our faces upward one last time and watched, saying nothing.

The helicopter swooped down close to the house, hovered just above the height of the roof. The sound was deafening, the blades stirring up strong ripples in the pool that bobbed us up and down. We stared at its oily underbelly, shivering. My sister reached out one pruney hand as if she could extend herself far enough to feel its steely smooth belly.

I wonder now who was sitting in the cockpit of that helicopter, whether or not they had their hands pressed to the glass of the windshield in return.

“Girls! Come inside,” called my mom from the house. She too was staring up at the sky. Lebene and I splashed our way to the side and hauled ourselves out of the pool. Our feet slipped on the earth-colored tiling as we made our way up the stairs. It was the last time we were ever in that pool and the first time since the war began that we allowed ourselves to feel scared. It took me hours to get warm, even longer to exhale the scent of chlorine and petrol from my nose. 🌀

## STUCK

Ribs of something  
remembered, ridges curved.

Structure of a swallowed bone—  
each gulp the mouth dry.

There's one I can feel beneath the skin  
on my side. Defying blueprint, now in  
the architecture of memory—a bolt refusing to budge.

It tightens;  
stomach turns.

More rigid than steel, I wish  
you would fracture.

ANNIE SUI



## PICA

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EMILIE CHRISTIAN

### MAÏTÉ

When my sister was nine, she ate doodlebugs<sup>†</sup>. I don't remember this, because when she was nine I was in womb, but I've heard the story enough times by now to feel like it's mine to tell.

My mother caught her. She used to think Maïté was just out picking dandelions, but one day she watched more closely and realized her daughter—her soon-to-be oldest daughter—was popping doodlebugs like Tic Tacs. She panicked at first, thought maybe she ought to call a shrink, but my father talked her down. They laugh about it now—“Don't kids do the darndest things.” The punch line: “At least she was getting her protein!”

Maïté is an actress in L.A. now and no longer eats meat. She has perfect cheekbones and does some modeling on the side. She's the glamorous sister. She's well-adjusted. She loves this story.

### CHOKING HAZARDS

It's a kid thing. Eating boogers, dirt, bugs, chalk, the beads off a bracelet. It's why we had choking hazard labels on dollhouses and age limits on board games and a babysitter when our parents left town. No Monopoly for the toddlers; they'll eat the hotels right off the boardwalk.

But they grow out of it.

### PATHOLOGY

Or they don't. Freud says “an abnormal oral fixation has two outcomes. First, the oral receptive personality, which is preoccupied with eating/drinking and reduces tension through oral activity. These individuals are passive, needy,

and sensitive to rejection. They will easily ‘swallow’ the ideas of others. Second, the oral aggressive personality. These individuals are verbally abusive to others, using mouth-based aggression.” Symptoms include: overeating, constant chewing on inanimate objects, and sarcasm. “The biting personality.”

These are loaded claims on a nine-year-old who ate doodlebugs.

### IRRELEVANT

But some say that Freud went too far. We can't all be nymphomaniacs in love with our mothers, and we can't all be “orally fixated.” Some people are just mouthy.

Right?

### IF-THEN: THE DSM

If you eat things that aren't food, and you are not autistic or schizophrenic or have Kleine-Levin, and you're old enough to know better, and you do it for reasons that aren't “culturally sanctioned,”\* and you've done it for at least one month, and you can't say why, and you can't explain your cravings, and you can't stop, and they call it an addiction:

Then you have disorder 307.52, Pica.

### ANNIE

Annie liked to call herself an OCPD: an obsessive-compulsive picarexic. She only ate things that weren't food. Mostly paper. Only in squares.

She worked at a movie theatre, where she chewed on ticket stubs and sometimes flavoring salt. She had frizzy

auburn hair and wore it in a different shape every week. Her overgrown bangs were streaked with highlighter blue.

We were in a treatment group together, a weekly meeting full of shrunken sad girls who only spoke in whispers. Except for her. Annie was bossy and indignant. She yelled a lot, mostly at staff. She was our hero and our food court jester. She kept our spirits up.

I never asked her why she did it—the paper eating, I mean—or why she couldn't just stop for a while. I figured if she knew, she wouldn't have been there in the first place. But I did ask her, quite earnestly, if she thought it was as dangerous as they warned.

“I'm not a fucking idiot.” She hissed. “I don't eat fucking *lightbulbs*.”

### \*CULTURALLY SANCTIONED

“Even today, what can be classified as pica behavior is a normative practice in some cultures as part of magical beliefs, healing methods, or religious ceremonies.”

### HABITS

I'm a voracious gum-chewer. Extra Polar Ice, a pack a day. It keeps me sharp, eases tension. Worries collect in my jaw, see. They need a way out. Gum is cheap and easy to come by. And when it's not, a fingernail will do.

It's an unseemly habit, one that my mother spent 18 years and cupboards of nail polish trying to break. No avail. I tried to quit cold turkey once; my nails were nubs within the hour.

How does one become addicted to the oral squishing of minty elastic? To the shredding of one's own cuticles?

When I was little, I'd swallow my gum. It seemed easier, more sanitary, than spitting out the sticky mass and finding a receptacle. But my sister caught me doing it once. She was 17 at the time and lied to me for sport, cracking inside jokes with herself.

She said I'd better stop swallowing, because gum is indigestible and stays in your stomach forever, and if you swallow too much of it, you die.

So I stopped.

### GEOPHAGE

Geophagia [geophagous, geophage, geophagy] (n):

1. Feeding on soil; deriving nutrients from soil or the sediment.

2. Ingestion of earthy substances like clay as a result of starvation, lack of something in the diet, or possibly mental illness.

### KAOLIN

Sandersville, Georgia. 1950s. A light mineral clay called Kaolin sits deposited in the earth: pockets of pale pink buried among layers of soil. Workers mine it, sell it to factories for ceramics, medicine, coated papers, cosmetics. Grocers sell it packaged alongside fresh produce with a legal disclaimer. “Down Home Georgia White Dirt. Novelty. Not Suggested for Human Consumption.” Coroners find it in cadavers' colons.

Prime consumers: pregnant and breastfeeding women. Kaolin: their prenatal vitamin. A natural—all natural—source of calcium, iron, copper, magnesium. More nutrients than a box of cocoa puffs, probably. Pregnant women crave strange things all the time. Ice cream and pickles. Chocolate and potato chips. Kaolin.

They say it's a texture thing. “It's smooth and mild.” “It settles my stomach.” “Helps with the morning sickness.” Doctors shake their heads and write it off. It becomes an old wives' tale. “More of that homeopathic bullshit.”

In 1980, Kaolin became an active ingredient in a common over-the-counter drug for mild indigestion: Kaopectate. Early pepto-bismol.

### TREATMENT

Etiology is everything. Know the cause, find the cure.

Causes: Malnutrition. Mineral deficiency. Comorbid disorders (ex. schizophrenia). Developmental retardation. Dysfunctional socialization.

Treatments: Interpersonal therapy. Behavioral therapy. Conditioning treatments. Prozac.

Etiology is everything. Know the cause, know the treatment.

Try the treatment, hope for the cure.

Treatment for pica yields a 31% success rate. 45% in children.

### RISK

The perils of pica come in five classes.

(1) inherent toxicity, including direct toxic effects of substances such as lead or other heavy metals, as commonly seen in paint eating.

(2) obstruction, such as may be seen in trichophagia or geophagy (hair eating / consumption of soil, clay, or chalk).

(3) excessive calorie intake, generally related to amylophagia (starch eating).

(4) nutritional deprivation, such as eating paper instead of nutritive foods.

(5) other, such as parasitic infections (commonly found

<sup>†</sup> Also known as: roly polys, potato bugs, or Armadillidiidae—the pill bug family in the woodlouse suborder.

in cases of coprophagy, consumption of animal species) and dental injury (a side effect of hyalophagia, consumption of glass).

## MAGPIE

In Latin, “pica” means magpie: the bird with the indiscriminate appetite and a proclivity for shiny things. Is this disorder, or is it difference?

Magpies are marked by their incredible plumage: feathers in various shades of iridescent neon and tuxedo black-and-white. Birds of unusual intelligence: one of few animal species who can recognize themselves in a mirror test. Pest control: they’ll eat whatever’s in abundance.

Shaman tradition considers magpies to be prophets, bringing intelligence and good luck. They’re the Korean national bird, symbols of good fortune, sturdy spirit, prosperity, and development. “We should never villainize them. They are just playing their role in nature’s big picture,” says a spokeswoman for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

## SYNDROME

In 1999, “Kaolin” went from a practice to a syndrome when three Georgian women died of ruptured colons. Autopsies revealed distended stomach walls and enamel-less teeth. They ate the kaolin, savored its velvety tang; meanwhile, it had sandpapered their insides. It wore them down like sea glass. Rubbed their intestines raw. It moved to exit, but had worn the hinges away. Doors shut. It killed them from the inside out.

## MEATBALLS

“YOU GO TO HELL, FUCKING SELLOUTS.” “FUCK THIS SNACK, FUCK YOU, FUCK THIS PLACE.”—that’s what Annie said when they brought her a meatball sub for “behavioral therapy.”

But her rage was lost on them, lost on us. Everyone knew there was no way out, not at the dining table. She sliced her sandwich in a grid pattern with surgeon-like precision.

“Annie, that’s a Behavior.”

She arranged the pieces into a checkerboard.

“Annie, that’s Arranging.”

She tore her napkin into fractions. They took it away before she tried to eat it. “FUCKING FASCIST PIGS.”

Eventually we left the table, but they made her stay behind to contend with the sub. Lumpy marinara mush. I

heard bargaining from down the hall as I cleared the exit. “Just HALF. I’ll only eat half.”

I went to sleep that night, wondering how it would end. Our therapist was a hardass, but Annie was harder. She’d be alright.

## LIGHTBULBS

The next day, Staff called an early Group with slow voices and solemn eyes.

Melodrama. Annie was in absentia. I wondered if she’d pulled another one of her stunts and been kicked out, sent to another ward. Ex-laxed the nurse’s OJ again? Been hoarding her Klonopin? Or maybe she’d run away. I imagined her skipping out the door, hitchhiking somewhere exciting. Somewhere that didn’t force-feed her meatballs.

I wondered these things while our Treatment Team assembled.

Dianne, the toad-shaped therapist who I hated, launched into a stale monologue about “trusting our process” and “food is your medicine.” I awaited the part about “bad influences” and “being a role model.”

Her voice stalled, and her eyes got glassy.  
“Annie’s not here anymore, everyone.”

She had killed herself in the night. They found her sitting in a pile of broken lightbulbs. Most of the glass was gone. She had swallowed it and it sliced up her insides on the way down.

These were the things I found out from eavesdropping outside the break room.

Staff didn’t talk about the therapy, or the sandwich.

In the weeks that followed, they used Annie as a tragic warning to us all about the dangers of resisting recovery. They blamed “illness,” said she let it go too far, said she died because she “wouldn’t embrace life.” They appropriated her ghost, turned her into propaganda.

I call bullshit. All of it.

Those fucking lightbulbs had nothing to do with her illness.

## MAGPIE, PT. 2

Annie’s favorite bit of trivia: in Latin, “pica” means magpie. “The bird with the indiscriminate appetite and a proclivity for shiny things,” she’d say, in a faux British accent.

I read up on them once, thinking if I could make sense of them I’d make sense of her. Magpies are scavengers, collectors, hoarders. They ingest treasure, spit it back out to build their

fortress-like nests. Thieving architects, building their own protection. Aggressive and territorial, eating the eggs and young of any birds whose nests get in their way. Annie was right: “Other birds don’t fuck with magpies.”

Magpies don’t sing; they only chatter. Bad omens, according to European myth; a sign of the devil, according to maritime legend. A British rumor: the magpie was the only bird that refused to join Noah in his ark, that chose to “jabber over the drowning world” instead.

“The bird everyone loves to hate.” ☹️



PAGES 27-31:

US IN THE CITIES  
(SELF-PORTRAIT AFTER  
ROBERT LONGO)

CHANDLER FRENCH  
OIL ON CANVAS

## 12 STEPS

Now you feel like a man. Heading all the way toward El Paso but somewhere in this city, people drink bleach just to piss clean and your old girlfriend tapes the picture of you holding a cactus next to that boy's obituary. Pack up your bags with the picture of your black dog and that coyote jawbone. You could be a whole new man. Ten million girls could moan your name into their pillows. Now you wake up in hotel bathrooms, tasting where teeth used to be. Sleep with a waitress named Judy or Sue but she can't stop giggling and has never heard of Lou Reed. You shake so hard that strangers stare. Later, dream of famine ghosts, mouths stained with grass, hands full of needles. Drink too much and get punched in the face by a man wearing a suit. You try to get clean but end up shrinking from your skin like a rattlesnake caught fire. Instead, write emails to your ex-girlfriend. Tell her that you're sorry, you don't score anymore, you broke up a dogfight and think you might have a scar. Tell her that somewhere back home, there are baseballs lost at dusk, there are rooms that you walked from, dumpsters fluttering with bloody leaves, the damp smell of moldy corsages. There are streets lined with smiling faces and nobody knows your name.

LINNEA BLANK

HEADWEAR  
JULIA LEE // OIL ON CANVAS





## WELL DONE, VERY CONVINCING

You light the match first.  
I've heard this riddle, the oath  
your eyes make to keep moving

from lash to lash, a brigade  
extinguishing the heat haze,  
the *we* the weeks overtake.

Skilled hands can do with ash  
what shifted tone or timing  
can *goodbye*. No matter how long

it's been or hasn't, always the same  
surprise: a room with no windows  
and no doors. My turn:

*I would rather forget you  
than mistake you for who  
you once were. What am I?*

Your parents, they lied: the world  
no longer exists when you close  
your eyes except as something

you remember by imperfectly imagining. And  
we do. Like *dew* or *dust* or *trust*  
*me, I know the way back.*

You were wrong; the tragedy isn't  
forgetting, but never noticing  
we forget without noticing.

Forgive me. I am clumsy with fire  
and you. I am suffocating  
tenderness, you run me through.

The world spins like a centrifuge.  
We rise, asleep on mute machines,  
to the surface of our dreams.

ANNELYSE GELMAN



A SORT OF STARRY NIGHT // JENNIFER CAAMANO // OIL ON CANVAS

## LEAVING SUBURBIA

The people stopped at the traffic light are watching them eat. A woman walking her dog sees them and crosses the street to the opposite sidewalk. The radio sings about *amor* and *la luna*. They sit in shade and suck down the cold Cokes and greasy meat. *What?* the drive-thru voice asked. *Speak-ee-inglesh?* He always drives to get lunch for everyone, he likes to shake his head at the street names: *Corralejo*—pig corral. *Soledad*—solitude. *Salado*—salty. Sometimes the streets are names of people—*Paz*, *Margarita*, *Jerónimo*, *Antonio*. Arms fill gaping burlap with branch and blossom. Sap soaks through denim to the skin of knee and thigh. On the slope that separates the houses from the street, orange vests squat and prune nests of ivy, crop heads of sagebrush square. On the greenbelt, others move up on a lift, orange between silvery leaves, to saw off the top of a eucalyptus that's brown and hollow with beetle disease. They yell over the sounds of the street. Before, all this was orange groves and pasture. The mountain had a different name. The valley was as it was. Oak, cattle hide, thistle. A war was elsewhere. Up north, the metropolis filled and spilled south. *El rancho* sold, parceled. Men in fedoras came to plan a city. A lakebed dug out the earth, water and fish covered it over. In the evening, sprinklers reared up to keep the hillsides green. People moved here, and were surprised when the main road, leaving the last of the building tracts, simply ended.

SAM GRENROCK



## RESTRAINT



KATE McCULLY

You see the drink there, on the table. You see it, muddy, homogeneous. Time runs backward and you pull the parts from the glass. Dark beer, yellow foam. Soft-feeling champagne. Black port, black as the lead that fills the sorry spaces between sacred stained glass pieces. Invisible gin that makes you sniff the air, disbelieving that something you can't even see can burn so well. Golden whiskey, absolutely golden.

You extract the jewels one by one and the universe shudders with reverse peristalsis. There are five candles on the table. Bend your knees and bring the edge to eye level. That way you can see how the glasses sparkle now. Light dances in the liquid. You think of fishes and how they must be blinded by all that light. The candles twinkle through the glasses, showing you a hundred colored stars.

Wait you had said. Just hold still he had said. This is a beautiful moment he had said. And you waited an eternity and now you find your beautiful moment full of little liquors that make your head float up above your shoulders and your arms hang down limply at your sides.

Sometimes you go inside your head and snip and rip and rearrange, you tell the woman who writes down your thoughts. She asks you what that means. She asks you to draw it in a picture. You rip the paper into squares and you stack them on top of one another. You ignore the pencils. Sometimes when you curl up in your queen-sized bed you can feel the breeze that came in through the window in the apartment where you lived with him. Sometimes you can feel his fear as he tells you there's a couple fighting outside on the street, and sometimes you remember that the fear came after, the morning you saw it in the paper that a woman had been killed.

What are you thinking, she says, and you say nothing.

Sometimes you go inside your head and pull out all the parts where it was your fault and lay them out on the table. You cut out your smile like it's a model in a magazine, your smile that had said it's all right. You find all your smiles, the ones that said I'm fine, the ones that said you can, and the ones that said I liked it. You open their mouths and feed them little liquors and burn their lips to teach them silence.

Give me your hands he had said. Give it to me.

This is not your body anymore. You once had a dog, a little one, one with perky ears who never barked. But you couldn't take care of it. You left it outside too many nights. Cold nights, too. You saw the sadness in its eyes and you didn't want to feel its hurt, so you gave it up, back to the pound. Oh, how you had cried.

The woman who writes down your thoughts asks you about the dog, about how it made you feel to be told you couldn't take care of another being. You tell her about the guilt and try to beat away the hand in your chest, the hand that squeezes you from the inside and makes it hard to see what's there in the room with you. It hurts so much to say some things out loud.

This is not your body anymore. You sip the liquid from the glasses one by one. You watch the clock stop slowly. It's half past where you should be. You draw yourself a bath and leave the shower running so that you can pretend it's raining. The water is possibly too hot, but you slide in anyway, liking the sweat that runs between your hairline and your collarbone and back. Breathe steam like a dragon. You watch as the skin under the water ceases to be yours. It ripples and shrinks and grows, alien. The water is spilling over the edge of the tub and you feel dizzy. You blink and the world shakes.

Sometimes you lie in bed and spin and spin, and sometimes you vomit onto the floor. These things are proof to you that you don't belong in this body. You have seen it stretched and twisted in ways you never wanted to. I love it when you cry he had said. Your skin is like a goddess.

In the morning, things are clearer. Your room is mild and the sun has leaked in through the window. It is early. There is pain in your head and in your stomach, and you can remember all the little liquors sliding down your throat. You lie in bed and think about a bowl of cereal. Two pieces of toast. An egg.

## Sometimes you go inside your head and pull out all the parts where it was your fault and lay them out on the table.

The woman who writes down your thoughts asks you to take a memory and divide it into all five senses. She hands you paper and a pencil and you write in a handwriting that was yours in the eleventh grade. You make your 'a's like a typewriter.

Sight. Light came through the window from the dying afternoon and from a streetlamp. His dark hands against your pale skin were beautiful.

Hearing. Sheets rustled. The heavy breathing of pleasure. He muttered in your ear. Shhhh.

Smell. The deep blue of cologne when his upper chest and neck passed close to your face. Clean, salty sweat from a just-washed body. When your face is in the pillow, you smell spices and soap, maybe lotion, maybe a particular detergent.

Touch. Smooth skin, hot skin. Soft lips on your lips, your ear lobe, your collarbone. Throb of a bite mark on your side. Hands and wrists go numb. Skin starting to become moist. Sharp pain.

Taste. The neutral taste of another person's saliva that at first you had found so metallic and strange. The salt of another person's sweat.

You live in a small place. You live in a place with many corners and large doorways. The doorway that leads the kitchen to the sitting room is so wide that you can spread your arms and walk right through without touching either

side. You've hung fabrics and mirrors on the walls, mirrors that distort your face.

Time runs slowly standing in your tiny kitchen, chopping up the vegetables for dinner. You play light games with the knife, holding it up and tilting the blade until you can make yellow patches dance on the walls. You do a dance with it, lunging with your legs, arms out to the sides, and you are a warrior and a ballerina at once. Revolving slowly, following the patches of light with your head, you turn and turn around the kitchen.

Collard greens, bok choy, chard. Carrots and an onion. Grip the blade between thumb and forefinger. Curl your fingers around the handle. Push, rock the blade back on the cutting board. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. You like the greens, you like their color, you like that they are named after their color. Bok choy is brightest, with a white stalk and a bitter taste. The chard is waxy, and cutting it is like cutting paper. Listen to the snap.

When you cut into the onion, it stings your eyes. There are tricks, you know, but you have forgotten all of them. You continue chopping even when the tears run down your face and you have to close your eyes. You continue chopping blind. You know by feel your way around an onion. You know that it has two undesirable ends. Chop them off. Peel away the papery skin until you can feel the smooth wet inside. Make two hemispheres. Make cuts, first at angles, then back down. Then make cuts across. Feel the pieces with your fingers.

You set the knife down and, eyes still closed, feel your way into the bathroom to wash your face. Your fingertips are ribboned with cuts. You suck on them and taste onion.

The woman who writes down your thoughts often asks the wrong questions. Have you been anxious this week, she says. Did you drink this week, she says. Was it alone or with friends. You hold your own hands and pick at the cuts on your fingers. The chair in this office is too big to sit in properly. Its leather means business, not comfort.

You go inside your head and find the taste of onions, put it on his fingers in your mouth. Oh he had said. That's right.

Your mouth moves like it wants to laugh and the woman asks you what are you thinking. You say you don't know.

You are thinking about animals and the different bodies they inhabit. You think that if you could be any other animal, you would be a snake. They are simple and straight and smooth and they can slither through small spaces and evade the grasp of predators. There was a pet snake in a science class that had wound its way around the bra strap of your teacher and she had taken ten minutes in the bathroom trying to coax it off. You'd like that sort of immovability.

You are thinking of getting birds for your apartment so

that during the day you can hear them chirping and feel the wind their wings make. You would wind ivy through their cage.

You try to sleep but your eyes are intent on the dark ceiling. You ignored four phone calls today. You were busy constructing a courtroom in your mind, made of bricks and dark wood. You have to speak because you are on the witness stand, but your throat is plugged with cotton. You lie on the floor and they carry you out into the daylight.

Some words are more complicated to speak out loud than others. Sometimes it is better not to say them because of all the doors they open. You are careful about definitions. You

are careful to find the exact colors to describe a thing. The difference between abuse and assault is duration, repetition, and relationship between the parties.

You go inside your head and snip and rip and rearrange. You precipitate out the bad parts from the good. The panic, dread, and guilt fall crystalized to the bottom. The smiles that came from who knows where. The moments where he said you didn't fight enough. You place them on a balance and conjure up a robed form like Justice, and as you fall asleep, slowly, the figure examines the scale and taps it with a stylus, examining the parts of memories you extracted, judging where you went wrong. ↻



UNTITLED // ERIN GUY // OIL ON CANVAS



TRANSFIGURATIONS UP AND DOWN // MELISSA LEWIS // PHOTOGRAPH

## IN THE SAGE

The boy picks up a black toad  
A species not found outside the valley  
They are both exiles

The toad knows that cattle die here  
Flattened hides stick to vertebrae  
Coyotes drag the corpses behind stone walls  
Built for stalking mule deer and bighorn

Okay the boy says hitching the trailer  
To the tractor he has coaxed up the slope  
Raises a leg over the rusted seat and  
Spins the wheels  
The orange machine skids  
Flips end over end and settles  
As the toad sits unblinking  
In the sage

There is no blood  
On the hands holding the steering wheel  
Or howling in the mountain wind

Only a face pleased with the sky

KIERAN HANRAHAN

## CONSTANZIA

This way, there is a reason  
for my bitterness, a reason  
that I think often of taking off  
myself, taking up  
with a perfect stranger, a reason  
this house smells like lemons and  
salt every night and I cry  
at the store, buying them.

When you fall into bed, always  
on my right side, where my back  
faces the door, and there are no welts,  
no bruises or cracked skin for your hands  
to gloat over, then your guiltless  
body asks me 'what on earth  
is wrong?' and I can't answer because my mouth is  
unaccustomed to this kind of truth.

I need you to make me angry,  
nightly,  
because that is the only thing we share  
anymore, aside from dinner and  
mutual friends.

I remember the first time we watched  
*The Sound of Music* together and you touched  
yourself at the untouchable Sisters after saying  
their voices were so pretty, especially  
the one with the short hair, like a boy's,  
and when you saw me looking, horrified,  
you took your hand away and stung  
my cheek, quickly, just a reminder,  
a sharp admonition.

And years later  
when you got the marvelous  
idea that I'd given play to another man  
and you took your belt, unwrinkled  
from your careful application of it  
every morning, not Saturdays, clasped  
at the third hole below  
the seventh button of those white shirts we used  
to love to unbutton together after a night  
of white wine, and you drew it  
with an artist's stroke across my thighs,  
I shut my eyes,  
hoping you'd hurt the baby  
so that maybe  
your manhood would feel the ache  
that I'd always been too timid  
to put upon it.

I always clench my hands like sailors' knots at the first stroke,  
maybe because it reminds me of your  
first push inside me, reminds me  
of everything those paintings, the ones  
whose subjects melt against bedposts  
and relax into deep reds and blues,  
are not.

A professor of art history showed us slides  
filled with cherub-like figures and limp  
hands barely touching and he told us that  
artists liked to paint their victims  
with a glimpse of God, which I knew  
meant near death.

KATE McCULLY

HOUSE ON A HILL // ALEX KRAFCIK // PHOTOGRAPH



## ИОСИФ ВИССАРИОНОВИЧ ДЖУГАШВИЛИ

Her death she said about Anna Karenina wasn't proved by her life. She said in the Siberian orphanage she remembers hunger very well. In Riga her father was amazing handyman and repairing radios even illegally in his spare time. Thank God or god he was not sent to jail and heard from his translating about the Jews. A special dollhouse with all the furniture. Not passenger trains but like for livestock. He was wearing his army coat three years after the war but always having money for books. One day the books are in boxes and gone to someplace. He is buying them fur coats cheap because heavy or heavy because cheap. He had a little flu and then was no longer existing. How he off took his coat entering a room. How he took his coat unentering. She is covering his face with a blanket and telling her daughter to go visit her grandmother my grandmother said. She is drinking her breath from the faucet. Time passes but it stays here. She is not pointing to her heart but her throat.

ANNELYSE GELMAN



UNTITLED // RACHEL SCHMERGE // PHOTOGRAPH



ENJAMBEMENT // JENNIFER MCNEAL // DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH

## HAPPINESS



CHANG WOO SEO

It is a hot day, an irritating day. The boisterous cries of cicadas ring in my ears. Haepi is hanging from a rope. Her legs are bound together, but her eyes are laughing. She is swinging back and forth, and wagging her tail, I think. Her tongue hangs out between her two small canines.

A lazy wind blows, hot and humid, stinking of manure, sweat, cheap alcohol. Father and his friends sit in a circle. Someone laughs. It washes over us, then tapers off to a raspy cough. One of them looks in my direction. This is what I remember.

I was petting Haepi. Haepi was the only friend I had. It was all because of the government. The FTAs, the newspapers said, would prepare Korea for “The Future of World Economy.” Many times I passed father hunched over the newspaper, his walking stick in his right hand, his pugnacious face wrinkled to a frown. “They don’t give a shit about us, fucking Yankee-lovers,” father said. “Might as well set myself on fire. Might be they’d realize what shit they’re brewin’ up then.” Someone actually did. He wasn’t remembered.

Mother had brought Haepi to this village. Haepi was a mutt. All of our dogs were. “I really hope she doesn’t eat rat poison,” Mother would say. It had become a habit for her, what with the government projects. Now and then we found dead dogs, their tongues hanging out, their muzzles enveloped in a shroud of white foam. Father would laugh, kick them aside. I would close my eyes, when he wasn’t looking.

Dogs were eating rat poison, people were moving away.

Now and then we found dead dogs,  
their tongues hanging out, their muzzles  
enveloped in a shroud of white foam.

Mrs. Lee was one of the last to go, but it happened, eventually. Sweat was running down her brow, through the creases of her sunburned face. In her two thick arms shaped by the earth she held a metal platter of rice cakes. She took a knife, cut off a piece, bagged it, handed it to Mother. "You needn't have," Mother would say. She would laugh. The old lady laughed too, and for a while they spoke in soft, hushed voices.

I was playing with Haepi then. Haepi was confused because I had just pretended to throw the ball. She ran to the other side of the yard, turning her head this way and that, panting. Above the sun burned fierce, and in the trees the cicadas cried their crude, brackish song, perhaps in protest to the smothering heat. Somewhere a sparrow jumped out of a bush, took flight. I watched it soar until it faded into the blue.

And that was that. People disappeared. For a while postcards would arrive. Mother read; we listened. We learned about apartments and subways and elevators. Father would scowl, say "Those people, they're gonna be fucked soon. Them city-folk, they're in the same bunk with the fucking Yankees and the Chinks, I know it."

Nevertheless, those were the fairy tales I grew up on. Sometimes when I was working the tractor, I would imagine I was on a subway, until Haepi licked my face and brought me back to the pungent smell of sweat and manure. I wondered often if Seoul smelled like shit, too.

And that day, the stink was stronger than ever. I think it was the heat that made it worse. It just kept getting hotter every year. My father stands up, says something I can't catch. He slurs a lot. He thrusts a construction pipe at his friend, who snatches it. He limps over to Haepi and me, slowly. He grins, runs his tongue over his lips. Is he drunk again? "We've been over this, son," he says, I think. "We can't keep the bitch."

"Fucking dog," someone says. They beat her with their bats and pipes until she is silent, and then some more. I hear a lot of thumping and swearing. "That'll teach them to name our goddamn dogs," they say. Their faces are faded. They drip with blood. They laugh. Haepi swings back and forth.

My neck is stiff, my throat sore. My neck is stiff because father has been holding it in a lock. My throat is sore because I have been screaming. I close my eyes. "Your son, he ain't a real man." Laughter rings in my ears.

I sit in a 13-story building, thinking. An hour ago a cicada landed on my window and started crying. I went around shutting all the windows, but I could hear it still over the screech of tires against the asphalt, and the impatient honking of horns, and so on. I have been waiting for it to fly away, but it would not. It will just sit there and cry.

I sigh. I spray it, watch its twitching. A few minutes trickle by, drop by drop. We become still. ☹️



THE DEATH OF US // RACHEL COLE-JANSEN // PHOTOGRAPH

Haepi was the only friend I had.

## THE FORECAST

I ask you  
if you believe in an alternate universe  
and you say you don't know.  
We stare into glasses of beer—  
piss yellow. The end of the muggy day  
has made them foamless, impotent.

There is a terrible jazz band playing tonight,  
the horns are off kilter and the lead singer  
is an ass—there's no other way to put it.  
We sit in white plastic chairs  
in one of the red dust-pits of a bar downtown,  
eat boiled peanuts  
and fried yam, fresh from the grease,  
too hot, so it leaves little off-white blisters  
on our fingertips.  
The city seems promiseless,  
the only way a city can seem  
after you've already told someone how  
full of promise that city is.

We are young  
and there is a sour paste of  
peanuts and cheap beer  
between our teeth  
and settling thickly onto our tongues.  
The sky is heavy  
in a way that predicts torrential rains or great love;  
surely we should be happier than this.

But we are what we have always been, waiting  
for something cataclysmic, waiting  
for whatever this way comes.  
And when nothing does  
we talk instead.

You tell me of things  
I could never possibly understand,  
explaining the tinned music behind us  
in terms of tempo, downbeat, polyrhythms,  
enunciating slowly and demonstrating  
with snapping fingers, a beat  
that my head starts to follow.



OCCUPY // ALEX KRAFCIK // PHOTOGRAPH



It reminds me  
of when my father used to talk me to sleep.  
He would tell me things  
that he never dared during the day,  
keeping his voice low and soft,  
speaking tightly of his childhood:  
eighteen years of collective memories  
that I had never wondered about,  
never asked for.

When I woke, I would have only tatters  
of the night before, images of shirts stained  
with the leftovers  
of fat morsels of fried plantain.  
There were names:  
Collins, Tom, Billy —  
boys who he played soccer with.  
And although I've never been sure  
I think one of them was a retarded brother,  
my father's brother who ran away from home,  
but I never had the courage to ask.  
I was afraid of losing that moment  
right before sleep when I realized  
that my father was no longer speaking English  
but had slipped back into Ewe, that he was  
no longer talking to me but to himself,  
and that either I was crying or he was.  
It was hard to tell.

I hope  
that in the alternate universe  
things are clearer.  
And maybe that's why I asked the question—  
to pin-point the identity  
of the well meaning boy  
who slurred all his words,  
couldn't stop the drool leaking  
from the left side of his cracked mouth.

I don't say any of this to you,  
only repeat my question  
and you repeat your answer.  
And we sit there,  
your explanations of the music lulling me to sleep  
as we wait for the moon to crash down  
or the beer to kick in  
or simply for a sign  
that something is coming our way.

DELALI AYIVOR

## OH, TO BE LIGHT

In the story, you fall in love with a girl  
on another planet. She's been dead

for years, but through your telescope  
you watch her laugh, laughing too,

and wave when she, remembering  
her smallness, remembers the stars.

ANNELYSE GELMAN



## PUPILS

STEPHANIE BASTEK

There is a blind boy in my French literature class. This would not be important but for the fact that in my other literature class, we are reading a novel about a man who is going blind.

Further complication: in this literature class, we are reading books that pivot on the axis of coincidence.

Coincidence, life-rhymes: the nexus of my studies, informally, for this, my semester abroad in Paris. A blank slate of requirements for my junior year left me with a kaleidoscope of courses at my disposal. *La situation du roman en Europe aujourd'hui*. *La Nouvelle Vague*. *Fictions de la disparition*. Everything sounds more romantic in French, especially 'disappearing,' so I tested out my understanding of the term by fleeing from the prospect of making a decision. Only a week into my six months in this foreign city and I already wanted to disappear, beaten down and overwhelmed: by the surfeit of choices, by the paralyzing freedom, by the half-familiar syllables playing on my ear. At my new not-home, searching for consolation after a night spent soullessly reading course catalogues, I ran my fingers along the spines of my host family's bookshelves. I was looking for something familiar, something to hold on to, something I could hold up against the oily amber light of a winebar. A row of copper letters caught my eye: *The Invention of Solitude*. Or, in French: *L'invention de la Solitude*. Or, in English: one of three books on a syllabus I'd read mere hours before. Or: *la solution*. I pried the book out from its shelf and read it in one sticky night crisscrossing the city by metro, drunk on merlot and a language both my own and another's.

I came to these cobblestone streets with the intention of studying the world through wide-flung French windows,

but instead every Thursday morning I find myself in an airless classroom studying the back of this sightless boy's black jacket. The windows open over a sea of chimneys and slate tiles while I stare soundless at the sightless and wonder if he can tell. Wonder what the odds were of him choosing to enroll in this class, and what things might have been like had he been in the other, reading a different novel, one with a blind man and a woman who bluffs.

Later, I would come to realize how odd it was for a book tangled up with reflections on the nature of chance to come into my life in the same fashion. How odd it was for me to be in Paris reading a book whose author had written it shortly after returning from France. For me to be reading a book wrestling with the same questions of writing and authenticity with which I was contending. For me to take an uncharacteristic chance on a writer, Paul Auster, whose other work I had abhorred, and whose ex-wife, by chance, was also a writer whose work I had abhorred.

Had it not been for the coincidence of finding it on my shelves, I don't think I would have picked it up otherwise. They say prejudice is blind.

They don't know anything.

The windows open over a sea of chimneys and slate tiles while I stare soundless at the sightless and wonder if he can tell.

The novel we are reading about a blind man is called *In the Museum of Reims*. It is a simple title for a simple premise: a man is going blind and going to art museums. While he is there, he meets Anne, a woman described not in adjectives but in actions. Without a word she takes him by the arm and leads him through the galleries, telling him about every painting that they see. Except she isn't telling him about them, not really, because she lies about the details. The captain frowns over the prow of his vessel instead of smirking. The forlorn maiden's dress is marigold, not periwinkle, and she is smiling through her tears. Anne lies about every one, that is, except the last one.

The blind man wants the last thing to fill his eyes to be David's painting *The Death of Marat*. Not the wilderness of a landscape painting, or of an actual landscape. Not the three-dimensional world. Not his family. But a bleeding French revolutionary keeling over the rim of his bathtub.

There are at least four copies of this painting, one of which is in Reims. They're not identical: the corona of light in this one's upper right blackness is wider, the hues in that one are more sallow, lit within by a sick yellow. The one in Reims even has a different inscription in the lower right hand corner: *N'ayant pu me corrompre ils m'ont assassiné* instead of the three-word dedication of the original—*À Marat, David*—from the artist to his dead subject. The difference makes sense, since it was painted by a different man. Unable to corrupt me, they killed me. Quoth the copy. But this is the version that our protagonist goes to see, after his vision starts to disintegrate.

First he loses colors. Red and green, between which he has never distinguished well to begin with. Then yellow, then blue, then last, purple. As his ability to make out shapes and colors dims to a set of blurs, the man walks through the Museum of Reims, the click of his heels a muted echo ballooning against the arching marble ceilings. Different, probably, from the plastic tap of the boy's black cane against the linoleum floors, the wooden table legs, the metal doorframe, when every Thursday morning he comes into class.

I wonder if books with blind characters are translated more often into Braille. Or if fewer are, because the publishers don't want to come across as insensitive.

I wonder if I am a bad person for wondering that.

I wonder, also, what it would be like to have him in this class, in which we are reading about something that none of us, not even the author, has ever experienced but he has.

When I sit down on Thursday mornings in that wide-open room in the Sorbonne, a room flooded with the light from a wall of windows that he can't see but maybe he can feel, I wait for him. I wait for him to tell us whether he lost his vision or whether he never had it at all. To make piercing observations about the nature of darkness. To strip the text of any romanticisms or inaccuracies about not being able to see the walls in front of you.

Then I remember that this is the subject of my other class, and that I have been swept up in trying to make the coincidences in my life line up completely. Therein lies the danger of chance: after one encounter, the need grows like a vacuum, sucking all occurrences into being read serendipitously, a never-ending train of horoscopic speculation.

The man walks through the Museum of Reims, the click of his heels a muted echo ballooning against the arching marble ceilings.

Does something exist if you can't see it? The question bores, posed as it has been by a long line of philosophers into shapes that seem distinct but are fundamentally the same. In his *Lettre sur les aveugles à l'usage de ceux qui voient*, Diderot uses a blind mathematician as a mouthpiece for his rejection of an omnipresent God. Since knowledge is gleaned through the senses, he contends, and the blind lack sight, the only common denominator between the blind mathematician and the seeing masses is the form of knowledge provided by mathematics. The treatise's title in English is *A letter on the blind for the use of those who see*. More useful to them, probably: the darkness of the dungeons in which Diderot was imprisoned. Most useful: a blind philosopher arguing the point.

Searching for clues, I find that the only blind philosopher mentioned anywhere is Galileo Galilei, who lived seventy-two years before his eyes grew milky with glaucoma and the cataracts shut out the sun.

In class the next day when the Morse code of his cane reaches the legs of my desk, I study the boy's movements as he passes my chair and sits in the same spot, in the same corner of the room. His hands grope for the chair to pull it out, but once grasped his gestures are smooth. The cane is placed soundless beside him. He turns around to empty his backpack and I look for the first time into his face.

The boy's eyes are entirely black, as though his pupils bloomed out over his irises. It is impossible to read anything into them, to decipher in his expression any clues to his thoughts. He remains a collection of disparate components: black leather jacket, black metal cane, black chin-length hair, black cloth on the screen of his computer like a shroud.

There is a passage of *The Invention of Solitude* in which Paul Auster's A. finds himself in Amsterdam. He has no map, but after several hours of wandering through the same half-familiar territory twice, he realizes

that the city is laid out in concentric circles. A cobblestone labyrinth of the eternal return. He eventually finds his way to the Van Gogh museum, where he contemplates that bedroom in Arles until he sees in it a metaphor for his own isolation. Curious, that the colors in this painting have changed completely since Van Gogh painted the original all those years ago. Curiouser, that there are also three versions of this particular painting.

The narrator of *In the Museum of Reims* doesn't ever tell us whether he sees himself alone in Marat's bathtub. In fact, he isn't alone when he looks at the painting for the last time. Anne is with him, and Anne is the only telling

First,  
he loses colors.

us what she sees in the painting. The position of the body, the colors of the blood, the inscription in the corner. For the first time, she is telling the truth about what is there, confirming what the narrator has read about the painting in his books, in his research about what he would see when he would see it. Every other time she has been lying, about colors, about hues, and every other time he has known and hasn't said anything. He neither confirms nor denies.

But this time, for this one, he does.

I never speak a word to the blind boy, and he never speaks a word in our class. The weeks roll by, and in both of my classes we start reading other books, about other kinds of loss. He never tells me how he lost his sight, or whether there was never anything to lose in the first place. He never tells me what it is like to overhear plans about going to the cinema, or how it feels to be led to his classes, how the school administrator's hand is a clamp on his elbow reminding him that *you are different*. He never tells me how it feels to read a book in Braille. I am left to consider by myself the translation of smooth lines of text into a constellations of points.

I never play Anne to his protagonist, though I think about what it would be like to walk the halls of an art museum with someone who cannot see the paintings. How I would describe them. Whether I would lie.

I end up going to the Royal Museum in Brussels to see the original *Death of Marat*. I take the train alone and let my footsteps echo against the vaulted ceilings, the hollow sounds drifting up to mingle with the dust motes and the gilt. ☪

I wait for him.

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# colophon

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