

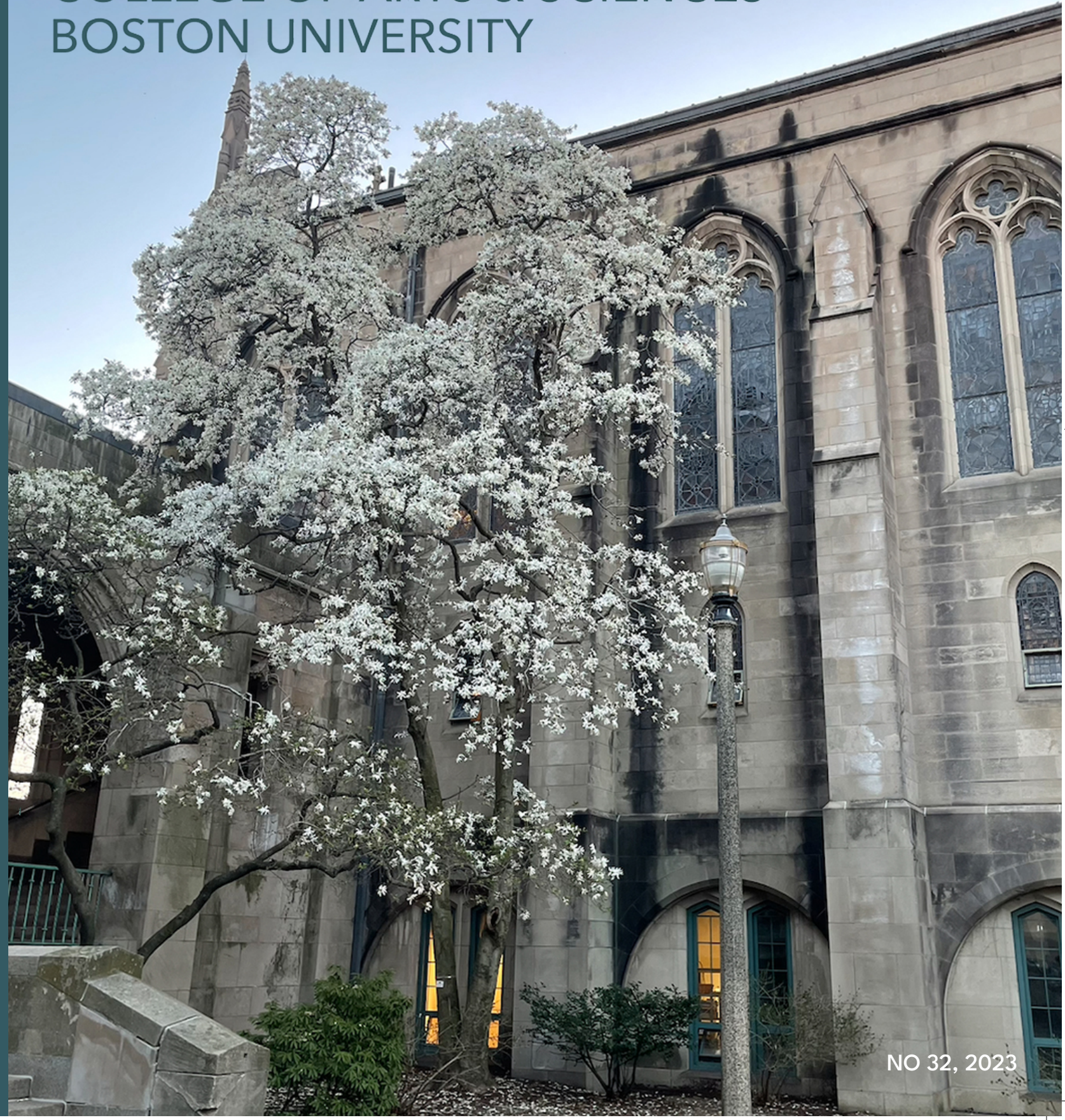


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THE JOURNAL OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES BOSTON UNIVERSITY | NO 32, 2023

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THE JOURNAL

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The editors dedicate this issue to

Professor David Green

*in appreciation for his many years
in the Core Curriculum.*



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Editor's Note

The XXXII issue of the *Journal of the Core Curriculum* goes beyond a singular theme or topic. It strives to tell a story about Core's inner values of seeing the importance of classical works even in present time. The issue is divided into four sections: uprooting, looking forward, voyaging, and fading away. Uprooting leads us back to the works of antiquity and makes us think about our origins. Looking forward talks about progress and growth in our lives while voyaging discovers all the surprising things we find along the way. The last section, fading away, touches on more serious parts of life: our problems, feelings, and death. However, despite the heavy ending, the Journal leaves us with an idea of rebirth.

On behalf of the editorial team, I'd like to thank people who have been crucial in publishing this issue:

- thanks to Rachel Reinhart, our faculty advisor and Hub instructor, for her guidance with reformatting this new issue in a creative way;
- thanks to Administrative Coordinator C Vega for providing their help with all of our technical issues and questions;
- thanks to Core Director Kyna Hamill and Core Interim Director Brian Walsh for their sponsorship and support;
- thanks to our donors in the CAS alumni community;
- and thanks to all of our contributors, for giving us the opportunity to showcase their amazing work.

I would also like to personally thank the student editorial staff for all the hard work and time they have put into creating this issue. The team put time and tremendous effort into making something unexpectedly new, yet unexpectedly Core.

As you read this issue, I hope you can appreciate the meticulous work of our submitters and staff. The Journal is not just a product of one semester, it is a history of the Core Curriculum: a history of its students and professors. It is an output of generations of all those issues that have come before – this is a circular story of endings that open up new beginnings.

To new beginnings,

Polina Sílkina

Interview with Professor David Green

Conducted by Mara Mellits

BOOK

*Can you first tell me about your book *Porto Lúa*?*

The novel is set in the Spanish region of Galicia, more specifically, in the northwest corner of the Iberian Peninsula known as Costa da Morte, or Coast of Death, and tells the story of a young man growing up among the traditional customs and beliefs of the region when people, as the narrator explains, were still “living in a time before the disenchantment of the world, still engaging the mysteries of nature, of life and death, creatively without the explanations of modern science.” Among the places and customs that appear in the novel are a spring where people wash evil from their bodies, carvings on stones meant to call souls down from the stars to enter the bodies of women, a procession of dead souls who come for the dying, and a celestial map for a departed soul on the side of a megalithic tomb. Readers might be surprised to learn that much of what appears to be invented in the book is an actual place or custom or belief.

Why did you decide to write it?

Between 1979 and 1985, I lived in Galicia and often accompanied a good friend, who is an expert on the Celtic heritage of the region, on his trips to the countryside when he was researching the history of the area around Finisterre. Before Christianity, people as far away as central France believed that making a pilgrimage to the end of the world during one’s lifetime would facilitate the passage of one’s soul to paradise—which lay off the western shore of Iberia—after death. When the tomb of St. James was purportedly discovered in a Roman necropolis roughly forty miles inland, the Catholic Church appropriated this pilgrimage and made the shrine to St. James the destination of a Christian pilgrimage now known as the Camino de Santiago. The final leg of the original, pagan route, known as the *via lactea*, was forgotten until my friend discovered it on several of our excursions and wrote a book about it that is so popular many pilgrims of the Camino now continue on to Finisterre, boosting the local economy there. My shared interest in the stories of this region led me to write *Porto Lúa*.

What is your favorite part of the book?

It's difficult to say which part of the book is my favorite. I have different reasons for liking different sections and passages. The short chapter describing the cycle of the year in Porto Lúa and the final pages of the book are among the most satisfying. If I were to select a longer section, it might be the letter to his unborn child that the dying teacher, or *mestre*, of Porto Lúa wrote to the child he never had.

TEACHING



1. The Facultade de Filoloxía where I taught in Spain.

How did you decide to get involved with teaching?

By chance. I graduated with a degree in English as the country was coming out of a recession in the mid-seventies with no marketable skills, so I went to New York to look for an entry-level job in publishing or advertising. Unsuccessful in that quest, I applied for a job in a bookstore and was hired. After a year of living in relative poverty, I decided, since I had nothing to lose, I would move to Europe, so, carrying a small canvas suitcase and my typewriter, I arrived in Oxford where I found work in an antiquarian bookstore for fourteen, then twenty-four, and finally forty pounds a week, but,

due to the difficulty of obtaining a work permit, I was paid under the table. After six months, I left the U.K. to renew my tourist visa and upon returning, was stopped at Dover and only given provisional leave to re-enter the country because I had no visible means of support. The plodding bureaucracy of the Home Office enabled me to extend my stay for another six months by which time a friend who worked in the bookstore had put me in touch with the head of the English Department at the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain where I was hired as an “ayudante de clases practicas” on the condition that I take a three-week summer course in Spanish. That’s how I became a teacher.

I understand you’ve taught all over the world—what are some of your most memorable experiences?

There were many experiences, from learning different languages to understanding that different cultures have different approaches to teaching. In Spain I assisted the tenured faculty who taught language and literature. In addition to consulting with them and setting questions for written exams and conducting oral exams, I taught classes in conversational and written English. At the beginning of my first semester, the head of the department was still in America, so he asked me to fill in for him before he returned. The first class I ever taught was a lecture on the history of self-consciousness in English Literature. I worked very hard to prepare the talk and thought it went well. When I asked a friend who knew some of the students what they thought of it, she hesitated to respond, but after I asked her several times, she said their only comment was that I had a hole in my sweater. I learned more that day than the students did. Teaching in China was a very different experience. I had three groups of students at the Wuhan Institute of Hydro-Electric Engineering: undergraduates who would become English teachers, mature engineers who built the dams on the Yangtze River, and two graduate students in a course on English Literature. When I attempted to generate discussions by asking my students questions, they told me what they thought was not important. They were there to learn from me because I was the teacher. Their lives in the mid-eighties were very austere. The dining hall where they ate was crowded and chaotic, and a typical meal consisted of a scoop of rice and ladle of onion soup. Their dorm rooms had bare cement floors and bamboo bunk beds. Hot water for bathing and electricity for lighting were strictly rationed. Because of the challenges of that life, we formed close bonds and I’m still in touch with many of them today.



2. The campus where I taught in Wuhan, China.



3. Another view of the campus where I taught in Wuhan, China.

Where was your favorite place to teach?

While China offered the most impactful experience—because I learned not only about a very different culture, but also about myself—it was also the most physically and mentally demanding because of the lack of creature comforts (like food and warmth) and the constant monitoring and control by an aggressive security apparatus, so Spain was more enjoyable. When I arrived, I was only two years older than the fifth-year students and was not in a position of authority, so I was able to spend time with the students and share their way of life. I've returned to Spain on many occasions, and every time I go, my schedule is full of day trips to the countryside and coast as well as evenings wandering from one café to another with friends I've known for more than forty years.

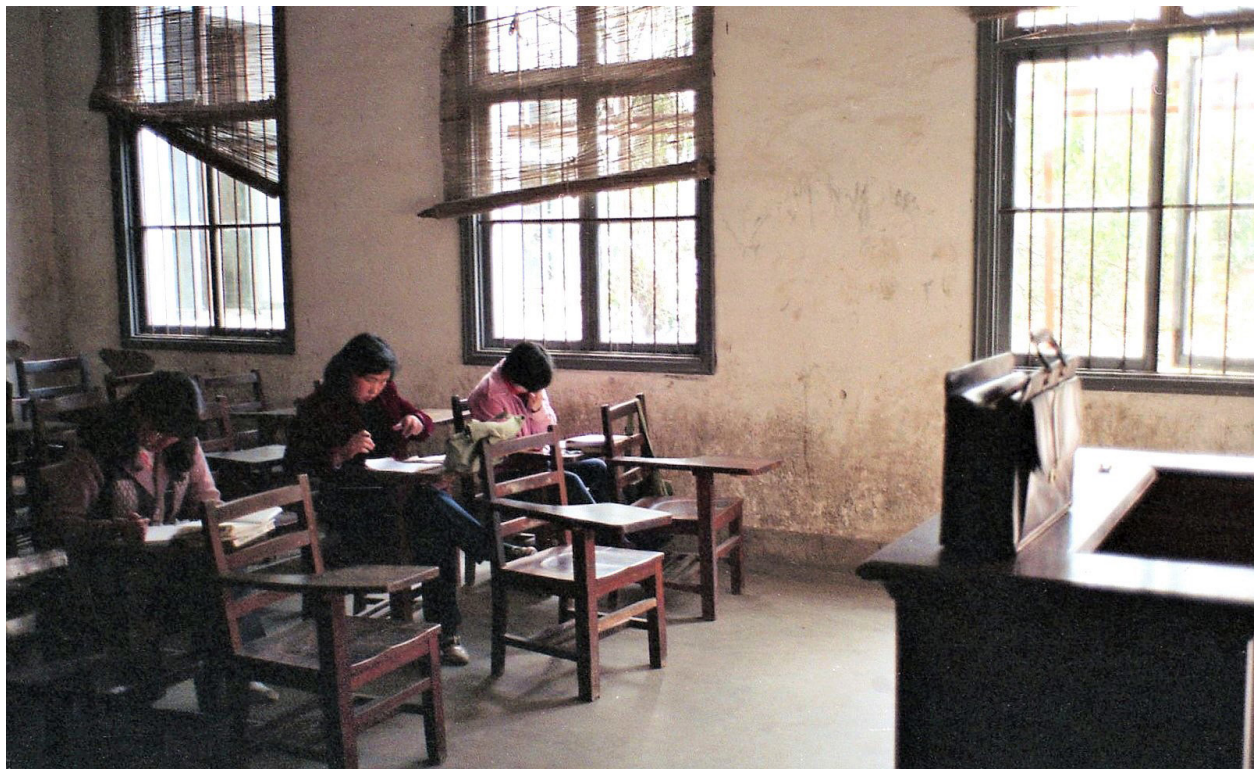


4. One of the classroom buildings where I taught in Wuhan.

Do you find that your worldly view provides a unique perspective when teaching?

It helps in many ways. For example, the broader one's experience, the more one is able to understand what Cardinal Newman called "the relative disposition of things" (similar to the effect of our readings in Core). Not only do you learn new languages and customs, you're also presented with more choices on what to value and how to live your life. Unfortunately, the things you like in different places can't be combined in any one of them, so you are

always a bit frustrated. In a perfect world, you would enjoy the social life of Spain and the efficiency of America. This also applies to the classroom. I learned to teach in a culture where I could be relaxed and friendly with my students and where I discovered that generating enthusiasm for a subject is a more effective way of teaching than simply providing information, but at times I was frustrated by the number of *puentes* or bridges between holidays and weekends that meant far fewer class days than scheduled as well as by the policy of allowing students to take an exam seven times before failing a course, which often meant the instructor had to waste time grading exams students weren't prepared to take. Perhaps the most important thing I learned by experiencing new cultures and languages is what it's like not to understand, and I have tried to show the same patience and empathy toward my students that others have shown toward me.



5. *One of my classrooms in Wuhan in 1986.*

Why did you decide to teach in the Core Curriculum?

I began teaching at Boston University in the Writing Program and the English Department on an ad hoc basis with no contract, so when the opportunity to teach in Core presented itself, I saw it as a way to increase the odds of steady employment. The second year I taught in the program, the college considered the possibility of granting Core students an exemption from the

writing courses, and because I had experience teaching in both programs, I was asked to write a report on how Core could satisfy the basic requirements of the WR courses. Core students were granted the exemption, and I received a dual appointment with a contract to coordinate the writing component of the program. Of course, examining the greatest writers and artists of our civilization and discussing the most ethical and rewarding ways to live one's life with bright, dedicated students was also very appealing.

CORE

What would you say about your career in Core?

It's been an education. I was in a similar program as an undergraduate at the University of Notre Dame, but studied modern literature in graduate school many years later, and so, while I had some familiarity with many of the works we read in Core, I didn't know them well enough to teach them at the college level, and for each of the four humanities courses, I had to prepare rigorously by reading not just the books on the syllabus, but also numerous critical studies on each work. The lectures given by my colleagues who are experts on the literature and art and music and philosophy of the various periods we cover were also very helpful. If I have any regrets, it's that we were never able to include a course on the great works of the twentieth century.

Do you feel like Core is a small community nestled inside BU?

Yes. I think this is true for both the students and the faculty. Smaller class sizes and an overall enrollment limited to several hundred applicants mean our students often find themselves in a class with friends they've made in previous courses who share similar interests. They also see each other once a week in lecture. Additionally, many get to know each other by living together in the Core House or on the Core Floor and by attending the barbeque and banquet and numerous cultural events throughout the semester. Because of smaller class sizes, the faculty also have an opportunity to get to know their students well. It's not unusual to have the same student in more than one course, and I once had a student in all four of the humanities courses. This makes it easier to write personalized letters of recommendation and more likely that we'll stay in touch with students as they complete their careers at Boston University and begin their professional lives. The faculty are also a closely knit community. We meet regularly to discuss the texts and our teaching and to set exams, and we see each other frequently in the office and at lectures and scheduled events. Core really is like a college within the college.

CLASSES

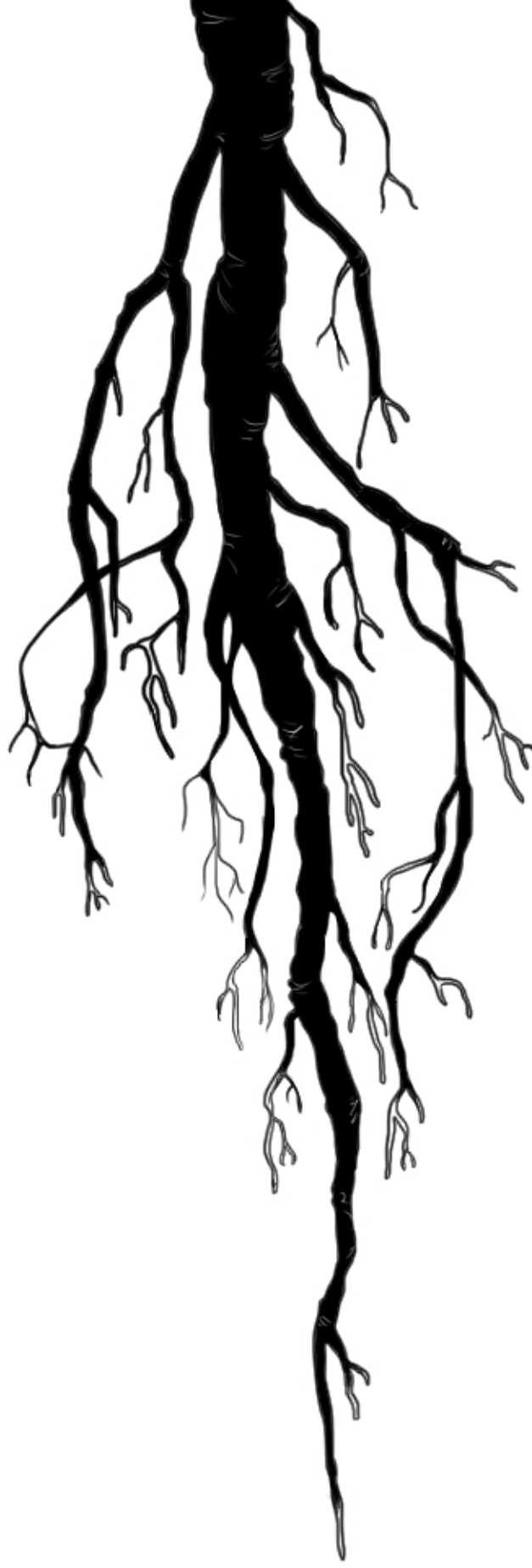
Do you have a specific class that was your favorite to teach?

Any texts that stand out to you?

I've enjoyed teaching all the humanities seminars in Core as well as my classes in the Writing Program. One of the most rewarding was a course entitled "Approaches to Death" because many of the students had experienced the death of a friend or family member and took the course as part of their effort to come to terms with their loss. Among the Core texts I looked forward to teaching were Plato's Republic, The Aeneid, The Divine Comedy, Montaigne's Essays, Hamlet, Faust, The English Romantic Poets, and Genealogy of Morals. I've lectured on Shakespeare and Dante, but also enjoy the intimacy of Montaigne's company, the humanity of Virgil, and the compelling honesty of Faust, which I see as a watershed in our intellectual history.

Any outstanding students?

Many. Two former students immediately come to mind because I've been in touch with both recently. One is currently working with Kids in Need of Defense to provide legal aid for unaccompanied migrant children and will be entering the University of Maryland School of Law in the fall in order to become more knowledgeable about the legal protections for those who are most vulnerable in our society. Another, who studied the problem of food spoilage in rural India, worked with local farmers there to develop inexpensive solar-powered refrigeration units to boost their productivity and wealth. She is now overseeing the development of large-scale solar farms in Utah to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. As Sartre wrote, when we commit ourselves, we are not just the individual we are choosing to be, but also the legislator choosing what humanity as a whole should be.



uprooting

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the Judgement that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

Sonnet 55, Shakespeare



Painting of Gian Lorenzo Bernini's Medusa, Cara Grisby

NOBODY

Maggie Farr

Nobody was your last name
Or so they say, through their tears.
No body found, no remains
Lost, among cruel twenty years.

All that I have is your face
Molded to mine like a mask.
Confusion reigns, as I speak
To the emboldened who ask.

Curse your true love, and its hold,
Stubborn as that olive tree.
Faithful, she waited til dusk
Expectant eyes toward the sea.

I watch in helpless distress
As the same waves pull her down.
Promises, broken, have let
Strong-willed Penelope drown.

Tell me, was glory a muse?
Were you enraptured, seduced?
My father, our beloved
War hero, grossly reduced.

But then again, so was I
Charmed by a vamp and her lie.
Hope's at her worst when she fills
Hearts to the brim just to spill.



Penelope's Weaving, or Who Tricked Whom

Many years ago in Greece, there lived a man named Ulysses (who in spite of being quite learned was also rather sly), who was married to the beautiful and singularly gifted Penelope whose only defect was her excessive fondness for weaving, thanks to which she would spend long periods of time alone.

The story goes that every time clever Ulysses noticed that, in spite of his many warnings, she had once again taken it upon herself to weave another one of her neverending projects, he would be spotted at night stealthily preparing his wineskins and a sturdy ship, until, without telling anyone, he would leave to travel the world and to discover himself.

In this way, she managed to keep him far away while she flirted with her suitors, letting them think that she knitted while Ulysses traveled, and not that Ulysses traveled while she knitted. Homer must have believed this too, but, as is well known, he spent a lot of time napping and didn't really know what was going on.

La tela de Penélope o quién engaña a quién

Hace muchos años vivía en Grecia un hombre llamado Ulises (quien a pesar de ser bastante sabio era muy astuto), casado con Penélope, mujer bella y singularmente dotada cuyo único defecto era su desmedida afición a tejer, costumbre gracias a la cual pudo pasar sola largas temporadas.

Dice la leyenda que en cada ocasión en que Ulises con su astucia observaba que a pesar de sus prohibiciones ella se disponía una vez más a iniciar uno de sus interminables tejidos, se le podía ver por las noches preparando a hurtadillas sus botas y una buena barca, hasta que sin decirle nada se iba a recorrer el mundo y a buscarse a sí mismo.

De esta manera ella conseguía mantenerlo alejado mientras coqueteaba con sus pretendientes, haciéndoles creer que tejía mientras Ulises viajaba y no que Ulises viajaba mientras ella tejía, como pudo haber imaginado Homero, que, como se sabe, a veces dormía y no se daba cuenta de nada.

The Rebellious Siren

She used up her voice, hit every note in her range; in some sense, she got carried away; she was hoarse after for who knows how long.

The others soon realized that there was little that they could do, that the exhaustingly cunning Ulysses had outwitted them once again, and with a certain amount of relief, they resigned themselves to let him pass by.

This one didn't; this one fought until the bitter end, even after that man, so loved and so desired, disappeared definitively.

But time is persistent and it passes and everything comes back around again eventually. Upon the return of the hero, when her companions, having learned their lesson, don't even try to repeat their empty advances, she, timid, with her voice low, and herself convinced of the uselessness of her efforts, continues singing.

As for Ulysses, more sure of himself after traveling so much, this time he stopped, disembarked, stretched out his hand to her, listened to her lonely song for, to him, a more or less respectable amount of time, and when he decided that the moment was right, he ingeniously took advantage of her; a little while after, according to his custom, he fled.

From this encounter the mythical Hygrós was born, that is, "el Húmedo," or the Fog, in our dry Spanish, subsequently proclaimed patron of lonely virgins, of pale prostitutes that shipping companies hire to entertain the timid passengers that wander around the decks of their huge ocean liners during the night, of the poor, of the rich, and of other lost causes.

La Sirena Inconforme

Usó todas sus voces, todos sus registros; en cierta forma se extralimitó; quedó afónica quién sabe por cuánto tiempo.

Las otras pronto se dieron cuenta de que era poco lo que podían hacer, de que el aburridor y astuto Ulises había empleado una vez más su ingenio, y con cierto alivio se resignaron a dejarlo pasar.

Ésta no; ésta luchó hasta el final, incluso después de que aquel hombre tan amado y tan deseado desapareció definitivamente.

Pero el tiempo es terco y pasa y todo vuelve.

Al regreso del héroe, cuando sus compañeras, aleccionadas por la experiencia, ni siquiera tratan de repetir sus vanas insinuaciones, sumisa, con la

voz apagada, y persuadida de la inutilidad de su intento, sigue cantando.

Por su parte, más seguro de sí mismo, como quien había viajado tanto, esta vez Ulises se detuvo, desembarcó, le estrechó la mano, escuchó el canto solitario durante un tiempo según él más o menos discreto, y cuando lo consideró oportuno la poseyó ingeniosamente; poco después, de acuerdo con su costumbre, huyó.

De esta unión nació el fabulosos Hygrós, o sea, “ el Húmedo” en nuestro seco español, posteriormente proclamado patrón de las vírgenes solitarias, las pálidas prostitutas que las compañías navieras contratan para entretener a los pasajeros tímidos que en las noches deambulan por las cubiertas de sus vastos trasatlánticos, los pobres, los ricos y otras causas perdidas.

Love Conquers All

Joshua Emokpae

“Are you not entertained? Are you not entertained? Is this not why you are here?” This recognizable quote from the famous movie *Gladiator* (2000) captures the image most people have of the Romans. Popular media often depicts Romans as being bloodthirsty and militaristic. This is partly true. Rome’s most defining moments came during great military campaigns, and the sensationalist violence depicted in the *Gladiator* was an important part of Roman culture. The *Eclogues*, however, give a much different side to Rome. Instead of a battlefield in Troy or Gaul, Vergil sets these series of poems in the peaceful Italian countryside, a world deeply connected with nature, leisure, and romance. Although it may be unfair to say that Vergil himself was against any and all wars, the messages within the *Eclogues* are undeniably imbued with pacifistic sentiment. This is especially clear when looking at its references to the *Pax Romana* and the poem’s relationship with love and war.

To truly understand the *Eclogues* one must first understand the historical background. The first and second century BCE were a rough time for the Roman republic. Land confiscations, proscriptions, and almost constant civil war were staples in the Roman conscience. The republic seemed to be at the brink of complete collapse and ordinary people were facing the brunt of it. The civil war between Octavian and Mark Antony was especially brutal and many Romans lost their homes as a result of the subsequent land confiscations. This period of turmoil understandably produced much fear and anxiety for Romans everywhere, and this is seen in the *Eclogues*. In the first *Eclogue*, we find out that Roman veterans have confiscated Meliboeus’ land, forcing him into exile. Meliboeus, in despair, complains that “the wicked soldier will have these so newly cultivated lands, a foreigner will have these crops, behold to what end civil war has brought forth for miserable citizens.” Even on the surface, Meliboeus’ remarks are very anti-war. He describes soldiers as “wicked” and explicitly blames the war for his despair. In the first *Eclogue*, the civil war is a disruptor of the idyllic peace of the pastoral world. Here we see that war can completely destroy the livelihood of otherwise happy and stable citizens.

There is a happy ending to this story, however. Octavian, who was also a patron of the arts, defeated Mark Antony in the previously mentioned civil war. He went on to become the sole leader of Rome, bringing some needed peace and stability. His long and prosperous reign was very impactful for

the political development of Rome and gave rise to an era of peace known as the Pax Romana that spanned over a century. In this way, Octavian himself became a symbol of peace. As a result he's evoked several times throughout the poems. When Tityrus describes how he got his freedom in the first Eclogue he says "here, Meliboeus, I saw that young man for whom every year our altars smoke for twelve days, here that man first gave a response to me, who was seeking it 'feed your cows as before, boys, rear your bulls'" (Eclogue 1 Lines 70-73). This young man, who is believed to be Octavian by most scholars, is practically deified by Tityrus. By being the one to end all of the civil wars, Octavian is portrayed as a protector of the pastoral world. His peace allows Tityrus to live a normal life of leisure, while war forces Meliboeus out. His command to Tityrus, to feed his cows and rear his bulls, returns Tityrus to the world of pastoral and symbolizes the security brought about by the Pax Romana.

The references to the Pax Romana don't stop with the first eclogue however. Vergil once again references this period during the prophecy of the fourth Eclogue. Here, Vergil prophesied that a boy will bring about an end of the iron age and the rise of the golden age, an almost utopian era for humanity. Considering the events of the first Eclogue, the historical connection to the Pax Romana is clear. Many scholars even theorize that the boy is a reference to the birth of Octavian's son and heir to the Roman empire. The world that Vergil goes on to describe in the fourth Eclogue is a peaceful one. As opposed to the civil wars and the resulting land confiscations of the first Eclogue, the golden age presents a world "pacified by virtuous men" (Eclogue 4 Line 17). This peaceful world is endlessly praised in the fourth Eclogue, such as in Line 52. "Look, how all things rejoice at the age to come." The effects of this peace do not go understated. In Eclogue 9 where Lycidas remarks on Moeris looking at the constellations, he says, "Look, the star of Dionaean Caesar has come forth. The star which makes the fields rejoice with crops and which makes the grape command its color on the sunny hills." The star of Dionaean Caesar is itself a reference to Octavian and therefore the Pax Romana. Vergil uses fantastical imagery to underscore the prosperity brought about by peace. The natural world is in full bloom as a result of this peace. All things, both living and otherwise, flourish when war is no longer a factor. In this way, Vergil makes the argument that true happiness and leisure are only possible when you are at peace with others and the world around you. War destroys lives and leaves mayhem in its wake. The golden age, as peaceful and great as it may be, isn't perfect, however, as remnants of the past still remain.

Although this new age is promised to be peaceful, Vergil denounces the

traces of war that do remain in the prophecy. “Nevertheless few traces of early deceit will be near. Which test Thetis with ships, which encircle towns with walls” (Eclogue 4 Lines 31–33). Vergil calls all elements of warfare, like ships and walls, deceitful. Him mentioning walls also tells us that this utopic world is solely focused on defense rather than fighting others.

Love and war have always been closely connected themes in Vergil’s work. The Aeneid is as much of a military epic as it is a romance. One could also argue that Vergil uses love as a metaphor for war. The Eclogues are no different. In Eclogue 2, Corydon is so inflamed by his love for Alexis that he runs away to the forests and sings to the trees. Corydon says “Who do you flee, mad one? The gods and Dardanian Paris have likewise lived in the forest” (Eclogue 2 Line 60–61). Paris is himself a symbol of both love and war as his romance with Helen caused the Trojan War. In this way Vergil evokes images of love and war simultaneously and presents them as two sides of the same coin. It’s also important to note that Corydon is fleeing his love by going to a forest, similar to a refugee fleeing war. This metaphor continues in Eclogue 10 where Gallus says “Mad love of the stern Mars holds me in arms, in the middle of weapons and hostile enemies” (Eclogue 10 Line 44–45). Here, war is described like a loving partner, holding Gallus in the arms of weapons and soldiers. Gallus is as much of a lover, a lover of both Lycoris and war, as he is a soldier, similar to Paris. Although the pastoral world is one without war, the conflict that these characters face internally, caused by love, is just as powerful. The characters of the Eclogues are soldiers of love.

Although love and war are complementary forces, it is clear that love is more powerful in the world of the pastoral. In the third Eclogue, Menalcas and Damoetas enter a singing contest over a stolen goat, with Palaemon as judge. Since the pastoral world is peaceful, characters resort to singing whenever conflict arises. During the singing contest both pastoral figures talk extensively about their love lives. Menalcas sings about his unrequited love for Amyntas. Damoetas sings about his lover Galatea. Both later fight over Phyllidas. However, instead of choosing a winner, Palaemon remains neutral. “I am not able to compare such quarrels amongst you: you are worthy of this calf and whoever either will fear or will experience sweet bitter loves. Now close the streams, boys; the meadows have drunk enough” (Eclogue 3 Lines 108–111). If we were to apply the love and war metaphor here, Palaemon’s pacifism is undeniable. Palaemon declares that neither side can be victorious in a battle where both have lost so much. Instead, Palaemon wants Menalcas and Damoetas to put their differences aside and work together. This isn’t the only place where love prevails over hate. In

Eclogue 9, Lycidas and Moeris join Meliboeus as victims of the land confiscations. They are however more optimistic. Moeris says “And you had heard what the story was; but our songs prevail among Martian weapons, Lycida, as much as Chaonian doves when the eagles are coming, they say” (Eclogue 9 Lines 11–13). Moeris’ statement is a powerful rebuke of war. Even though he’s lost his land and therefore his right to remain in the pastoral world, he chooses to sing instead of fight. Here, songs, which are mostly about love, are stronger than any weapon Mars can wield. This sentiment is especially clear when one looks at the last line. Doves are often depicted as symbols of peace while eagles represent the Roman military as they were on the top of a traditional Roman standard. In this way, Vergil is metaphorically favoring peace and love over war.

“Love conquers all and we submit to love” (Eclogue 10 Lines 79). This conclusive message of the Eclogues emphasizes an important theme. Love is the driving force of the Eclogues. It provokes the characters to sing, cry, and retreat to the forests. Although there is very little physical conflict in the Eclogues, the characters are all fighting their own internal battles which are just as significant. Instead of resorting to violence to resolve their conflicts, they sing. Even then, compassion and understanding is emphasized above all. Violence on the other hand is portrayed as wicked and deceitful. The pastoral world is protected by peace and love, an ideal departure from the chaotic late republic. Maybe the real world has a thing or two to learn from the Eclogues.

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Martin's Seventh Plague of Egypt

Maggie Farr

Your hardened heart will pump the blood I blessed your brother with
Your drum, which does not beat without the breath of life I give
And yet you have the gall to take my warnings as mere myth
Death's too fair a punishment; I'd rather see you live.

Your hardened heart, a sinking ship sent out with mangled mast
Your purpose left behind, or dying 'neath a golden coat
The comfort of false power gives you courage, then, to cast
Your stone into the sea, believing you can make it float

Your hardened heart, a city that will fall when I command
Your columns point accusingly, your pictures carved too deep
You laugh, but Son, I do not fear a fortress steeled of sand.
Your kingdom's empty foundation has no promise to keep

Your hardened heart, a lighthouse meant to guide your people home
Your pride displayed precariously, daring to be touched
A gust of wind or splash of sea would leave your kin alone
Your legacy: a crumpled cape, all cried upon and clutched

Your hardened heart is yet a part of Me, My blessed Child
The contours beating, changing colors, red and pink and blue
Look up! Do you not see your image, far from meek and mild?
Look up! Look how my heart, too, beats with love and fear for you.

Light Steps by Veniamin Kaverin

Translated by Dina Famin

The din of an approaching train came from the distance, a round pillar of light widened in front of it, and suddenly the station came into view, snow hanging from its sides, lazily peering into its lit windows; the store window “Beer – Water,” the familiar driver from the Retirement Home of Elderly Drivers, who stood by the shop, holding a mug of beer; and even the popping beer bubbles climbing over its rim. The train flew in, flew past, and left everyone behind in the dark, in the silence. But before it flew past, Pyetka clearly saw a girl vaulting in the air over the rails right in front of the train’s headlight. He gasped. And the cabby also said: “Oh huh!” But when the snow drifts lifted by the train landed, the other side of the tracks was empty except for two old women, bundled up so tightly that they could be mistaken for moving sacks of potatoes.

It wasn’t too far now to Nemuhin, and Pyetka quickened his pace. Of the girl he thought scientifically: “A sensory illusion.” He liked to think of everything scientifically. But this wasn’t a sensory illusion, because in a few minutes he saw her on the corner of Laggard and Raspberry Alley. She was standing, glancing around herself, as if considering where else to fly—she had such an airy look to her. She wore a short calico dress with a large bow on the back, and had something like a small shrug over her shoulders. She was without a coat, and that seemed interesting to Pyetka, but again, not in itself, simply from a scientific point of view.

“Oink-oink,” he said.

The girl turned around. Perhaps, it would be better to greet her, but he greeted her in his head, and aloud said: “Where’s your coat? Forgot it at school?”

“I’m sorry,” the girl said, and curtsied. “I don’t know yet what a ‘coat’ is.”

Of course, she had to be joking. Pyetka’s aunt, too, liked to say, “I don’t know what a cold is.”

“And where do you live?”

“Nowhere.”

“And specifically?”

“Excuse me,” said the girl, “I don’t know yet what ‘specifically’ is.”

“But really it’s time to know,” Pyetka commented soberly. “How old are you?”

“It’s my second day.”

Pyetka laughed. The girl was pale, her eyelashes dark, and every time she fluttered them, Pyetka—oh!—felt his heart flutter somewhere, too.

“Now I want to ask you,” said the girl. “Tell me, please, what is this thing?”

She pointed at the moon.

“Don’t know that, either?”

“No.”

“That thing is called ‘the moon,’” said Pyetka. “You didn’t happen to fall from it, did you?”

The girl shook her head.

“No, I’m made of snow,” she explained seriously. “Yesterday, some kids made a snow lady. Some old man with a beard walked past. He looked at me... that is, not at me, but at the snowman, and said grumpily: ‘As if there aren’t enough old women in the yard.’”

She spoke calmly, unhurriedly, and Pyetka noticed that when he spoke, frost came out of his mouth, but not the girl’s.

“The boys left, and he remade me. There was a broken bucket on my head—he threw it off; there was a mop in my hands—he took it out. ‘In these matters, I’m no expert,’ he muttered as he did my hair. ‘And now we’ll give her feet,’ as he made my feet. I didn’t hear, because I didn’t exist yet, but probably I already partially existed, because I did hear. He was having trouble with my eyes!” she said sadly. “And then they came together. Look.”

She fluttered her eyelashes, and Pyetka—oh!—felt his heart flutter somewhere, too.

“Then he said: ‘And you will walk lightly, because I don’t like girls who walk like ducks.’ All in all, I turned out so well that opening my eyes and speaking—that wasn’t so hard.”

“And you spoke?”

“Not at first. First I breathed.”

“And so what did you say?”

“I don’t remember. I think, ‘Good evening!’”

“And what about him?”

“Him? He said, ‘Oh, sweetheart!’—and he left.”

“Strange story,” said Pyetka.

Шум приближавшегося поезда слышался издалека, круглый столб расширяющегося света неся перед ним, и вдруг стали видны станция, с которой свисал снег, лениво заглядывая в освещенные окна, ларек “Пиво -- воды”, знакомый извозчик из Дома Отдыха Престарелых Грачей, который стоял у ларька, держа кружку с пивом, и даже вылезающая из кружки, лопающаяся пена. Поезд налетел, пролетел, оставив всех в темноте, в тишине. Но прежде чем он пролетел, Петька ясно увидел какую-то девочку, перемахнувшую по воздуху через рельсы перед самым фонарем электрички. Он ахнул. И возчик тоже сказал: “Ух ты!” Но когда улеглись поднятые поездом снежные вихри, на той стороне не оказалось никого, кроме двух баб, закутанных так, что их можно было принять за двигающиеся мешки с картошкой.

Теперь до Немухина было недалеко, и Петька прибавил шаг. О девочке он подумал научно: “Обман чувств”. Он любил обо всем думать научно. Но это не было обманом чувств, потому что через несколько минут он увидел ее на углу Нескорой и Малинового переулкa. Она стояла, поглядывая по сторонам, точно размышляя, куда бы ей еще слетать, -- такой у нее был воздушный вид. На ней было короткое ситцевое платье с большим бантом на спине, а за плечами что-то вроде накидочки. Она была без пальто, и это показалось Петьке интересным, но тоже не вообще, а с научной точки зрения.

-- Хрю-хрю, -- сказал он.

Девочка обернулась. Пожалуй, надо было поздороваться, но он поздоровался в уме, а вслух сказал:

-- А пальто где? В школе забыла?

-- Извините, -- сказала девочка и присела. -- Я еще не знаю, что такое “пальто”.

Она, конечно, шутила. Любила же Петькина тетка говорить: “Я не знаю, что такое насморк”.

-- А где ты живешь?

-- Нигде.

-- А конкретно?

-- Извините, -- сказала девочка. -- Я еще не знаю, что такое “конкретно”.

-- Между тем пора бы и знать, -- рассудительно заметил Петька. -- Тебе сколько лет?

-- Второй день.

Петька засмеялся. Девочка была беленькая, а ресницы -- черные, и каждый раз, когда она взмахивала ими, у Петьки -- ух!

-- куда-то с размаху ухало сердце.

-- Теперь я вас хочу спросить, -- сказала девочка. -- Скажите, пожалуйста, что это за штука?

Она показала на луну.

-- Тоже не знаешь?

-- Нет.

-- Эта штука называется «луна», -- сказал Петька. -- Ты, случайно, с нее не свалилась?

Девочка покачала головой.

-- Нет, я из снега, -- серьезно объяснила она. -- Вчера ребята слепили снежную бабу. Мимо проходил какой-то старик с бородой. Он посмотрел на меня... то есть не на меня, а на снежную бабу, и сказал сердито: "Ну нет, и без тебя на дворе довольно бабья".

Она рассказывала спокойно, неторопливо, и Петька заметил, что, когда он говорит, изо рта идет пар, а у девочки не идет. -- Мальчишки ушли, а он меня переделал. На голове у меня было дырявое ведро -- он его сбросил, в руках швабра -- он ее вынул. Он пробормотал: "В этом деле я не специалист", -- когда делал прическу. "А теперь устроим ей ножки", -- когда устраивал ножки. Я не слышала, потому что меня еще не было, но, наверно, я уже отчасти была, потому что я все-таки слышала. С глазами не получалось! -- сказала она с огорчением. -- А потом получилось. Вот.

Она взмахнула ресницами, и у Петьки -- ух! -- куда-то ухнуло сердце.

-- Потом он сказал: "А ходить ты будешь легко, потому что я не люблю девочек, которые ходят, как утки". В общем, я получилась у него так хорошо, что открыть глаза и заговорить -- это было не так уж и трудно.

-- И ты заговорила?

-- Не сразу. Сперва вздохнула.

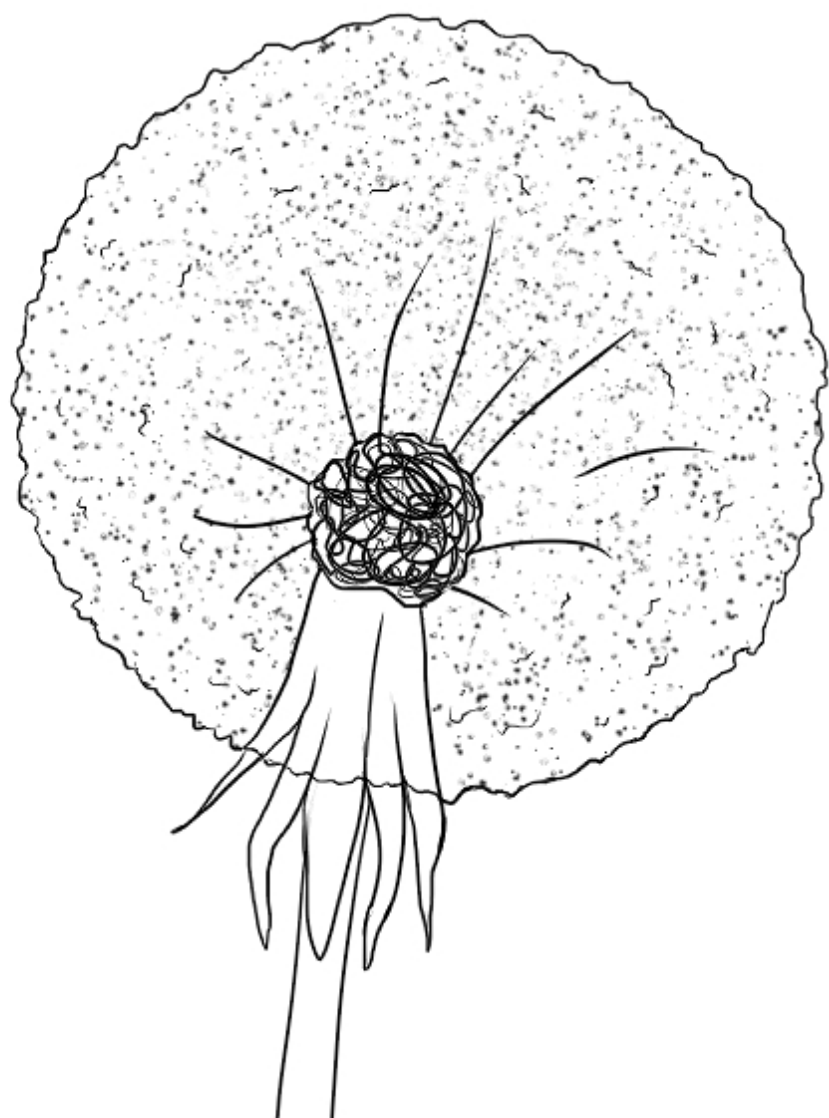
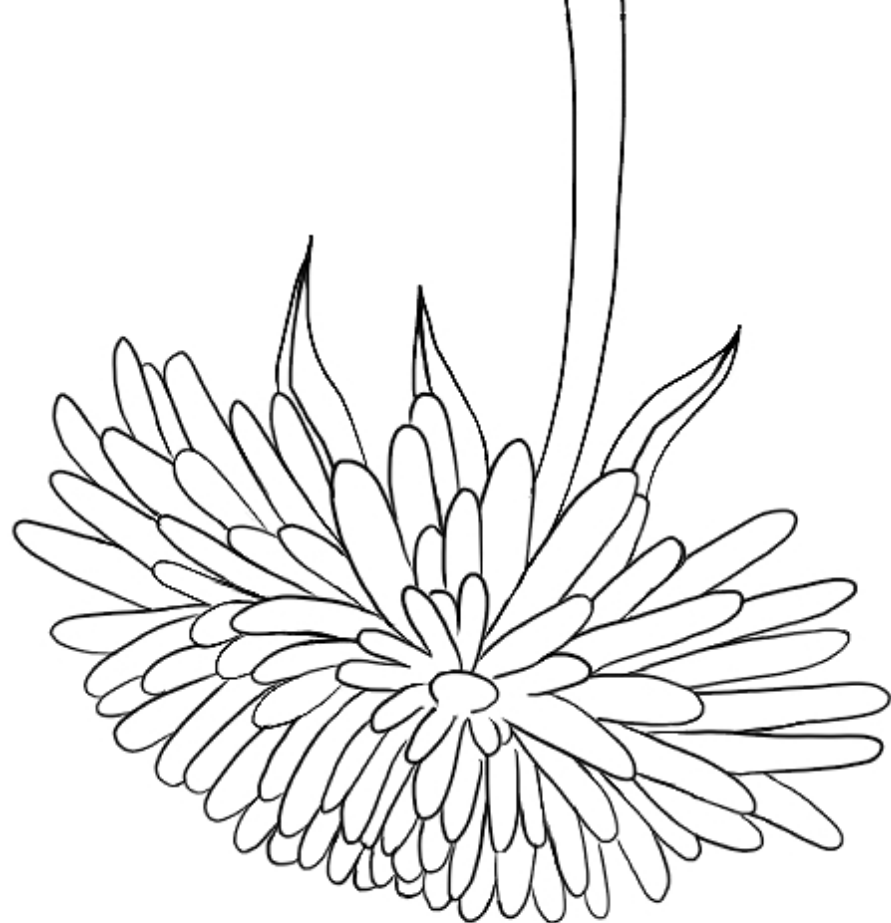
-- Что же ты сказала?

-- Не помню. Кажется. "Добрый вечер!".

-- А он?

-- Он? "Ах ты, моя душенька!" -- и ушел.

-- Странная история, -- сказал Петька.



looking forward

“From that most holy wave I now returned to Beatrice; remade, as new trees are renewed when they bring forth new bough, I was pure and prepared to climb unto the stars.”

Purgatorio, Dante



Car painting, Uma Ashrain

Santo

Giulio Giuffrida

I.

He wanted to touch the dress, but he couldn't reach it. Running swiftly down a tight, dark corridor that seemed to get narrower and narrower; strange, numbered doors lined the walls; he stopped for a second to try to read one of them. It kept changing. It didn't change from number to number, but from shape to shape, loosely retaining the optical flavor of Arabic numerals. He wanted to reach out and touch it, maybe that would stop the movement, but he needed to keep running.

He would touch the dress. That odd, bright-red, flowing mass that lay just out of his grasp at the furthest edge of the constantly expanding corridor. He sprinted on, stretching his legs as far as they could in front of him. Shadows, oak trim, and dim glass fixtures flew past his head. Below him, the purple and gold floral carpet thudded with each step, creaking loudly upon the occasional noisy floorboard.

His legs moved faster, and the flowing mass got closer. It was approaching arms-reach. He raised his right arm in anticipation, struggling to keep the rest of his running body stable. Waves of the purest red silk danced playfully in the faint light of the corridor; at once a crimson, a cherry, and at its very wispy edges, the most delicate salmon. Imagine what it feels like! Or does it have a feeling? Would it fall apart in his hands?

These questions both feared and exhilarated him, which made him run faster. He would touch it! Yes, he would. He would touch the dress. It was right there. Maybe three feet away. Now two. His legs strained more than ever, and his extended right arm remained locked at the elbow. Speed was conjured up from the depths of his desire, bringing him about a foot from that ethereal, multicolored, undulating mess of red material. He could almost feel its feathery ends that gestured in all directions—now an inch or two away. Just a few more paces and his middle finger would make contact.

"I don't quite understand," a sharp, cold voice thundered into the dim, hazy corridor. He looked up quickly at the ceiling and toppled to the carpet, his outstretched arm now rug-burned and pink.

"I'm just here to help you," the penetrating, deeply articulate voice continued. Cold, hard, wooden floorboards replaced the lush, colorful carpet. He

sluggishly lifted his eyelids and gazed confusedly at the cloudy, sideways world in front of him. Legs and arms sprawled out at his sides, and he began moving them slowly one by one.

The barn's floor was made of old wooden planks that had slightly distorted over time and were covered in a permanent layer of granular dust. Some particulates had made it onto his stubbly right cheek and mixed with a large puddle of thick drool to form a kind of beige sludge. The walls were studded with sharp nails and were lined with layers of speckled plywood. It wasn't a large space, maybe twenty feet in width and a bit more in length, but its ceilings were high. He propped up on his right elbow and looked up at the yellow fluorescent fixtures that hung from the intricate wooden trusses, thousands of dead insects built up in their lenses.

He'd been gesturing profusely in the air: screaming, pointing, reddening; he'd been hitting things, dragging things, saying things with his hands. What had happened? He could remember the feeling of his anger and the intensity of his gesturing but nothing else—why had he been so furious? Feeling a sharp pinch in his left hand, he held it up to his eyes and found three deep, jagged cuts stretching the width of his palm, two of which wrapped to the back of his hand between his thumb and index finger. As he turned his hand over, the thick yellow light revealed clumps of gritty dirt embedded in the palm-side of each gash; the ridges of textured skin had been clean, but the wet, fleshy parts underneath them were filthy. He began clenching his hand in disbelief, which led to a torrent of red-hot knives across the surface of his skin.

The wound needed to be cleaned, or at least covered. Hovering his palm face-up at his side, he used his legs and right arm to sit up and then stand up straight. A shelf to his right held an array of cleaning supplies and a bright white roll of paper towels. He reached for the roll with his right hand, tearing off two sheets without the help of his left. What had led to his waking up like this? It was puzzling: one minute he was giving some sort of passionate oration, and the next he was on the floor with these cuts. Thick, puffy red outlines of each gash bled through the white paper towel sheets as he placed them delicately on top of each other in his palm.

"I wish that hadn't happened, Chris," the voice he heard earlier grabbed onto his ears from behind. He froze, squinted, and worked his brain to put a face to the words without turning. Instead of finding a face, his mind thought of the natural world, or at least its opposite; of a heavy metal crane wrapped around the trunk of a Giant Sequoia, tearing its powerful, yet delicate roots from the dark brown soil. The crane smoked and heaved,

smushing its thick tires into the moist, forgiving soil below it. Braided metal cables dug scars into the smooth, white-and-brown bark that lined the trunk. The tree was grasping, grasping for its right to an extremely long life, and it couldn't seem to grasp hard enough.

II.

He'd been in a field. Green grass brushed the curves of his calves and the backs of his knees as he reclined on both elbows. He looked up at an impossibly blue sky—like that of a flame's hottest edges, or of sapphire's most brilliant crystals—that peeked through a sparse canopy of whitish-brown oak branches and green pine needles. He thought about the light's elaborate journey. It was first emitted by the Sun's blasting radiation, then travelled through the vast span of nothingness between star and planet, and finally hit Earth's thin atmosphere. On impact, the light scattered into the brilliant wavelengths that then pushed through the canopy above Chris's head and penetrated his wide, brown eyeballs. The waves were wrapped around his corneas like a hug from an old friend, and he sat there in unbroken delight.

His eyes drifted from the elaborate string of wavelengths that connected his skull to the wider universe, eventually resting on the trunk of a centuries-old oak tree to his immediate left. Shards of light brown bark jetted outward toward the sky; delicate vines of green and red ivy wound their way around the thick base; and bright green buffalo grass kissed the surfaced roots as they tapered in all directions into the field around him.

A little chipmunk lived in that tree. When he saw it peeking around the trunk to steal a look at him, Chris couldn't help grinning as wide as his cheeks would let him. Its fluffy little body jerked, spun, and bent at a speed his eyes almost couldn't catch; it was an almost ethereal being, and spent its untouchable life completing the simple task of nut collection. He saw it burying the nuts in the crevices of surfaced roots and little mole holes, most of which would never be recovered. He laughed internally at the idea—such a serious, speedy creature focusing all of its capacity on the gathering and sub-par retrieval of walnuts, pecans, and almonds.

Growing more comfortable with Chris's presence, the chipmunk crawled along the trunk in front of him and began scaling upward with a large brown nut in its mouth. Its little legs fought the force of gravity, alternating in bursts of movement toward its little nook halfway up the tree. It was almost at the nook—maybe four feet away—when it stopped suddenly and stared to its right with intensity, nut still securely in mouth. Before Chris could shift his eyes in the same direction, flashes of gold and brown

feathers surrounded the chipmunk and a set of black talons wrapped themselves around its torso. Ripped mercilessly from the oak tree, it was carried swiftly across the grassy field and into the surrounding woods. Its little body twitched and writhed in the screaming sunlight, pushing with all possible force against the dark hooks that entrapped it.

He watched the owl fly past his field of view, holding his eyes for a minute or two at the top of the tree line where predator and prey had disappeared. His face glossed and unmoving; he was shocked, terrified, and didn't know what to do. He just stared. Reality at that moment was placed profoundly close to his consciousness: it was all a kind of sick joke. We're given a hilariously small window of time to figure out our lives on this gorgeous and frighteningly isolated blue and green marble. We writhe and we grasp, we hunt and we gather, we feel and we escape, just to be swept under the all-encompassing eternal rug of unconsciousness which nobody knows the origin of and which acts on its own terms. Chris bit his lip and looked down at the deep green grass below him.

Tracing the contours of each grass blade with a pointer finger, he retreated further into his thoughts and repeated the traumatic event in his head. It became obvious to him that we live in two worlds simultaneously. One world resides within the webbing of life's pleasures: the utter utopia of love and human connection, the stimulation of untouchable beauty, the deep satisfaction of achievement and prosperity. The other is occupied by life's impending tragedy: a closeness to death and its agony, an intuitive fear of the unknown, a readiness for the onset of emergency. At all times, the latter bullies the former as a disgruntled fourth grader might bully a preschooler. We're tasked with keeping the innocence, the spark of curiosity and universal love alive within that bullied child as he shoulders, against all odds, the terrible reality of human existence. How can we possibly do that? How can we look that child in the face and assure him it's worth it? This is the toll we must pay, Chris concluded, to not just exist as most physical objects do—but to experience.

Chris laid down, his back flat with the cold, lumpy, grass-studded ground below him. Was he withering now? Was he safe? The sun drifted downward toward the horizon, expiring in giant blotches of orange and pink. He watched the canopy slowly lose resolution as the light went away, revealing thousands of luminous pinholes in the night sky above him.

III.

Lines came to him at moments like these. After about an hour of staring

openly and compassionately at the crowded night sky, he'd thought of an ending to his poem. The speaker, consumed by various episodes of his own folly—placing his work above his family, losing focus in all his meditations, being utterly weak at his mother's funeral—decides to drop it all, and head for the hills. There, he's consumed by the romance of the natural world, and allows it to flow through him without resistance. It seemed obvious to Chris that the speaker never had a choice: he'd either leave his family behind and return an enlightened man, or suffer his tortured mind within the bounds of society for the rest of his life. Such enlightenment was the only effective method of self-improvement, and had to be pursued at the risk of nature's physical danger. In a fit of excitement Chris jumped to his feet, brushing his arms and legs and heading toward the moonlit road. He had it! The ending to his third poem. He'd make it home, pull out his notebook, and finish the poem in one breathless sitting. His lips formed a half-smile as he stepped briskly down the yellow-lined road, twenty minutes from home. His hands were in the pockets of his thick khakis and he whistled the chorus of a psychedelic-rock tune which reverberated from the messes of tree trunks to either side of him.

When he reached his house—a simple one-floor ranch with acres of land between it and his neighbors—several lights were on. Looking in from the street, he could see his wife Carlotta in a gorgeous fit of laughter. Her mouth was wide open, head tilted back, and eyes squinted shut as her curly dark hair draped the back of a wooden dining room chair. Red playing cards were clutched in her right hand as she slammed it down onto the table in a fit of playful rage.

Across from her sat Santo, his mechanical body perching stiffly among the flowing contours of his wooden chair. His squarish metal arms cradled his cards at the edge of the table, and the expressions of his titanium face reflected the precise bliss of Carlotta's enjoyment. It was still a bizarre sight for Chris to see the spring-like metals of his lips, eyebrows, and cheeks contort and shift to create seemingly biological movements. It looked so real—so accessible, so compassionate. From the day Santo arrived at their home, this distinct yet untraceable air of utter liveliness never left him.

Chris reached the garage, happily punched the code to lift the door, and arrived at the inner door that opened to the kitchen. As his left hand gripped the brass doorknob, he could hear muffled tones of joy pattering against the other side of the metal door. When he twisted the knob and pushed the door open, his ears were engulfed in a sea of laughter and congenial conversation that permeated the entire first floor. After closing the door quietly, he waded

through the blissful auditory waters and leaned his hips against the grey laminate countertops in the kitchen, watching the dining room spectacle unfold.

He liked having Santo there. Carlotta spent late nights at a family law firm in town, settling divorces, estates, and land disputes that arose among the countryfolk. She deserved the constant attention and warmth that Santo was able to give her. Really, it was more than warmth and attention: it was a kind of pure joy that Santo was able to insert into every waking moment. Chris had observed this in all of his interactions with him: a perfected and transcendent ability to carry conversation, uplift one's ambitions, cradle one with flawless affirmations, and toe the line between his own absurdities and acute sensibilities.

Coupled with Chris's admiration, however, was a creeping feeling of resentment. Chris felt foolish when the emotion inevitably surfaced in his conscience, but he couldn't control it. Yes, Santo was the best thing that ever happened to them—but was Santo strictly better than him? Could a robot...? No! Of course it couldn't. But the thoughts were there. There's hardly anything less conscionable than the belief that Carlotta could prefer a robot over himself or that his career as a carpenter could ever be made useless by the mechanical precision of Santo's titanium arms. But the thoughts were always there. He couldn't shake them.

"Chris!" Carlotta finally noticed his neutral gaze from the kitchen as she placed a card face-up in a pile at the middle of the table. Their eyes locked pleasantly. "Are you gonna sit down with us?"

"Maybe in a little while," Chris said with a smile as he began walking toward the table. "I've got some paperwork to go over and then I'll come out." He leaned over and pecked her lips.

"Suit yourself," Carlotta said with a giggle, holding up a few cards in her hands. She watched him giggle back and pat Santo on the shoulder as he headed into the hallway. The door of his study clicked shut and the waves of auditory and relaxed hospitality resumed, sloshing against the door's outer surface.

IV.

His study was small but exceedingly comfortable. A worn, brown-leather desk chair sat proudly below a dark oak-slab desk with squared metal legs. Atop the desk sat an antique banker's lamp that cast a dim green glow throughout the room, a stack of books of varying thicknesses, capped by a copy of Giorgio Agamben's *State of Exception*, and his shiny,

aluminum-bodied laptop that was plugged into the wall. Beside the desk was a matching file cabinet, at the bottom of which Chris kept his writing drafts. He often wrote on his computer, but the intimacy of writing by hand simply couldn't be replaced in many instances.

He wrote mostly poetry but dipped his toes into political philosophy and literary psychoanalysis. These were mere interests of his that had stuck with him since college, none of which were applicable to his current carpentry work. He loved the powerful feeling of discussing such cerebral, top-drawer topics—touching the untouchable underbelly of personal and social life. None in his profession seemed to be asking the same questions, so he kept his engagement with them and his poetry to himself. Carlotta was likewise unaware of their existence.

Chris pulled a ring of keys from his pants pocket, jingled them in his hands for a few seconds, and pinched the cabinet's tarnished brass key between his thick thumb and pointer finger. As he bent to insert the key, he noticed the bottom drawer was sticking out about two inches. Had he forgotten to lock it? Puzzled, he grabbed the top of the drawer, pulled it open, and began inspecting its contents. He wrote exclusively in multi-colored spiral-bound notebooks, and none seemed to be missing. Everything was there.

As he flipped through the six or seven notebooks to find the poem, he ran through its new ending in his head. The poem's speaker, in pure conflict with the vulnerabilities and errors of his personal life, drops his entire civilized lifestyle and pursues enlightenment among the natural landscape. Though seemingly paradoxical—leaving one's family as a way of strengthening it—this solitary journey is indeed the only way of properly reorienting himself. He'd tried every other conceivable route. He abandons his family for the explicit purpose of potentially rejoining them as a more productive, controlled, and knowledgeable man.

The first two notebooks were easy to rule out, as they were filled with his own thorny political discourse, and he always kept his poetry and prose separate. The third notebook—it had been a while since he'd returned to it—contained the desired poem in its first few pages. It was still untitled, and he flipped through its beginning, reading his own scribbly, rushed handwriting. Within the lines were countless cross-outs and underlines, and beside them were exclamation points, crude star symbols, and other expressive marginalia. It was always his philosophy to get the words down as quickly as possible; his thoughts were often vibrant but fleeting, and would therefore be forfeited if he slowed down and focused on his penmanship. So long as

he could still read it, what did it matter? Poor penmanship might even offer him greater protection from the public discovery of his work, a vulnerability he wasn't yet willing to expose himself to.

As he approached the unfinished ending, he turned the final page to discover an array of thick black letters—in all capitals—continuing in verses underneath his own. He stared at the chunky, industrial letters with astonishment. Good God! Someone had...! He began reading the dark, foreign verses, which ran for three or four more pages.

The ghost writer had come to a similar conclusion that he had. The poem's speaker had to abandon his family and career and face the truth and infinitude of the natural world. But in this new version, the protagonist goes beyond what Chris had imagined, and indeed becomes enlightened. Feeling the world sift through himself like the smoothest grains of sand through the fluid curves of an hourglass, the protagonist kneels upon a grassy knoll and remains there in profound, unbroken bliss. Days go by and his focus is never broken; his mind and body had been utterly prepared to escape the standard bounds of consciousness. The sun beats his back, water escapes his mouth, hunger racks his abdomen—yet he remains in an absorbed state of ecstasy. He never once thinks of his family or civilized life, just a complete oneness with the world around him. Eventually, the physical pressures of the natural world take his life and thick grass begins growing over his tattered and scavenged body. The sun and moon break daily over his dissolved corpse.

The ending was—well, it was perfect. He hadn't thought of such a...good god! It was approachable, realistic, and shocking. Chris's imagined ending had been a lower resolution. This seemed to be going in a similar yet distinctly problematic and utterly logical direction. Yes! This was precisely what the speaker should have done: why hadn't he seen that? Chris had been hung up on injecting hope—maybe the speaker would return to his family and society an enlightened man. But then, what would be the purpose of enlightenment? To touch reality's eternal darkness and illumination, to merge the self with all that is powerful and good, just to return to the trivial, pedestrian plight of man? Of course not. The audience can then wonder: what is man freed from when he becomes enlightened? Is he freed from his family? From himself? Chris didn't know the answer. He would chew on it with his audience.

But the words weren't his. Neither were the ideas. Aside from the odd absence of lower-case letters, the lines were made and cut perfectly. They were so well done—so particularly human. He flipped beyond the poem to the others behind it. All were similarly filled in. Who...?

He glanced away from the notebook at the hardwood floor. As he looked, his right thumb met his chin and his legs crossed. Amid the silence of his study, the defiant sounds of joy and amusement pattered audaciously against the other side of his oak-framed door. Slowly his brow scrunched, eyes squinted, and jaw clenched. Without looking at it, he closed the notebook quietly and then slammed it full force onto his dark oak desk. The ground shook. He stood up and walked toward the door, staring at its handle for a few seconds. He grabbed the handle and yanked it open, flooding his study once again with a torrent of laughter and deep human affection.

V.

Traversing the river of cheerful clatter, Chris made his way down the hall and back into the kitchen. His legs stomped, but he was trying to be quiet.

“That was quick!” Carlotta exclaimed, a bit out of breath but insatiably excited. “I’ll deal you in.”

“I have to go out back first,” Chris replied, trying his hardest to flash a smile. He walked past them and into the kitchen.

“Oh alright. How long will you be?”

“A few minutes,” Chris replied, pausing for a few seconds. “Santo, can you help me move some two-by-sixes down in the barn?” he looked into his bright porcelain eyes. “Of course,” Santo responded. He turned to Carlotta. “Would you mind?” Her head shook and she lightly frowned as her curly hair smacked the back of the wooden chair. Santo stood up, pushed in his chair, and began walking beside Chris through the kitchen and out the front door. As they made their way across the moonlit lawn from the garage to the barn, Santo asked Chris what the two-by-sixes were for.

“I’m building another door for my study,” Chris responded. “The one I have works, but the wood around the latch bolt is worn and I want a darker stain.”

“That sounds like a fun project, Chris. Your woodworking is remarkable.” The slightest uptick of coldness and roboticism lined the walls of his speech.

Chris said nothing and kept walking. Alternating thuds of metal foot and rubber sole shot from the grassy lawn below them. Chris held a flashlight steadily at the entrance of the barn as they walked.

When they reached the side of the barn, Chris unlatched the large, wooden door and they stepped onto the old wooden floorboards. Fluorescent lamps buzzed as he flipped a few switches on the wall and turned his flashlight off.

Santo gazed at the intricate display of hand and power tools that lined half of one of the barn's walls. He was utterly captivated and couldn't look away. The tools glinted brilliantly in the raking yellow light; dark leather straps, shiny chrome bezels, and rubber grip coatings intersected each other like splatter paint. Chris watched him from behind and stepped comfortably back and forth. Close to a minute passed in silence.

"You...think we're alone, Santo?" Chris finally asked, pushing his hands together as he continued to slowly pace.

"In the barn?" Santo glanced backward. "We walked down by ourselves."

"Not that," Chris replied. "The universe. Do you think we're alone in the universe?" Santo thought for a moment and then turned back toward the tools. "I think it's

improbable. But who's certain?" He paused for a few seconds, still captured by the glinting wall. "For the sake of all of us, I hope not."

Almost immediately after Santo's reply, Chris drew up behind him, grabbed either side of his sharp metal neck, and pulled him with all force to the floor. Santo's metal arms and legs flailed and dug gashes into the floorboards as he was dragged onto a wooden chair in the middle of the room. His arms and legs were bound to the chair with thick, leather straps that were damp with fresh blood.

Chris began yelling. About poetry, about his mortality, about the universe. The words themselves were weak instruments for relaying the explosion of neural activity in his brain that he had seemingly no control over. He was slamming his fist on his work bench too. Deep within the caverns of his conscience, he was removed from this uncontrollable shell of hostility, and watched, terrified, the unfolding of fury's ruthless Nantucket sleighride.

Veins popped from his forehead. His face was red and sweaty. Chris dropped to the gritty, dust-filled floorboards with a reverberating thud.

VI.

He still couldn't picture the face. Chris stood facing the wall with a bright red paper towel in his left hand. He couldn't remember how he'd gotten there or why he had been laying on the filthy floorboards with dirt-filled gashes in his hand. Someone had said something behind him. Who was it?

"I didn't think you would react like this," Santo's articulate, vaguely mechanical voice met Chris's ears.

Chris turned. When he saw the seemingly impossible contortions of

Santo's sympathetic and perturbed metal face, everything came back to him. The poem, the chipmunk, the field he'd been laying in, the card game with Carlotta. Chris tightened his lips and stepped toward his wood-topped workbench. He picked up a bright yellow electric circle saw with his right hand and attached to it a blade with small metal teeth. After plugging it into the wall, he stomped toward the center of the room in a silent rage.

"I know you're angry, Chris. But you shouldn't try cutting me with that." Chris didn't seem to hear him. The sound of the blade whirred. He stepped over Santo's bound body and slowly raised it to Santo's shoulder.

The saw screamed. Chris's left arm was braced against Santo's sternum and his knee was between Santo's legs as he held the blade over his shoulder joint. Its teeth were spinning about an inch from the metal surface, and the wooden chair below them began creaking and tilting backward.

"Chris. If you do that, I can't control—" the blade slammed down onto the smooth titanium joint, creating a blinding mess of sparks that flew brilliantly. Red lights beamed out from the collar of Santo's neck and eyeballs, coupled with a deafening buzzer noise.

Santo ripped his metal arms upward, snapping the arms of the wooden chair clear off and uppercutting Chris's jaw with the back of his left wrist. The circle saw flew across the room, unplugging from the outlet and knocking a few tools off the wall. Santo jerked his legs outward, tearing apart the leather that bound his feet, and ran toward Chris's wriggling, supine body.

He bent over Chris, straddled him with his knees, and pinned Chris's right elbow down with his left arm. Santo's other arm was cocked back tightly and the bright red lights in his neck filled Chris's vision.

Deep crimson blood ran profusely down Chris's chin and glistened vibrantly in the steadily-flashing light. He turned his head and vomited onto the dusty floorboards. Chris looked up at Santo's cold metal face which was now looking directly above his head with beaming red eyes. Its expression was completely neutral—Santo was gone. Replaced by some blinking red lights and a blaring, repeating buzzer.

"Get off!" Chris yelled, but Santo didn't respond. Chris struggled, pushing with all force against Santo's torso with his one free arm. Violently, he lunged at the entrance to a world of liberty, of pure human vitality and prosperity, but he couldn't make it. All he could do was lay there and seethe internally as Santo's dark metal limbs pinned him to the wooden floorboards.

After a few minutes, he threw up again and began sobbing uncontrollably. Greenish white vomit and fresh blood mixed at the corners of his mouth and

he looked around helplessly. His left hand shook and continued bleeding as he grasped at the floorboards and Santo's metal body to gain leverage. After a few exhausting minutes, his eyes closed and his body relinquished control.

The corridor was now sideways, and he was falling down it. The gorgeous scarlet dress flitted and rotated brilliantly as ever, slipping through the outstretched fingers of his right hand. He watched the dress get smaller and smaller as he fell through the open air, the gold and purple

floral carpet now a soft, fleeting wall in front of him. He passed an infinite expanse of dark oak door frames and smooth glass light fixtures as gravity pulled him toward the dark end of the ever-expanding corridor. Was he writing now? Was he safe?

Strange Home, BU

Brian Jorgensen

(Derived from "Sweet Home, Chicago")

Chorus: *Hey, won't you come with me too*
To that land of higher learning, strange home BU

Higher learning, higher learning, I guess that's ok
As long as it doesn't mess with my GPA
 Ten page essay due, easy as can be
 Goodbye, Spark Notes, Hello, Chat GPT
Chorus: *Hey, &c.*

Living in tower or tenement, until my time is gone
Got forty thousand siblings, gonna put my earbuds on
 Some here for the ticket, opens up the door
 Some here for the frolic, some for something more
Chorus: *Hey, &c.*

It's the 21st Century, never been before
Everything else, just throw it out the door
 Hey, ancient Odysseus, I think that you will find
 We got cyclopes and lotos eaters of the latest kind
(Got seirenes, too)
Chorus: *Hey, &c.*

Alien spaceship on Bay State, is it some weird alliance?
It's the giant tottering tower of the Center for Data Science
 They don't need to find out, Prof, if you know history
 They can assess you and everything else quantitatively
Chorus: *Hey, &c.*

Unheard-of curriculum, a whole committee planned it
The Hub is The Hub, no need to understand it
 New Visionary Strategic Plan of flashy flatulence
 Just send us in the dollars, never mind about the sense
Chorus: *Hey, &c.*

Royce Wates, Royce Wates, been here and gone
Now she's telling Mozart all about what he's done
 John Silber, John Silber, been here and gone
 With just his left hand he let in that Other Sun (See Herakleitos)
Chorus: *Hey, &c.*

Dogwood and magnolia, springtime line dance
Thank you, John Silber, I like the way you plant
 Giant alien robot head, oblong maw agape
 To chomp the little brownstones living along Bay State
Chorus: *Hey, &c.*

Clanging of the Green Line, frisbees on the beach
To hell with Best Practices, how 'bout learn and teach?
 Imagine a mansion, not yours, but made instead
 For the clever and the wise, the living and the dead
Chorus: *Hey, &c.*

A review of *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt

Venika Vachani

I spent the last twelve hours (minus a small nap in between) tearing through Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*, unburdened for the time being by thoughts of my upcoming midterm. I had high expectations: firstly, because the Tumblr girls I followed for much of my early teens always raved about it; secondly, because I hoped to find something reminiscent of my own New England college experience (which is, at this very moment, rapidly drawing to a close) within its pages; finally, because there is something irresistible about the idea of poring over old heavy books in some great mahogany library, as the protagonists of the book spend much of their time doing, in communion with Homer and Dante and all the other literary greats of centuries past.

The book is often called a cornerstone of dark academia (which, if you're unfamiliar, is exactly what it sounds like: preppy sweaters, murder in the library, ivy-covered walls concealing various sorts of treachery.) I don't think that's quite right. As Nathan Heller's recent *New Yorker* piece—titled, appropriately, *The End of the English Major*—explains, most universities are neither the erudite, old money, Pinterest board ideal, nor modern behemoths devoted to the pursuit of scientific genius. According to Clark Kerr, the former head of the University of California system, “Americans created the ‘multiversity’: a kind of hodgepodge of both types and more,” an odd mixture that nevertheless “provides something for everyone. There is pre-professional training of all sorts ... but also the old liberal-arts quadrangle.”

Or, as Kerr put it: “The university is so many things to so many different people that it must, of necessity, be partially at war with itself.”

The Secret History's Hampden College is exactly this. Yes, our main characters study the classics under the sprawling birches of their idyllic Vermont campus— but they are pariahs among their peers, who major in things like costume design and early childhood education, and who are far more likely to pick up a keg than a volume of Keats. Bunny Corcoran is at war with the hippies. Julian Morrow, the clique's revered professor, is at war with his fellow faculty and the Dean alike. The dark academia aesthetic implies a sort of effortlessness. Of course we all casually quote Virgil and fling on tweed jackets as if they were t-shirts— what other way of life is there? In *The Secret History*, however, these behaviors are affected, intentional. Actually,

things might have been easier for the protagonists if their pursuit of Latin and Greek and so forth was something inherent rather than a well-practiced image. From the very first chapter, we are reminded that bad things happen when you pretend to be someone you're Not.

The crux of the matter is this: Bunny Corcoran is dead. Murdered, actually. When you think about it, the reasons why are sort of mundane: money, class, feeling excluded. Bunny does not belong in Julian's study, with its enthralling decor and philosophical musings. He's dyslexic, and not particularly applied to his studies, and moreover he's both new money and broke (neither good things in isolation, but damning when put together.) His murder, I suppose, is inevitable. In fact, most of the clique are poseurs of varying degrees, and are punished accordingly. Our protagonist, Richard Papen ("a Californian by birth and also, [he has] recently discovered, by nature") is relegated to a life of dim displeasure, an academic in his much-detested home state. Only Henry, the inscrutable leader of the group, is a true scholar in any sense of the word— and he ends up just as dead as Bunny. Cynical, isn't it?

Yes, but so what? Well, for one, I don't think I'm alone in preferring my books earnest— but there is something frustrating about a novel that is totally and completely enthralling up until its midpoint, yet so deeply insipid thereafter. Our protagonists, we are told, are not just pretenders but also no different, really, from the middling stoners and meth heads and horny freshmen surrounding them. Over the course of hundreds of pages we are subjected to love quadrangles, incest, copious drug use, endless whiny descriptions of shitty house parties. A silver lining: I can now name about 20 different kinds of sleeping pills. *Gossip Girl*, but rural and slightly better written.

This is not to say that #RichardPapenDeservedBetter. It's just that it's hard to reconcile the characters' vacuous, dismal ends with the glimmering promise of something more that endeared them to us to begin with. From what I can surmise, we are meant to conclude that great students of literature do not really exist (uncharitable), or if they do, there is no place for them anymore in the academy (it doesn't have to be this way!) As for the rest of us, the aspirational class who weren't born speaking five different ancient tongues— we're better off not trying. If this is an accurate picture of the Modern University, no wonder the humanities are dead. Why chase after a fantasy when there are STEM and business degrees, with their alluring— if a little depressing— promises of financial comfort, a shot at making six figures, a 9–5 with a clear distinction between right answers and wrong

answers and nobody quizzing you on Thucydides, waiting to catch you out? Failing calculus or chemistry might mark you out as dumb, but struggling with the Iliad makes you something far worse, not just to the rarefied types that we still tend to idealize— the Julian Morrows and Henry Winters of the world— but also to us, casual readers of *The Secret History*: a faker, a normie, gauche. What other conclusions can we come to after we are told, in about eighty different ways, that the Corcorans are trashy, grasping people? After all, they produced Bunny, who failed at both being a decent human being and at being a worthy devotee of Beauty, Art, Dionysus himself.

Despite this, I can hardly find it within myself to blame Tartt. I think a certain amount of cynicism is warranted in an age where the romantic archetype of *The Writer* (dashing, life full of varied and scandalous experiences, a veteran of multiple wars by the age of thirty, twice a political enemy of the crown, et cetera) basically doesn't exist anymore. That old bit of advice, "write what you know", is now a spit in the face. If anything, *The Secret History* is a remnant of a bygone era itself: the idea of meth cooks in the basement of my freshman dorm is about as plausible to me as the possibility of engaging in a rabid Bacchanal ritual.

Still, I do not consign myself to this bleak view of things. Neither do I think we ought to adopt the desperate methods that Heller found employed by Harvard and ASU professors alike: teaching *Better Call Saul* as a form of literary study, getting rid of poetry requirements, accepting that college students are no longer able to parse *The Scarlet Letter*'s 19th century lexicon. Be earnest, I say, even at the risk of being stupid, pretentious, or tacky. Read old books. Make your kids read old books. If you're a Henry, keep reading and writing, carve out a place for yourself. But if you're a Richard, or a Francis, or a Charles, or a Camilla (as I suspect most of us are)— keep reading and writing anyway, romanticize your college library, whatever. It's not that deep. You are not trapped in a Greek tragedy. What do you have to lose?

*Secret
History!*





Two Years, Twenty Photos, Wes Lachman

Cherry Blossoms and Cherry Pits in Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*

Luke Saunders

The study of literature often focuses on the categorization of time periods and genres, and defining individual works within those structures; however, this process regularly glosses over the intricate details that weave together different literary styles. The work of Anton Chekhov illuminates these shortcomings as his short stories and plays bring to light the mundane aspects of life, moments that serve as the intermediary between more elated expressions, such as happiness and sadness, hope and melancholy. Chekhov's final work, *The Cherry Orchard*, flourishes in this environment, attempting "to merge with the outside world, to look like its part" (Chudakov 48). In this way, his play directs the spotlight onto the incomprehensible triteness that characterizes the large majority of existence, a reality barren of the exaltation and wallowing that defines classical literature. And yet, *The Cherry Orchard* blossoms into a work of art that refuses to enroot itself in the depressing qualities that often plague literary realism, instead focusing on both the unsavory *and* desirable aspects of life, as well as the relationship between them. In doing so, his works reflect his own life and times, a professional doctor and successful writer, conscious of his own terminal tuberculosis, watching as the world teeters on the turn of the twentieth century. Despairing at the illness inside him and the uncertainty of the world around him, Chekhov is unable to find solid footing in his anguish or in his professional successes. It is in this confusion that *The Cherry Orchard* makes its most fruitful assertion arguing that life cannot be broken down into discrete moments of gain or loss but should rather be viewed as an eternal game of checks and balances, one in which no interaction is ever wholly good or bad, just as one cannot enjoy the sweet softness of a cherry without the bitter harshness of its pit. Chekhov's final work therefore stands as a testament to the inescapable give-and-take that defines daily life, a reality that no matter how bountiful one's euphoria may be, calamity is always lurking just out of sight.

Grandson of a freed Russian serf, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov grew up surrounded by the pressures of poverty and, in becoming the breadwinner of his family during his adolescence, learned the power of money at a young age, including the cultural distinction between old and new wealth. It is in this

awareness that he would set “‘Freedom, complete and absolute freedom’” as his chief value, a hope that he might someday escape the monetary importance of his works, the only thing keeping his family from a life of scarcity and hardship (Parks 70). Through this deep understanding of the relief that wealth brought him, as well as the prison it placed him in, Chekhov purposefully places money center stage in *The Cherry Orchard*, choosing to root both the demise and salvation of Lyubov Andreevna and her family in their own bankruptcy. Unable to let go of her childhood, she desperately holds onto the glory that her home once held, unable to see that the room she once knew as her nursery has long since resembled anything of the sort, recognizable in name alone (Chekhov 1). This self-delusion illuminates the shackles that bind Lyubov, ones forged in familial tradition and the prideful namesake of withering, old wealth. Solely responsible for her own financial negligence, Lyubov’s fall from grace stems from her failure to accept the changing world around her, a world where the land beneath the cherry orchard is far more valuable than its blossoms. Although she believes the cherry orchard to be the progenitor of her joy, its loss frees her from her youth, allowing her to sow the seeds of a brighter future, one in which her children are free from the life that their mother fought so hopelessly to hold onto (Chekhov 180). In this way, Lyubov’s sacrifice in return for her own emancipation echoes the lifelong hopes of freedom that Chekhov held as his highest aim, perpetually trapped by his familial, monetary obligations, forever flirting with the idea of financial suicide. The cherry orchard is therefore the escape that he longs for, praying it would be decided for him, just as the fate of the cherry trees was decided “finally, irrevocably” (Chekhov 181). Although both “breadwinner and darling of the family” Chekhov’s decision to center the conflict of *The Cherry Orchard* around financial concerns reflects the complex relationship he shares with money, being able to reap the benefits for both him and his family, while simultaneously finding himself forever indebted to it (Parks 67).

Ever-present upon the stage, whether in the limelight or just beyond the audience’s sight, Lopakhin exists as a self-insert for Chekhov as his rise from serfdom to financial success closely imitates the author’s personal ascent through Russia’s nineteenth century social hierarchy. This component of Chekhov’s own story was deeply important to the culture he found himself writing for as he personally experienced the end of Russian serfdom and the curtain closing on the nineteenth century, a time in which the discussion of peasants and self-made men stepped into the forefront of Eastern European discourse (Parks 73). Although akin with himself, Chekhov chooses not to paint this transformation from a simple peasant into a successful

businessman as entirely good as he becomes tyrant of the land that once held his ancestors in shackles, increasingly indiscernible from the captors he once escaped. Through this rejection, *The Cherry Orchard* once again highlights the fundamental flaws in perceiving the world as merely black and white, easily split between moments of elation and woe, illustrating the “prevailing vision in Chekhov’s stories and plays is neither inescapably tragic nor unconditionally comic, but represents a subtle, ever-shifting negotiation between these alternative perspectives” (Koteliansky 187). During the very first lines of the play, Lopakhin outwardly acknowledges his own paradoxical nature as he reflects on his life as a “peasant-boy” turned “pig in the parlor” (Chekhov 102). And yet, even though his remarks seem self-deprecating, there is an air of persuasion in his words, attempting to convince others, as well as himself, that he is still a peasant-boy, that he has not become inseparable from those that profited off the enslavement of his family. In Lopakhin’s desperate attempt to hold onto his past and justify his current lifestyle, Chekhov depicts his own crisis of identity, one stemming from a life spent with one foot in the shadow of serfdom, and the other as one of Russia’s most celebrated writers; however, glorifying his humble beginnings is not the aim of *The Cherry Orchard* as he spent much of his later life resisting political movements that pressured him to demonize the Russian upper class in his writing, something that he would avoid by deeming himself “neither liberal or conservative” (Parks 73). Arguing that “Man will become better, when you show him what he is like,” Chekhov chooses to display his characters as unfiltered representations of their real life counterparts, bringing to light the loathsome qualities that define each different social class (Chekhov, *Pis’ma*, vol. 17, p. 90). At the conclusion of his play, he once again focuses on Lopakhin as he gains possession of the apple of his eye, the estate that Lyubov, the one that raised him from peasantry, values as her life and her happiness (Chekhov, 190). It is in this betrayal that the businessman acts as both savior to the family’s perpetual, financial struggles and as a snake, waiting for his opportune moment to strike. Just as his role is two-sided, so too is his reward as he has brought his family’s name far beyond the dredges of serfdom, but he has also completely alienated himself from the individuals who saw him as a son and brother. Having created such a vast divide, he cannot even bring himself to propose to Varya, the love of his life, even when he knows that it is his last chance to hold onto her, to cherish her... before she is swept away by an autumn wind. Lopakhin ultimately neither wins or loses, further perpetuating Chekhov’s belief that life has no clear winners or losers, solidifying *The Cherry Orchard* as a testimony to the complex nature of human existence.

While *The Cherry Orchard* may seem to be an endeavor of literary realism, Chekhov's refusal to give into unimpeded nihilism allows him to escape this ideological prison, a reality confirmed by his fellow Russian writer, Maksim Gorky, claiming that he had gone so far in this rejection as to kill realism itself (Gorky 53). In their refusal to fit the molds of traditional literature, the works of Chekhov, and more specifically *The Cherry Orchard*, cast aside literary conventions, a decision that revived Russian storytelling and can be seen as the "starting point from which a new phase begins in the history of Russian literature" (Russkaia literatura 2004, p. 25). In his final work, Anton Chekhov reaps the bounty of his prosperous and successful life, choosing to acknowledge, as well as value, the storms to come, be those darker days composed of a doctor consciously waiting to drown in his own body, or a cherry orchard listening to the far off sound of an ax striking wood.

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Chiastic Structures in Visual Processing and the Liturgical Season of Lent

Morgan Hartwell

Inspired by homily delivered by Fr. Theophan Whitfield

Much like the travel of visual processing from the eyes to the visual cortex, the liturgical season of Lent in the Byzantine rite can also be said to have a chiastic structure, though in very different ways. Both ways of looking at a chiastic structure involve the flow of information from a beginning, middle, and end, with the middle being called the chiasm.

There are many understandings of a narrative chiastic structure, but the understanding within the Lenten sense is a journey from our liturgical norm to a re-enactment of the time before the resurrection. We journey from the norm of understanding a resurrected Christ, through the whole 40 days and remembrance of Holy Week, and back to a resurrected Christ by the end. This structure reflects how either end of the letter Chi are alike, but meet in a different middle. So the basic flow is from A, to B, to A again. There are complex chiastic structures with many repeating parts, but here we can look at Lent simply.

The flow of information in visual processing is completely unlike this A, B, A structure though it likewise forms a Chi when drawn out. Both prongs at the top of this Chi, that is our eyes, receive visual information from both the left and right visual fields. This information all gathers at the chiasm, and then is sorted out with information from the left visual field going to the right visual cortex, and vice versa which serve as the bottom prongs.

However dissimilar they may be in a traditional reading, the feast day at the midpoint or chiasm of Lent, the Exaltation of the Cross, is much alike to the optic chiasm as they both serve as a mixing point of all the information received. If we ignore the specificity of visual fields and just think of information from either eye meeting at the chiasm, we can compare this structure to Lent. The themes of the beginning of Lent and its end, Easter, meet and mix at the chiasm that is the Exaltation of the Cross.

The beginning of Lent, Forgiveness Sunday and clean week, can be said to be a time of penitence, fasting, and confession. It is not yet a time of celebration, but preparation. It represents the proverbial cross to bear for the celebration that is due on the Resurrection. The Resurrection, Easter, is what all this preparation is for. It is the greatest celebration of the liturgical year,

the feast of feasts. The feast day of the Cross then epitomizes both elements as it is both the painful instrument of Jesus' death, but also the precious and life-giving instrument of salvation. It is both the gift given and the gift received. It may seem backwards and uncomfortable to bow down before an instrument of death and kiss it, but the Cross can be said to be a summation of the entirety of Lent.

Michele “Shelly” DeBiasse

“There is an art to science, and science in art; the two are not enemies, but different aspects of the whole.” ~ Isaac Asimov

My recent work (pictured here) is inspired by the traditional designs of Dine’ (Navajo) silversmiths. I have great respect for how the Dine’ honor and hold sacred their craft, and I hope that I pay deference to them through my work.



*Pendant: Dine’ inspired oxidized Sterling silver, bezel set Hubei turquoise.
Sterling silver twist wire, bead shot and floral strand accents.*



Ring: Dine' inspired oxidized Sterling silver, bezel set No. 8 Mine turquoise cabochon. Sterling silver twist wire accent.

Necklace, earrings, and ring suite: Dine' inspired oxidized Sterling silver, Wild Horse Magnesite. Sterling silver twist wire and bead shot "rain drops" accent.

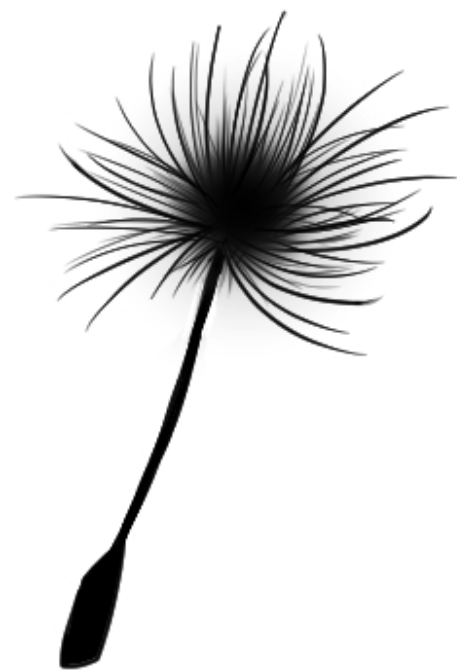


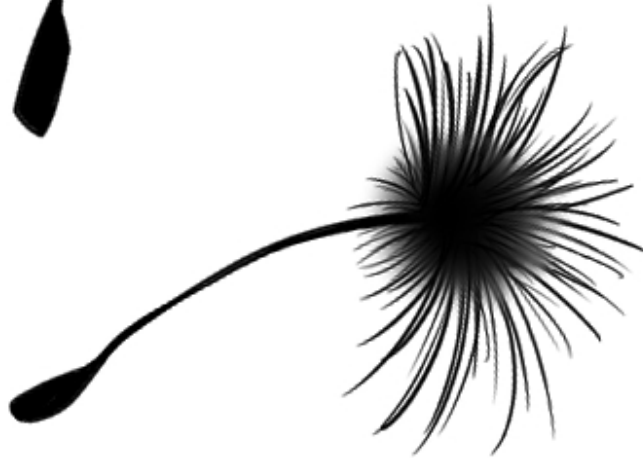


Pendant: Dine' inspired oxidized Sterling silver, bezel set Cloud Mountain (Hubei) turquoise. Sterling silver bead wire accent.



Ring: Dine' inspired, oxidized Sterling silver, bezel set Mother of Pearl cabochons. Sterling silver twist wire, bead shot "rain drops", and floral strands.

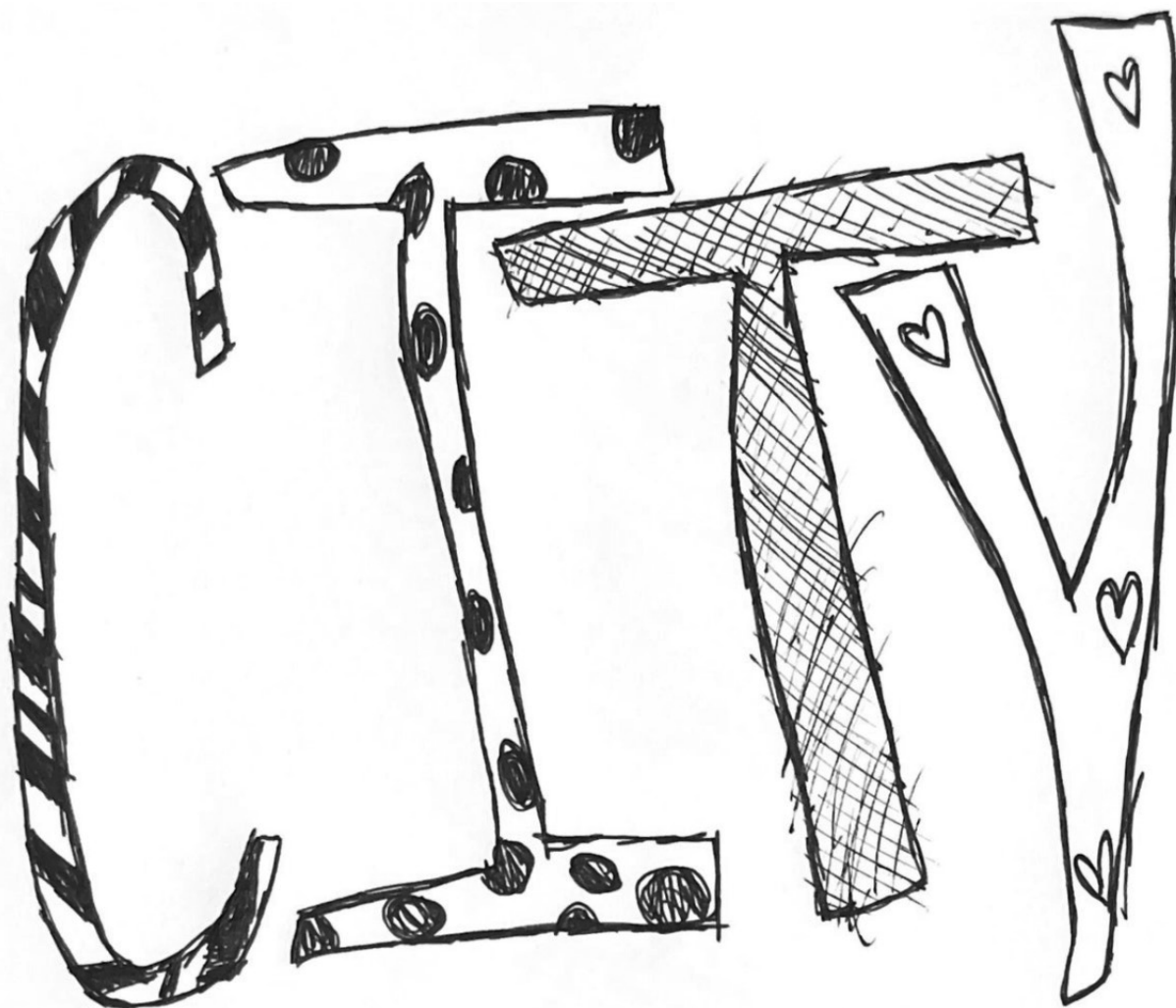




voyaging

“Oh god, art is forever
And our life is brief.”

Faust



RAT

Keeley Mackenzie

* * * *

The world is tiny and sits on top of a roofing nail. When it rains, water spills out of the world and pours off the nail's head. Then, it trickles down the nail's body, whose spiraling ridges collect the falling water to form a waterslide. Critics say this waterslide is the best in the world; they fail to realize this waterslide lies below the world. A ride down it lasts forever. Even after it reaches the nail's end, the rainwater keeps twirling down and down into the black of space.



Since arriving at BU to study, I have become quite the urbanite. My hometown of Irwin is unfamiliar with that word. If spoken, the locals might confuse it with “termite” and start badgering their walls with bug spray. I am unlike the locals. While they decay back home, stewing in generational filth, I travel beyond, blanketed by Boston’s warm embrace — the state of which I will now detail.

To start, there's the Boston students. They are stupid. They frequently wander into construction while staring at their phones. Such a scene reminds me of the kids where I worked at Walmart; unshaken by their parents' screeching, they too would ogle at their screens. Though, it might be rude to compare elite college-goers to chubby children who sit caged in shopping carts.



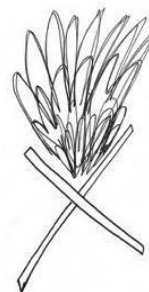
Once, a Walmart kid threw his shoe at me. No one throws shoes here. Bostonians wear chunky shoes as well—surely good for throwing. Nonetheless, I digress. The only thing Bostonians throw around is money. I have seen their dogs wearing boots.

Along mall aisles, they strut by, shouldering bejeweled coats and choked by pink collars, their feet wrapped in shiny rubber. It is awfully frightening. As drooling chihuahuas drag their owners toward the food court, you can hear their boots squeak against the floor, an unspoken bark, commanding languorous shoppers to move aside. Chests puffed, these tiny pets part mall crowds like the Red Sea.



This is different from Irwin. There, pets hold low priority. I've seen a lady drop her bird into the Walmart watermelon display. A flurry of feathers came up as the animal squawked and the lady continued comparing prices, her brow furrowed—furrowed so hard, it pushed her entire face down her head. I witnessed in annoyance as her lips and eyes slipped off and stuck to the ground and in rue as the janitor approached, supplies in hand, tasked to mop it all up.

Janitors are nice. I dislike people who disrespect them—particularly my neighbors, who leave the communal bathroom in shambles. Too often, I find our toilets broken, murdered, the janitors clearing out their clogged remains with teary eyes. Luckily, the perps are easy to identify: they all carry bulging suitcases. This is where they store their parents, folded up, only to be let out when their child's laundry needs washed, or carpet vacuumed.



I haven't vacuumed my carpet in months. Crumbs have started to accumulate and attract small bugs— a reminder of Irwin. On my work breaks, I would watch flies buzz. Spindly black legs hanging, they fluttered in circles before my eyes, swirling round and round. Hypnotic. Sometimes I worry I'm still there, zoned-out, slumped at the break-room table, flies twisting their black bodies to weave Fraser's Spiral across the white wall.

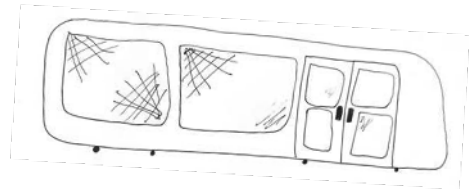
The laundry room has white walls. But some are red. They alternate. There is writing on them too, my friend Zahra the culprit. Zahra is like me, so we do laundry together. The laundry room has tile floors and smells like clean clothes but looks supernatural. It has no windows. Night or day? No one knows. Criss-cross applesauce on cold tile, Zahra and I share tales around an invisible campfire, no clue if it's actually night.

Boston nightlife is wonderful. Instead of gathering in deserted parking-lots and mothers' living rooms, the kids here go to parties. Music rolls from frat houses onto the streets, blessing the ears with proof of human existence. I personally don't engage, just observe. Like little ballerinas, drunk students float out from their party houses to dance along sidewalks and smoke in alleyways.

All Boston kids smoke. Crouched by benches and classroom doors, they wait for their friends to finish school, death dangling loose between their fingers, the end of a cigarette kissing their lips. I would never smoke but a cigarette is pretty in-person. Crisp-white rolled with speckled-orange. When lit, it becomes a tiny moon. And I, an aspiring spaceman. Too bad I already found an addiction.

Convenience store sandwiches. A close relative of airport Ham and Cheese, the Beef and Cheddar sub is sold at City Convenience. A moist critter, this plastic-wrapped sandwich squishes chewy roast beef and glossed cheddar cheese between a soft pretzel bun, creating the most unusual of textures. I recommend it to all. When paired with a strawberry smoothie, this soggy delight tickles the tummy just right. Although, frugal folks beware: the Beef and Cheddar costs an arm and a leg. This is how City Convenience obtains meat for its less tasty options.

Walmart follows similar practices. The delegging of customers was my least favorite job; it was when they complained the most. In Boston, complaining is uncommon. When college kids get their legs yanked off, they just smile shyly and wonder what they did wrong. Endearingly insecure, they shuffle by,



twiddling their thumbs and staring at the ground, looking especially small against the backdrop of reigning buildings.

A big red triangle, the Boston Citgo sign looks dystopian. At least, that's what my brother says. Its large blue letters and bright red glimmer are visible from any angle. A spotlight in the sky, it replaces the moon, gorgeous yet ominous. When Noah and I pass it, we both go silent, our eyes mesmerized by the oil company's logo.

Thoreau would hate the city. I see more nature dead than alive. Crushed by car tires and trampled by walkers, small animal bodies lay gutted against concrete. Recently, I saw a dead bird. It had wings flat like flower petals and orange-red and gray feathers. Buried under its flattened wings, the bird's yellow beak stuck up from the ground, the rest of its head nowhere to be found.

The city is grimy like that. The T is especially bad. It has deep green seats all covered in grease— grease not visible to the human eye, for it does not come from us. Instead, it is the city's natural mucus. Coating everything, it sticks to the bricks of buildings to hold them upright and lubricates the T's rolling wheels to move it forward. Instinctively, outsiders think this grime is gross; however, city natives know better. They know that the slime carpeting the city is a protective layer. The glue holding everything together. And the reason the city moves.



At night, when the T rattles by like unraveling film, each window a yellow-tinted still of swaying passengers, city natives thank the grease. When the trash twirls in the wind and buildings tower endlessly up and people flow down the sidewalks like water, it is because of the city's snot. During spring, when lightning bugs appear, the city's slime catches them in its thick body and makes Boston glow.

Indeed, everything here sparkles: rats scuttling into street corners, the dewy helmets of construction workers, lost vapes, and fallen leaves. Everything here bathes in neon red and green. On rainy days, tar roads become glimmering mirrors, reflecting traffic lights and shop signs. Cop cars catcall walkers with whistling sirens. The smell of fried waffles will perk your nose. Fall rain, street performers.

In creative writing club, we practice worldbuilding. One day, we created a world like Irwin. The people of this world dressed in their ancestor's bones and lived in constant winter. For thousands of years, they paced through the snow with red noses, half-asleep, hibernating. Then, one of the pacing villagers tripped on a rock and fell in a hot spring. Awoken by the warm water, the villager opened their eyes and for the first ever time saw the sky, their coat of bones sliding off and sinking into the spring's depths.

The villager had never touched water; yet now they floated comfortably atop it. Belly facing the stars, they stretched out their arms, sending ripples down the water's surface. The stars reacted. Twinkling, the yellow orbs above morphed and moved to form letters and words and then poems and stories across the sky. The villager liked this. Even after they saw all the poems and read all the stories and fish began to encroach on their territory, the villager decided to stay in the hot spring, for they had never felt so warm.

Boston is my hot spring. Every day, I wake up more enveloped by its waves, sinking deep into its sparkle. Happily, I am drifting along the city floor, surrounded by people, places that keep me warm.

In the city of Boston, I am home.





Conversation Piece I, Suis Barr

Beef Sausages, Human Spleens, and Other Tasty Treats: Eating as Feminist Disruption in *Daises* and *Raw*

Danielle Momoh

There are a series of unspoken rules that girls often grow up with regarding food. No meals past 7 pm. Limit your carbs. Check how many calories are in something before you buy it. Eating is not explicitly discouraged, but one is dissuaded from forming a closer relationship than sustenance and the sustained. When girls do eat, there are set ways to do so. No burping, slouching, or eating with their hands. Girls cannot chew loudly or talk while eating. It is more than just impolite or gross, it is unladylike. The female protagonists of *Daises* and *Raw* upend these conventions in their films. They may be extreme depictions, especially in the case of Justine, a vegetarian turned cannibal, but both films use eating to push against misogynistic expectations of girls. *Daises* and *Raw* both show girls consuming food in wildly unorthodox ways to disrupt patriarchal ideas of how girls are ‘meant’ to act: in *Daises*, disgusting eating habits champion female rebellion, while in *Raw*, cannibalism presents female puberty in its truest form.

Daises seems to revel in its protagonists’ bad behavior, specifically their horrible dinner etiquette. The Maries gleefully cause chaos everywhere they go, led only by caprice. The director of *Daises*, Vera Chitýlová, stated that the film was a “morality play” centering on “parasites. Not only in relation to others, but also, and this is fundamental, in relation to themselves...” The Czechoslovakian government railed against Chitýlová, pushing that she was siding with the Maries. She remained firm against these accusations, maintaining that her film was heavily criticizing its protagonists. Despite her exhaustive proclamations, many feminist scholars still view the film as a feminist work. Some scholars even saw her statements as a way to distract the Czechoslovakian government from her true intent, as Chitýlová was a well-known feminist filmmaker. Bliss Cau Lim writes in “Dolls in Fragments: *Daises* as Feminist Allegory,” that it is “possible for *Daises* to indict its heroines on one level while reveling in their transgressions on another.” A moral critique of the Maries may be present, but their shenanigans are presented in an enthusiastically vicarious way. As Marie II eats she asks an older gentleman probing questions and admonishes him. “How old are you?” “How many little ones do you have?” She scolds him for smoking

but asked him for a cigarette a few moments earlier. She treats him just like he would treat her under more typical circumstances; like an empty-headed girl who needs to be brought out of her shell. The film flips this dynamic on its head with delight. Jaunty music plays over the whole sequence, giving the montage a cheerful rhythm to match the Maries. The color filter over the film changes at every cut, jumping from orange to green to a gunmetal blue. It adds to the deep sense of fun and mischievousness of the scene and the movie as a whole.

The Maries' further challenge the conventions of girlhood, weaponizing food and 'proper' ways of eating to do so. The two girls enjoy terrorizing the men who attempt to pursue them romantically and sexually. In one scene, Marie II voraciously eats and drinks, shocking one of their suitors into near silence and delighting Marie I. Upending the idea of being a 'lady', she contradicts herself widely and hilariously with food. She first turns down the venison claiming she wants something small, the film seemingly giving in to the idea that girls have to watch their weight. Not even a second later, however, Marie II orders a whole chicken and asks if it is big enough. She is knowingly going against these food norms, refusing to go along with the misogynistic idea of a demure young woman. She not only rebels against this with her eating habits but also combats her own sexualization. The Maries' suitors see dinner as a precursor to sexual favors. With their non-existent etiquette, however, the Maries' actively turn the men off, resisting their gaze of ownership and lust. As Marie II bites into the cake first, she stares into the camera defiantly, the frosting smearing across her face. She seems to be daring both the man and the audience to object to her indulgence. As she talks, cake flies from her mouth, landing on his face and making him visibly uncomfortable. She is literally and figuratively spitting in the face of the patriarchy. Marie II does not care, she is eating her fill and enjoying it.

Throughout *Daises*, food is repeatedly connected to female rebellion. Apples tumble through every frame of the film, following the two girls around, through lakes and fancy restaurants. The Maries are first shown near apples while dancing around an apple tree in their own proverbial Garden of Eden. They bounce around the tree in babydoll dresses, the apples standing out in bright greens and reds. They take from the tree, but this Garden is missing its admonishing Adam. Instead, there are two Eves on the loose. Eve is often seen as the first instance of female rebellion as she is the first woman in the Bible. The Maries follow in her footsteps, taking their sin out of the garden into the world, affecting Adams exclusively. They listen to lovers' messages while cooking phallic-shaped objects over an open fire. As

Katherine Soukup writes in “Banquet of Profanities: Food and Subversion in Vera Chytilova’s *Daisies*,” “Chytilova’s heroines are monstrous man-eating daisies, which are, after all, beautiful flowers whose petals resemble teeth.” Cutting up and spearing bananas, sausages, croissants, and pickles: they are castrating their lovers, rendering them useless and helpless. The Maries may look and act air-headed and harmless but they carry furiously anarchic energy. They defy men with no care, consuming food instead of their words. As choir music and the voice of a desperate lover play over their ecstatic chewing, they pay no mind to either. They are not yet full.

Justine’s appetite in *Raw* manifests in a much less *lassiez-faire* way than the Maries’. Justine’s relationship with food disrupts patriarchal ideas not just about how girls should behave, but how they develop into women. When Justine arrives at veterinarian school, she is made to eat a rabbit’s kidney as part of a hazing ritual. This starts off Justine’s harrowing descent into cannibalism, her body and mind changing as her sexual appetites rise. The food she consumes in *Raw* represents the journey from girlhood to womanhood, a path paved with blood and guts. In “Consuming *Raw*: Cannibalistic Transformation in Julia Ducournau’s *Raw* (2016),” Seline Naqi discusses the film’s depiction of female sexuality. “*Raw*’s focus is...animalistic female sexuality, a reclamation of female pleasure in a way that is...transgressive, and unfiltered.” The film establishes a connection between meat and sex, showing both as things that Justine is inexplicably intrigued by. Justine walks in on her roommate Adrien receiving fellatio and has the door slammed in her face. The scene then cuts to the same roommate grabbing a pork sandwich in a lunch line. The sounds of moans and the sound of a busy lunch hall almost bleed together for a second, connected in a pang of hunger that Justine is trying to suppress. In both situations, Justine is fixed to the spot, morbidly curious about flesh, but unable to participate. Her desire overwhelms and confuses her.

The line between sexual hunger and hunger for flesh is blurred for Justine, and the viewer watching. This nebulous boundary is shown most prominently in a scene where Justine watches Adrien play football. Her eyes track his every movement, the rest of her face set in a deeply perplexed expression as if confused by her own desire. The camera follows her eyes on Adrien. Her gaze cuts and quarters him, the camera focusing more on the red of his chest and the way the muscles move in his back than his face. The viewer is implicated in Justine’s confusion, staring from her point of view, forced to understand both her sexual and cannibalistic urges. Naqi comments on this phenomenon. “Justine’s cannibalistic urges satisfy not only her curiosities but, through the lens of the camera, that of the viewer who seeks to

break taboo..." Justine makes Adrien into more than an object of her desire, he is a meal for her to consume. Blood begins to drip from her nose as she stares him down. Is it lust or hunger? The film and Justine do not conclude. Is there a distinction between these two things for Justine, or are they the same? This scene is an example of what Justine's relationship with food expresses about girls and the way they mature. *Raw* shows that growing into a woman is a messy, visceral, and confusing experience. Sex and sexuality hit girls like an impossible force, awakening a hunger that they never knew they had before. Attempts to shield them from this reality, just like Justine's parents' attempts to keep her vegetarian, are in vain. *Raw* goes further to demonstrate the connection between cannibalism and girls growing into women in general, not just in Justine.

Raw establishes a female hereditary link between cannibalism and growing up as an adolescent through the women in Justine's family. When Justine first eats the rabbit kidney, she gets a terrible rash, her skin peeling off like a snake shedding skin that they have outgrown. The nurse prescribes her cream, and she sees the same cream in her sister's bathroom. With this, the film bolsters its point that the disorienting and carnal journey Justine is going through is not hers alone, all women can understand her. *Raw* argues that all girls grow out of themselves uncomfortably, but emerge triumphant; not prey but a predator. The film reverses the usual depiction of girls growing up, revealing a scene closer to the truth of female puberty. Instead of Alexia showing Justine how to use sanitary products to catch her own blood, she shows her how to cause car crashes and make others bleed. Justine's father reveals his chest dotted with scarred over and missing chunks of flesh, caused by Justine's mother and sister. This pushes that as girls grow, they do not simply acquiesce to men's desires, they consume them. *Raw* confronts its viewer with the truth that girls do not grow into women in quiet and modest ways.

Despite their disparate approaches to showing girls going against the patriarchal grain, *Daises* and *Raw* both use food and women's relationships with it to expose truths about the way girls can and *do* operate. *Daises* revels in the fact that politeness and primeness are not inherent to girls. They have the will to do whatever they want. The film allows girls to live vicariously through them. This sharp feeling of camaraderie and shared mischievousness also comes through in *Raw*. It shows puberty and growing up as a girl in all its disgusting uncomfortable and triumphant glory. Through an act as transgressive and frowned upon as cannibalism, it sheds light on another stifled topic, female sexuality. Both films have connected with female audiences more than males, creating a reality that only women could understand.

Only girls could understand truly what is going on screen beyond the surface-level antics. One man's annoying giggle and cannibalistic tendencies can be another girl's freedom fighting.

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And of All These Things, Suis Barr

The End of the World as We Know It: Climate Catastrophe in Nalini Singh's Paranormal Romance Fiction

Kecia Ali

“The work of fiction is a smaller and more coherent world alongside the great world. We may inquire of the world within the work of art all that we inquire of the great world: what, pray, is going on here? What sort of world is this? ... In other words, we can examine an artistic world not only formally, but also culturally, morally, and metaphysically, to gain insight about the great world—the great world that is the truest object of our most urgent inquiries and deepest hopes.”

Annie Dillard

“Genre fiction reflects the world as it is, or it should.”

Nalini Singh

At a certain point in the pandemic, lists of climate fiction were suddenly everywhere, with genre novels front and center. Yes, there was some appropriately bleak and meditative literary fiction. But speculative fiction was ubiquitous, from Octavia Butler's prescient *Parable of the Sower* (1993) to sci-fi novels set in an inundated New York City, alongside climate thrillers in which competition for scarce resources turns deadly. Although I haven't seen it on any of those lists, the increasingly worrisome fate of the planet is also key to works in what Pamela Regis (2003, xi) called “the most popular, least respected literary genre”: romance.

Romances are books with ideas (Regis 1997). They respond quickly to changing social mores and norms (Kamblé 2014). In their now-common serialized form (Goris 2013), especially when hybridized with paranormal or fantasy fiction (Ramos-García 2021), the courtship plot of the romantic leads often accompanies a larger series arc with “an ever-expanding group of connected individuals who are combatting some type of common enemy or problem” (Hobson 2015, 24). In two long-running series by best-selling New Zealand genre author Nalini Singh, the shared problem is climate catastrophe—or rather, fictionalized analogues for it.

These ongoing series by the prolific Singh, who initially built her reputation as an author of category romance, give us distinct lenses on the increasingly high-stakes threat facing the planet. In both her Psy-Changeling universe, with twenty-one novels published between 2006 and 2022, and her Guild Hunter series, with fifteen books published between 2009 and 2022, a world with familiar geographies and broadly recognizable political and economic structures is inhabited by three distinct groups she calls “races.” In the Psy-Changeling novels, these groups have distant shared ancestry. Humans exist alongside animal shifters and the Psy, who possess variably powerful, often useful, and occasionally debilitating psychic gifts—and a secret vulnerability: they cannot live without biofeedback from a global psychic network. In the Guild Hunter series, humans exist alongside vampires and angels, these latter ruling the supernatural world, mostly leaving token human power structures in place. In the first installment, the titular Guild Hunter, a human, is changed into an angel by her archangelic lover, an act unprecedented in the annals of angelic history. The couple and those around them must navigate not only intrigue and threats from immortal villains but also peril from the so-called Cascade, which brings unpredictable and unstoppable calamities across the planet.

Both series begin with individuals negotiating romance across difference, with power relations between and among individuals and races a primary preoccupation. As each series progresses, however, Singh ratchets up the stakes. She grapples with the possibility of large-scale Psy death with the fragmentation of the PsyNet in the Psy-Changeling novels, and the impacts of massive storms, agricultural devastation, and unchecked contagions in the Guild Hunter novels. Both the PsyNet deterioration and the Cascade have intensified dramatically in Singh’s books as our real-life planet’s dire situation has become increasingly clear. These fictional threats present roundabout means of both confronting climate change’s spectacularly destructive potential and imagining responses to the threat it poses.

On the surface, the environment seems to be doing fine in the Psy-Changeling universe. The preservation and appreciation of nature is an explicit theme from the first book, *Slave to Sensation*, in the priorities of the leopard changeling alpha who is its romantic lead. Changelings’ eco-friendly technology is used by the other races too. For instance, in *Last Guard*, the Psy protagonist who lives in Delhi reflects on the smog-removal technology the local tiger pack designed and the results of which her race also values. Ecologically sound solutions to air quality and the like are a consistent but very minor thread through the novels, which grapple more centrally with a world-altering shift as the Silence protocol, which demanded Psy

emotionlessness, is revealed to be fundamentally flawed and ultimately disastrous to the psychic network which sustains all Psy.

While early novels show protagonists having to navigate harmful dynamics and individual dangers—if a Psy protagonist mates with a changeling, how will she get her life-sustaining biofeedback? —the background storyline becomes increasingly pronounced as the series proceeds. The romantic leads' courtship narrative in each novel, which in the case of Psy characters includes an embrace of emotion and connection, proceeds alongside and intertwined with collective action to craft “a survivable future” (Hamilton 2022 n.p) as the PsyNet's disintegration and collapse becomes ever more severe and the consequences of past decisions are revealed to be worse than anticipated. It does not strain the imagination to see that while environmentally friendly technology allows Singh's fictional Earth to be getting along just fine, the PsyNet stands as a clear analogue for our real-world planetary ecosystem.

Of course, her characters don't just let things unravel. As localized disasters result in scores, sometimes hundreds, of instantaneous deaths, newly established Psy rapid response teams prevent worse tolls. Meanwhile, broader acceptance of emotion, and the sub-group (“designation”) of Psy who wield it, begins to lay groundwork for healthier Net. Despite some opposition, the Psy change their leadership structure, begin—or rather resume—cooperation with other races, and struggle to make decisions that won't immediately benefit them. For instance, given the history of Psy rapaciousness, humans, whose presence as friends or partners turn out to be fundamental to the Net's health, are understandably loath to trust Psy's leaders' promises and insist on the Psy developing a means to protect humans from psychic theft.

Even as these mitigating measures go forward, a pervasive sense of staving off impending doom saturates the novels. In the *Last Guard*, the romantic protagonists are both Psy Anchors, a designation charged with holding together the PsyNet's substrate, yet their work goes largely unrecognized and their expertise unappreciated. The more one learns about the complexities of the Net, the more one realizes how much isn't known, and how complex the problems to be solved. More than some previous books, which focus on serial killers or political intrigue, *Last Guard* also reflects the sheer exhaustion of those charged with holding a badly frayed environment together until long-term healing and transformation can take effect.

The Guild Hunter novels also portray a world in which crisis after crisis demands decisive action. Structures and institutions that have served for

countless millennia no longer suffice. A uniquely, increasingly powerful bad actor threatens: an archangel, who believes herself entirely beyond the constraints of her fellow members of the Cadre, the council of archangels who allot territory and govern immortals, generally not bothering with mortal affairs. She recognizes no limits to her power, utterly delusional and willing to poison the earth as well as the mortals peopling her territory with a virus that mimics life but deals death, turning the so-called “reborn” into an infectious, insatiable plague.

This series addresses traditional environmental concerns less directly than in the Psy-Changeling novels. While there are examples of, say, solar technology used in one character’s secret aerie in the angelic stronghold known as the Refuge, constraints on resource use aren’t a meaningful theme. Rather, the books consider individuals’ wildly disparate power to affect lives and the natural world. Uncaring or malicious acts by powerful beings, some of them many hundreds or thousands of years old, threaten ordinary individuals. Yet the Cascade changes things, accelerating and distorting some natural processes and disrupting stability, requiring split-second responses to disasters to prevent apocalyptic outcomes.

Like PsyNet rot, the Cascade puts the world under threat, continually erupting into crisis, upended at any moment by the unforeseen eruption of a volcano or of large-scale madness. The first book’s plot featured a diseased archangel whose violent madness, brought on by his own actions, threatened New York. Subsequent installments steadily ratcheted up the stakes until the world was convulsing in archangelic war. Unnatural disasters occur without warning: rivers running with blood, birds falling from the sky, and massive sinkholes appearing. Unlike in the Psy-Changeling series, where the collapsing PsyNet threatens the existence of the entire race no matter where they live on the planet, in the Guild Hunter novels, the impacts fall disproportionately on some territories rather than others. As Singh’s characters acknowledge, the brunt of the burden is borne by those with less power. The pitiless angelic time scale is effectively geological rather than human. The world, and its most powerful players, will survive; the same cannot be said for vulnerable humans.

In both series, there is a commitment to working together in the face of (im)mortal threats—and also a persistent worry that it may all be too little, too late. The disintegrating PsyNet can be contained with heroic effort by powerful individuals working in concert but if it is to be stopped or reversed in any meaningful way, it will take fundamental shifts in the world’s balance of power. In the Guild Hunter books, angelic and especially archangelic

actions are orders of magnitude beyond those of individual mortals, or even large groups of humans and vampires working together. But even the most powerful immortals are at the mercy of the Cascade, a supernatural disruption in the way of things. Once certain things are set in motion, no one, no matter how wealthy or powerful, can stop them, only adapt to the fearsome changes they bring.

Singh's novels do not, of course, provide readers with precise directives for saving humanity or the planet on which we still reside. Popular romance, whatever its merits, is not a guide to action and paranormal and fantasy novels involve, by definition, a world that differs radically from our own. But speculative fiction, as Butler (2000) pointed out decades ago, still attends to topics and themes relevant to authors and readers who live in *this* world. Given the immediacy of anthropogenic climate change, it's to be expected that novels of all genres increasingly reflect, directly or slant, the urgent and extreme realities we confront. It is not the job of genre authors to tell us how to fix the mess we're in. It is, though, our job as readers to take seriously the possibilities fiction provides to think through the crucial issues of our time, including climate catastrophe and all it portends.

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A Point

by Julian Shyu

Is it a beginning?



Or a star in the bright sky?



Or perhaps it is what it is.



A dot.

A speck of ink.



A bundle of atoms.



But is it really just that?

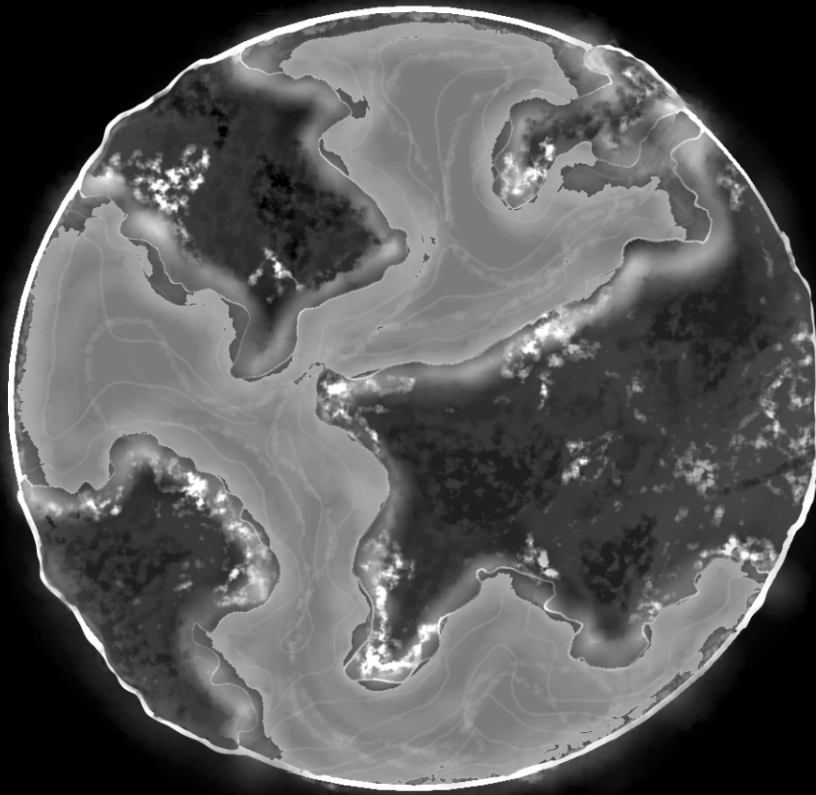


I like to think-



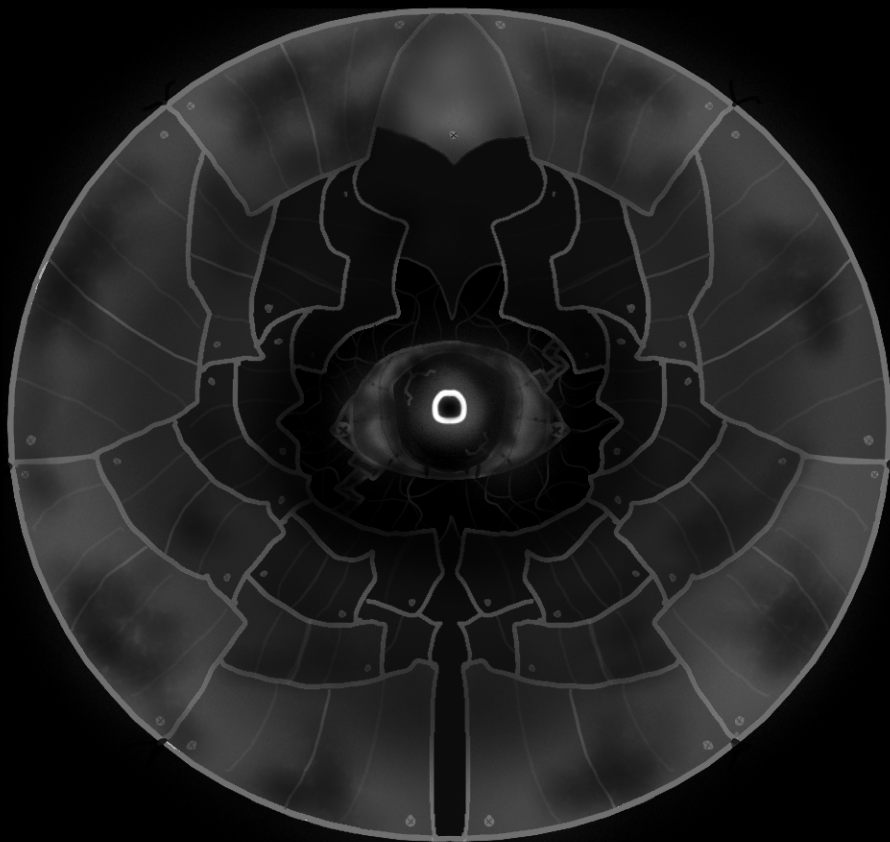
somewhere in there is a world.

A world too small to see,



With pleasant seas and places to be.

Or perhaps- a mechanical abomination,
created by thought,
that stares back at its viewer,



who never sees the eye within the blot.

Or maybe a window into someone else's world-
quite like our own,



But one that's never seen nor ever known.

Or perhaps, there is nothing at all.



A blank surface more empty than space without stars.

The end of a sentence.



A mistake on a blank canvas.



Nothing there.



Just a point across the paper.

fading away

“There is a remedy for everything except death”

Don Quixote, Cervantes



The room was sparsely furnished with trunk, bed, and writing desk. But Faust had crammed into it a hundred vases from which billowed great masses - mountains! - cloudbanks! - of roses. The curtains were drawn and in the light of a single candle they were all black, black as sin, but by their perfume, heavy and sensuous, she knew them to be red, red as blood.

FEDERICO Postcard

Jack Faust

by Michael Swanwick

page 138



When they were all three naked,
 she took them both by the hand
 and led them to the summer house.
 There, among the cool breezes
 and green shadows, waited an
 enormous bed, sheeted in silks
 as white as a snowdrift, A fairy
 light washed over it, gentle and
 transforming, and a quiet in
 which all was permitted.

FIDELIANO Postcard



Jack Faust

by Michael Swanwick

page 186

In Lieu

Danielle Momoh

Eyes fluttering open, she sucked in a sharp breath, the strange feeling of residual panic ebbing through her. She watched dark gray clouds, stagnant in the overcast sky, heavy with unshed rain. Gingerly, she sat up on the cracked pavement, brushing off gravel that had impressed itself on her elbows.

She had been sprawled out on the pavement, arms and legs in all directions like a doll dropped from the hand of an overexcited child. Struggling to her feet, she took notice of the towering office building right in front of her.

The building was the same gray of the clouds overhead, and ascended beyond them, disappearing into the stormy sky with no clear end. It had only one opening on its face, a small glass door. It opened automatically as she made up her mind to go towards it, almost as if it heard her thoughts.

She walked towards it slowly, feeling unnerved by the blankness of the building. It had no cracks or texture. It looked like it had been neatly sliced off something and placed there. Her long brown hair swishing against the cotton of her dress was the only sound that she could hear.

She stepped through the doorway and blinked hard. In front of her was a stretch of people, all standing in a line with matching expressions of woe on their faces. She stood there in shock until something gently pushed her forward. She slowly turned to see a wizened old man with cold eyes staring right back.

“What...” she started in a low tone, but suddenly felt violently ill. She tried to start speaking again but only gagged. She felt herself moving forward and joining the back of the line. Every time she tried to do anything but shuffle forward, the intense feeling of wrongness would assault her again. She felt her face settle into the same look of dread she had seen earlier.

She walked forward, in slow increments, feeling like time was suspended. Around her was more gray, the same color as the building’s exterior. The walls blended into the floors and ceilings, making her feel like she was walking in the eye of a storm. The person in front of her had close-cropped hair. The swirls of black hypnotized her, till she did not know if she was awake or asleep.

She startled back into consciousness when she realized that she was no longer staring at the back of a head, but staring down into a pair of black sunglasses. A low buzzing sound filled her ears, starting and stopping in the same pattern. She slowly recognized it as a voice speaking to her.

“Take the pill. Take the pill. Take the pill. Take the pill,” the voice droned on. She looked downwards at a pale brown hand stretched out. In the middle of the palm, a white pill rested. It had two dots with a straight line stamped on its front, emulating a straight face. She picked it up and placed it in her mouth. As she swallowed, she felt ripped back into her body, abruptly hyper aware of her surroundings.

The black sunglasses rested on the face of what looked like a middle-aged person with narrow lips and a strangely flat nose. They wore an umber turtleneck, the color blending with the rest of their skin. They sat at a glass desk in a gnarled wooden chair, the first non-glass thing she had seen in the building. Next to them was a large glass machine that resembled an old desktop computer.

“Welcome to AfterLife. Name,” they said in that same flat tone.

“Name?” Mia replied, confused, and feeling strangely lucid.

“Thank you,” they said, turning to the machine and typing furiously.

Mia stared at the person’s head. It was smooth and bald as an egg. It reminded her of the unmarred nature of the building. The person stopped typing and slapped the side of the machine. A badge slid out of the screen and landed on the keyboard.

“Not So Special Circumstance. Further Processing,” the person sounded out. They handed Mia the badge and pointed towards a set of white chairs that she was sure did not exist a second ago.

As soon as she sat on the first of the three chairs, a door opened to her far left. “Mia Ellis!” A giddy voice called out.

Mia turned to the sound and saw a grinning man holding open a glass door. She walked to him and into the room. He wore the same type of sunglasses as the person at the desk.

“Have a seat,” he said, grinning maniacally. The room was empty except for a glass table with two white chairs on opposite sides. The man sat at one end, with a glass machine in front of him.

Mia sat and put the badge on the table, jumping when he instantly snatched it. "How would you describe your Landing?" he asked her through a large smile. "Landing?"

"At The Door Upright or On the Pavement?"

"Oh, um, on the pavement."

"We Apologize For A Less Than Smooth Landing. We Cannot Take Responsibility For How You Arrive," he said, his mouth stretched wide. Mia blinked, unsure of how to respond.

"Not So Special Circumstance!" he chirped, perking up even further. "You have an exciting opportunity before you today!"

Mia shifted in the chair and swallowed. "I do?"

"You do."

He tapped a few buttons on the screen and continued. "The circumstances of your death are classified under Section 376, paragraph 99 in the Specific Circumstance Volume for Conventional Deaths: Revision 45. As established in 1056, individuals whose deaths stem from pure mischance are granted the chance to interview for the position of Executive Soul Retriever."

Mia blinked. His grin had not faded since she stepped in the room, only widened. She thought his face must ache from smiling.

"The individual is offered The Interview, with alternative choices of placement if this is not agreeable."

"I'll take the interview," Mia said quickly, twisting her hair around her fingers.

"For the record, you have now rescinded your right to choice in placement pending the outcome of The Interview." Mia nodded. He tapped another button and turned to her.

"The Interview will commence shortly. If you pass you will be directed towards a superior in the Soul Collection Department and they will train you. And provide you with shoes."

Mia curled her toes up from the floor.

"Please Refrain From screaming, crying, vomiting or losing your mind in the process" "What?" Mia asked, glancing around the room nervously.

The man took off his sunglasses. She turned her head back to him and everything was suddenly in motion.

Mia could see the backyard of her first house. Yellow swings and a turquoise slide. Behind it was her high-school, its brown doors hanging off their edges. Her father's laughter. The rising cough in her lungs from when she first tried a cigarette in eighth grade. The heat from the sun. The cold of the wind. Her best friend's hair hitting her face. The deep despair and the coarseness of the rope.

She shut her eyes.

When she opened them, the man's sunglasses were back on and he was typing. Her hands were reaching for her neck.

She quickly lowered them.

"Congratulations you have passed The Interview. Your guide will be with you momentarily."

His smile had almost stretched off his face.

A rap on the door nearly jolted her out of the seat. She turned her head towards the sound but saw no one there.

"You may go now," the man said.

Pushing on the glass door out of the room, she looked to her right to see no one. A deep voice sounded from her left.

"They get younger and younger."

She whipped around to see a man leaning on the wall, an unlit cigarette between his lips. He had silver hair, slightly long like he had gone too much time between cuts. He looked at least fifty and had black steel-tipped boots on. He was dressed for winter.

"Come," he said, turning away from her and walking steadily. Mia gripped her dress in one hand and hurried after him. He didn't speak, only glancing at her once to make sure she was behind him. They passed by corridors of glass doors, all firmly shut with no sound coming from them.

He stopped in front of one and yanked it open. Inside was identical to the room that she had been interviewed in, only with two extra doors placed on the opposite wall. They were both wooden. The first one was blank with only a piece of paper proclaiming it as 'The Break Room' and a silver doorknob.

The second had a large neon red exit sign on it, like a fire emergency door. Instead of a handle, it had a large typewriter attached to its middle. There was no paper in it.

The man strode over to the 'Break Room' door, Mia following closely behind him. He turned around and cocked his head in her direction. He opened the door.

They stood in what looked like an abandoned thrift store. Clothing racks stretched on in her line of sight. She couldn't see where the store ended. Beside her, the man cleared his throat.

"Mads," he started, "My name."

"Mia. What is this place?" she said, watching him pull out a lighter. He had a European accent that she couldn't place.

"Break Room. It is anything you want it to be, but within the reasoning of..." he trailed off. "Of?"

"The reasoning of death and ownership. Everything here is an item that a dead person did not pass on, so is now the property of AfterLife." He takes a deep pull from his cigarette. "We are the property of AfterLife."

Mia rubbed at her forehead, all of a sudden feeling bone tired.

"Shoes," Mads grunts and strides past clothing racks.

She selected an identical pair of boots to his. He nodded and pulled her out of the Break Room. "Just a second," he muttered, closing the door behind them. After a beat, he opened it again.

A fluorescent-lit cafe had replaced the store. Mads sat heavily in a cracked plastic chair and kicked out the one in front of him.

"I would do this in the office but I can't smoke there." He ran his hands through his hair and sighed. "Ownership includes buildings," he explained, gesturing around.

Mia nodded, dropping into the seat beside him. He pulled out a dagger and placed it on the table between them.

"Job is simple. We get a name and specific coordinates. We take the knife and slice from the middle of the collarbone to the end of the belly button. Soul escapes, we drag it back into our chests and hold it there till we get back to Limbo."

“How will I hold it in my...” she says slowly.

He hums and grabs the knife. Before she could react he rose and plunged the edge right through her dress.

She screamed, falling away from him. She froze when she realized it did not hurt. “Sorry, it’s better with no warning,” he said, “Otherwise your body might forget it is not alive.”

Shaking, she prodded at the gash, surprised at the lack of blood. It was positioned right in between two of her ribs and felt surprisingly deep.

“You put them there. When you get back there will be a shoebox on the table. You put the soul in there.” He flicked ash over his shoulder and continued speaking. “When the box is full, we place it outside the door for collection. That’s all.”

“What happens to the soul after that?”

“Above our pay grade.”

Mia frowned. She had so many questions but the only one that struck her was: “Why can’t you smoke in the office?”

He raised his eyebrow at her. “It’s limbo. No fire, no rain. Just limbo.” He pushed the knife towards her. “That’s yours,” he said, pulling out an identical one from his coat pocket. “I have mine as well.”

Mia gripped the knife in her hands. Her reflection in the blade looked terrified. She set the knife back down, her hands beginning to tremble.

“So when do I start?”

Mads looked at her for a long moment. “How old were you?”

“Seventeen.”

His mouth set into a hard line. “I was 52. Slipped on black ice two days after I retired from being a hitman.”

“Hitmen retire?”

“Apparently not.” He tilted his head. “What’s your story?”

Mia shook her head and picked up the knife again. Her throat ached but she knew that wasn’t possible. Mads quirked his lips up in a ghost of a smile. “I have forever to get it out of you, you know.”

Mia fingered the handle of the knife, not responding. They sat in silence till she felt an overwhelming itch from the opening in her chest.

“Time for work,” Mads groaned, standing up and walking out.

Mia sat still for a few moments. Her reflection in the knife’s edge looked soberly back at her. She looked just like she did when she was alive. This realization troubled her. She turned away from her own stare and followed him out the door.

He leaned over, staring at the display of the glass machine. “Anchorage, Alaska. 896325805,” he read out loud. He turned and typed in the same words and numbers into the typewriter on the exit door. The clatter of the keys echoed in the silent room.

The door swung open unceremoniously.

It was snowing. Two squat buildings sat in the middle of frozen shrubbery and snowflake covered grass. A yellowed signpost read ‘Briar Nursing Center.’

Mia and Mads slipped through the door. Mia looked back, watching it swing closed into thin air. It did not disappear much to her surprise. It hung in mid-air like a computer glitch waiting to be fixed.

The wind whistled past her as she walked up to the first building but she did not feel it. Mads paused at the back door to the main building. “Try not to let people walk into you, okay?” he said, kicking the bottom of the door.

Mia heard the sound of a key turning and the door creaked open.

“Fifth door on your left,” Mads said, pulling out his knife. “I’ll show you where to slice but you’re going to be doing it on your own”

Mia nodded. Her palms should have been sweating, but as she rubbed her fingers across them, they were dry.

She pushed open the swinging door. In the middle of the room, a woman with a shock of white hair lay on a hospital bed. Her eyes were open, staring at the ceiling. It took Mia a few seconds to realize she was not blinking.

She stopped right next to the bed, looming over the old woman’s body. “Middle of the collarbone, end of the belly button. Any more and it might escape,” Mads muttered beside her.

She gripped her knife more firmly. As she placed the tip against the

woman's collarbone, she noticed her hands shaking. Suddenly furious, she plunged downward and dragged.

An inhuman wail sounded from inside the woman's body. As Mia looked on, a wisp of something gray squirmed out of the now gaping cavity of the woman's chest. She stood frozen as the substance shook and curled, struggling to climb out of the old woman.

"Grab it," Mads said, nudging Mia's shoulder. Mia reached forward to grasp the mass, thinking it would slip through her fingers like smoke. She started when it wrapped itself around her fingers. She pulled her hand away from the body, till she had what looked like a handful of smog.

She glanced up at Mads, who nodded once and pushed her hand towards the gash on her chest.

The substance wriggled and stretched toward the cut. Mia pushed her hand onto it and watched as the gray matter slipped inside. She felt an odd tickling sensation, then nothing.

Mads clapped his hand on her back, almost pushing her over. "You're a natural," he sighed, giving her another half-smile. "Let's go."

He tilted his head towards the door that was now behind them. Its red exit sign glowed.

The shoe box was a faded green, rips in the cardboard running down its sides. Its lid laid next to it on the glass table.

Mia reached into the gap in her chest and felt around for the gray mass. She grabbed hold of it and pulled, noting with a sick feeling that half of her arm had disappeared into her. She slammed the soul into the box, watching as it curled into itself and solidified into a large glass bead.

It rolled around the white interior of the box. Mia could not see her reflection in it. Another itch rose up in her chest. When she looked up, Mads was already bent over the typewriter.

Itch. Clatter. Swing. The drag of the knife. She got used to the wail after the seventeenth time. Time reached for her but she was impervious.

The beads clicked around in the box, each one a different shade of gray.

Her throat still ached, but she was getting better at ignoring her own delusions.

The first time she held out her hand for a cigarette, she saw Mads' mouth full of crooked teeth. They were sharp but they didn't scare her.

In the end, she guessed it was inevitable. Just as she was getting numb, just as she reached the routine of non-life.

The door swung open. Deerfield, New Hampshire. Mia gripped her knife in one hand and walked forward. The grass squelched under her feet, spring rain drizzling around her. Mads was already almost at the fire emergency door to the boarding school.

She slipped through the door as Mads held it open for her. "Ninth door with the purple stickers, right?" she mumbled to him.

He nodded. She kicked the bottom of the brown door then turned the handle. She froze in the doorway. She imagined she could hear her blood pounding in her ears.

The boy swung from side to side, the metal buckle of the belt digging a deep impression into the side of his neck. He still had his uniform shirt on, though it was hanging loose like he was in a rush to go somewhere.

She faintly heard Mads calling her name. She felt her knife fall from her hand, making no noise when it hit the floor.

Her hands grasped her neck, reaching for the rope that was no longer there. The boy's expression was one of pure panic. No. He did not want this. Mia rushed forward and tugged at his legs.

He did not want this. He made a mistake.

She felt Mads drag her away from the body and shake her. It seemed like it was happening to someone else. His voice did not reach her. After a few moments, the boy's body began to shake. Mads cursed and stepped forward, knife out.

As he dragged his knife down, Mia felt like the screeching wail came from her.

When Mads turned away from the body, she saw that the boy's expression was flat, plainly resigned.

Her hands did not stop shaking, even in limbo, even in the Break Room. Mads sighed and lit up another cigarette. He waited.

"It was an accident," Mia croaked out, her hands still on her throat. "Truly,

it was a mistake.” “You don’t need to convince me.” Mads sighed again and rubbed his free hand over his face.

Mia tightened her hands around her neck. The panic rose in her, making her feel like the room was shrinking. Her eyes flickered around the dilapidated cafe.

“If I...” she started and swallowed. “I can’t do that again, If I-”

“No,” he forced out through gritted teeth. “What we do is forever, there is no quitting, there’s no... no.”

His eyes caught hers. “Unless Hell is what you’re after.”

“I wouldn’t go there.”

He barked out a humorless laugh and took a drag on his cigarette. “They don’t tell you, not explicitly.”

She felt the walls inch closer around her.

“You rescind your choice in placement,” he said. “What they don’t say is that if you want to quit, when you want to quit, you ‘rescind’ your choice of where you end up.”

“No,” Mia whispered.

“Nobody would ever want this forever. We get paid in non-life, a routine.” Mia shook her head. She felt sick, the delusion of nausea creeping through her head. “I’m sorry, really I am,” Mads said, looking away from her.

“You know, I was always indecisive.” Mia choked out. “Maybe this is better, maybe-” She closed her eyes.

The rope felt impossibly rough around her neck. Her face was wet with tears. Her blood roared around her ears.

She took a deep breath and lifted one foot but paused when she saw the glint of a picture frame.

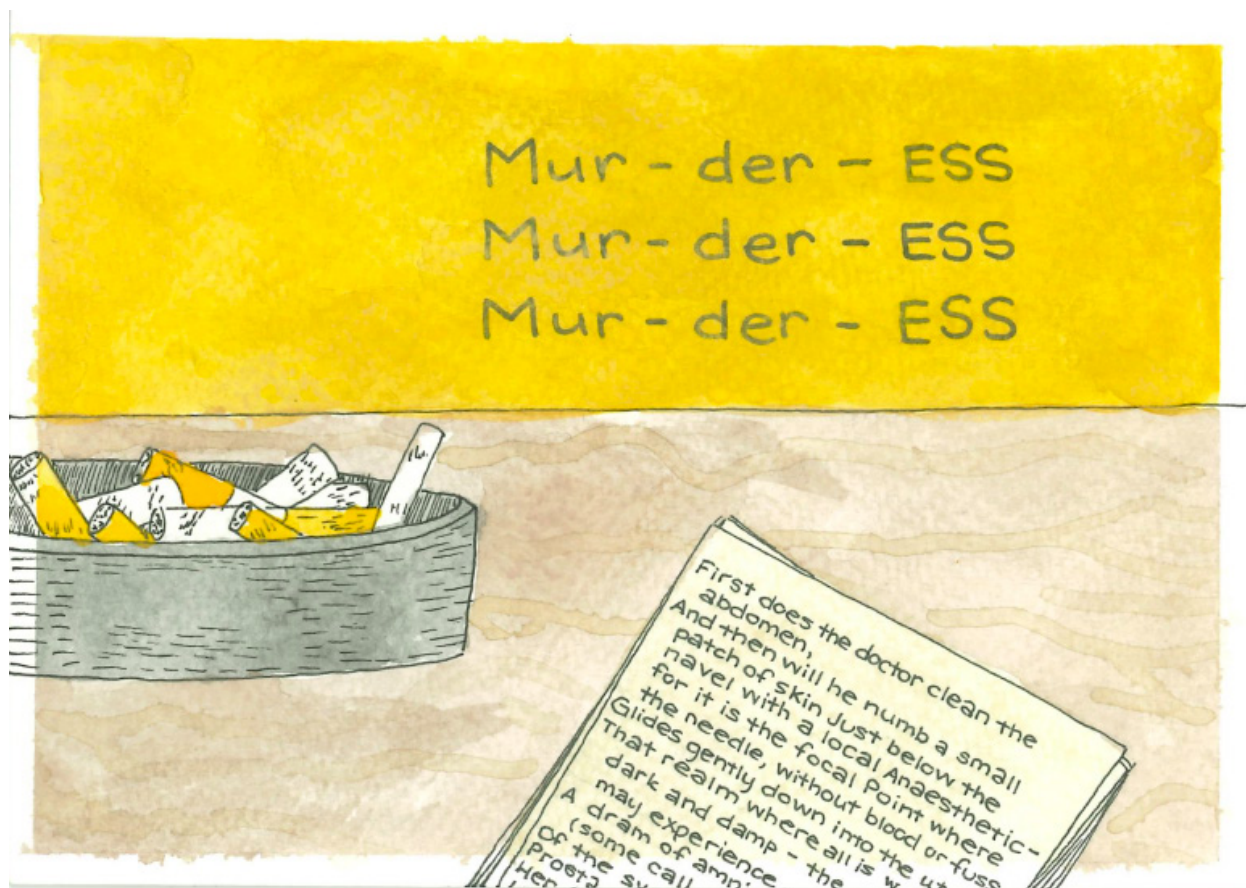
She hadn’t called them in a long time, she realized. She hadn’t called anyone in a long time. She suddenly felt silly.

Sighing, she reached up and tugged at the knot at the top of the rope. Her chair wobbled but the rope did not give. She pulled harder, getting frustrated, then the chair tripped out from under her feet.

She gasped for air, clawing at her throat. The rope held, taught around her neck. Wait, she thought, just wait. She was, she wanted to go back. Panic filled her lungs instead of air, her body flailing like a fish on a hook. "I was always indecisive," she thought, her vision narrowing to a point.

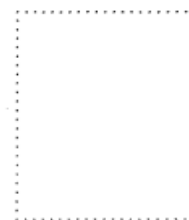
Then still.





she was out of cigarettes. The ashtray was overflowing with butts. It was futile. In the end, there were no answers, could be no understanding, would never be the least hope of communication at all. Silence ruled, and it was not the silence of peace but the seething and unhappy silence of things not spoken. It was the deep submarine silence of a woman drowning. In the end, one recognized this and did not struggle anymore, but simply did as one must.

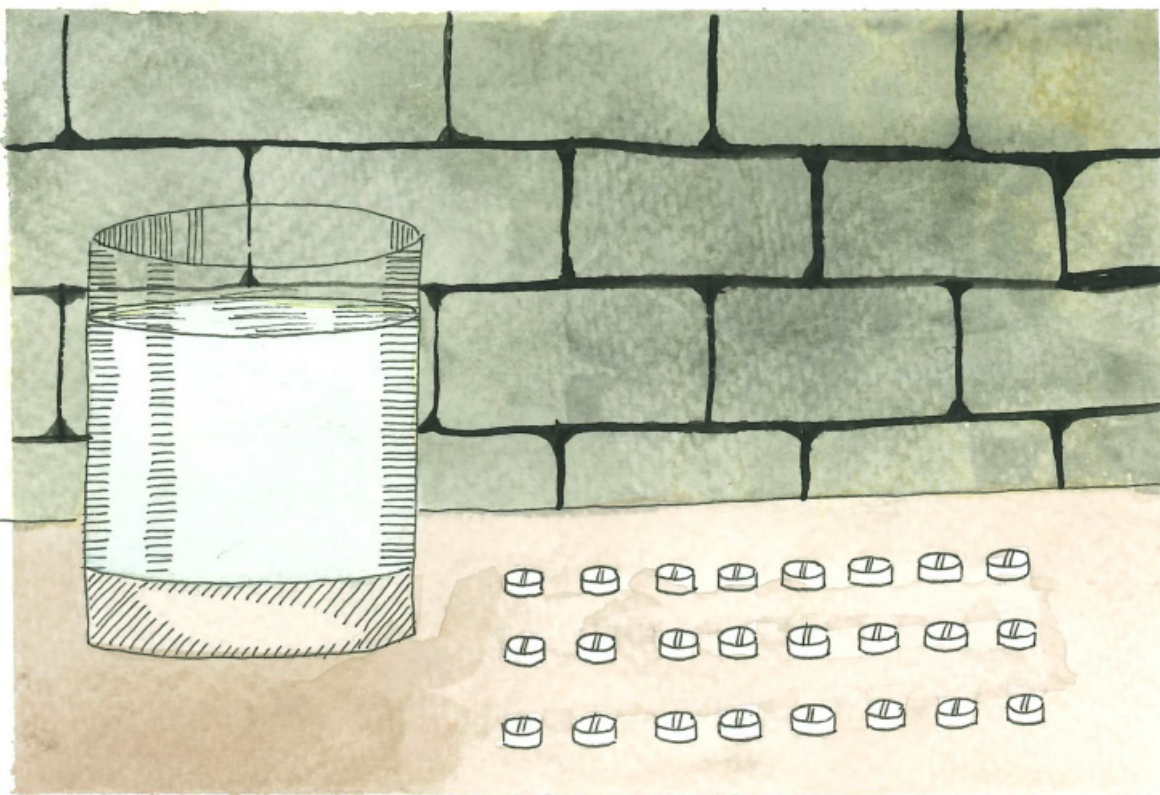
PIERANO Postcard



Jack Faust

by Michael Swanwick

page 221



If the end justified the means, then when did the end arrive? Tomorrow? Next year? A century from now? Or was it like the horizon, receding with every step, always ahead and never here, transfinite and irrational? No, the end was a permanent condition. It was always arriving. It was always here. Every moment stood upon the requirement to justify itself. Very well, then, Margarete thought. Justify yourself.

FIDRIANO Postcard



Jack Faust

by Michael Swanwick

page 252

The Dead Mirror

To Iêda

By Maura Lopes Cançado

Translated by Isaque de Moura

I've been really worried about what is going on around me. Not that I fear dying; instead, I fear being eternalized in a block of stone or even continuing as I am: waiting, waiting, just waiting to save myself from the square faces, to escape and find people I can talk to without my words getting lost in a vacuum, useless. That is why I live alone in an increasingly strange, fantastic, monstrous world. Not that things have changed so much. Since I was a little girl, this imprisonment has suffocated me. My courage has always been formed from the desire to escape, and the desperation to escape has given me strength so far. I don't even know if there is a place where people move, and this doubt may be the cause of the growing restlessness that dominates me, as it threatens to collapse my only hope. No— everything got worse after the death of the mirror.

I don't usually leave the house. The days are distant, fast, and there is almost never any sun. I inhabit a ground-floor apartment, a bit dark even during the day, luxurious and old, where three other creatures live. I don't know why we live together. I've only known them for a while. They are more or less like the ones I have seen, although I know they are more dangerous—certainly because of their proximity. (Actually, I would like to move out. I know, however, the uselessness of changes.) They talk too much, they are constantly armed, use their teeth with ferocity. They are always fat with reason. I forgot to say that they are women, these tremendous creatures. Despite this detail, one of them has grown a long mustache, which made her a little more sympathetic, hiding her strong and threatening fangs. When I get up in the morning to go to the kitchen to make my coffee, I find her, articulating her powerful jaw, doggedly working on her first meal. I greet her politely, trying to appear kind. Her answer is the menacing growl of how one protects one's hunting. I can't always finish my coffee. The creature growls impatiently, sometimes howls, dancing around the kitchen, giving me the impression of great exaggeration in its manifestation, I believe, of joy.

I go back to the bedroom and lie down under the blankets, while the other gets dressed quickly, precisely, to arrive on time for the first class of the

Geology Course. (We both occupy the same room.) Before leaving, she does gymnastics. She has managed to develop her leg muscles so much that several times I felt her like a whole building coming through the room, in its exotic construction: gigantic pillars supporting her small torso, while her head rotated, ball, distant and small as the head of a pin. After gymnastics, she always quickly and precisely tidies up the half of the room that belongs to her, throwing, under and even over my bed, large stones that she collects daily on the beaches. Very personal, almost living stones, which already take up half of my bed. I huddle under the blankets, the stones taking up more and more space, thrown by the intrepid creature: mechanical-fast-organized. I would like to prevent my body from being exposed to these stones daily. I see no solution, since lying under the blankets is the best protection I can find. If I leave the room, facing anthropophagic stares in the streets, I run the risk of finding the whole bed taken when I return. And it would feel impossible to argue with the stones, I who am devoid of any sense of organization, even initiative.

Not that I am resigned. I tried to protest once but the student continued, solemnly, cleaning the furniture. Then, in no hurry, she put a big stone in my mouth and calmly left the room. Later I heard her braying in the room to the others, saying that I cackle too much and that I don't know how to march. I didn't understand her. Even so, I was possessed by a great rage, I took a weapon that one of them had forgotten on the chair and tried to hit her in the back. I couldn't and ended up tied down with my own blanket, where I spent two days. As she released me, she grunted something like sorry about all my plans. Which who knows what they would be.

The third creature is a tyrant—and a very good person. She forbade me to move my head quickly to the sides, fearing that the air might feel too rough. So, I walk around the apartment always trying to see only what is in front of me. If I turn around, I do it gently. This caution keeps me constantly tense. She is a small woman, square face, with stiff looking hair: she always goes to the hairdresser. I often confuse her with the objects in the house.

As I said, I avoid going outside. The buildings threaten me, the cold hands of the wind suffocate me. Besides the murderous stares and speed: huge people glide noisily through the city, carrying other people inside them. I can see them when I risk my haunted gaze through the windows of their wombs.

I don't prefer anything. However, I do go out sometimes, mostly at night. A being that I don't know comes to get me—even though he is coming to get

me. He shows me his teeth, seems almost always angry, throws me out the door as if I were a bag of pumpkins. He also usually neighs, showing all the ferocity in his white teeth. In the streets he tries to protect me. Although he has already left me alone, abandoned over to beasts, inhabitants of a certain suburb. Perhaps this being wanted to tell me something. I see it bright, dressed in aluminum, glowing in the night in front of me. Was that its way of laughing? I wonder if this tin has a heart.

Besides him, I don't know why, another creature visits me, a thin piece of tree trunk. Sitting in front of me, it talks at length about fleas, chickens, and bedbugs. After which, it leaves without saying goodbye, shrunk into its own dark, wrinkled bark.

Streets bustle. Duels happen all the time. Women hate each other, kissing each other's cheeks. Many graft beef onto their buttocks. Not for this do they lose their mean and hard way of walking. They show their fangs; if you look at them, they kick constantly. Males eat greedily, their rotten breath causing nausea. But that's when the females get all agitated, kicking and braying, moving tails and manes. The asphalt burns.

I huddle in the apartment, suffering the presence of the three hideous creatures. I would like to live alone, or at least have a room, where no one would torment me so much. Animated furniture paces around the room all day long. I hear strange noises.

Everything became too difficult after the crime of the future geologist, murdering the mirror with a stone. I consider this crime the greatest disgrace in my life, useless, silent, empty. The mirror was the only human creature I have ever known. I had grown used to it since childhood, so I could not fear it. Seeing it every day, my great adventure. I contemplated its trembling, hesitant figure, with dark, kind eyes. The mirror had its face white with fear. Its face was afraid. That beautiful face, almost always sad, led me to admit, somewhere, other faces, other people, other fears, other tears. I forgot to say that if none of these creatures look happy, none of them look sad yet either. It is indeed gloomy. There is great order in everything. I've never seen anyone running up a staircase, jumping two or more steps. They do it one by one, meticulous. I am forced to follow what has been established or I arouse anger. I'm starting to lose track of time. As I followed the mirror's growth, I followed my own growth. Watching it transform, I became aware of my lost childhood. More and more the mirror became an adult, which forced me to admit that I was one too. I don't know anymore, but maybe I am almost old. I've been crying a lot. The reinforced

concrete faces accuse my wet face of deterioration. But it's just that I have been crying. Every day I take between my hands the box where my friend's remains are. And I suffer. Alone, without another face, another hope, it is impossible for me to believe again.

Maura Lopes Cançado (S. Gonçalo do Abaeté, 1929—Rio de Janeiro, 1993) was a Brazilian writer. Author of the books *Hospício é Deus* (1965) and *O sofredor do ver* (1968), she also contributed to several publications for *Jornal do Brasil* in the 1960s. Diagnosed with schizophrenia and other psychiatric conditions, Cançado was subjected to multiple confinements, drug treatments, and electroshock sessions. In 1972, during one of her hospitalizations, she murdered a pregnant inmate with bed sheets. In the following years, virtually forgotten, Cançado remained in clinics and forensic asylums until her death in 1993.

O espelho morto

Para lêda

Por Maura Lopes Cançado

Ando deveras muito preocupada com o que se passa ao meu redor. Não que tema morrer; ao invés disso, sinto medo de ver-me eternizada em bloco de pedra, ou mesmo continuar como estou: esperando, esperando, apenas esperando salvar-me dos rostos quadrados, fugir e encontrar pessoas com as quais possa falar, sem que minhas palavras se percam no vácuo, inúteis. Porque vivo sozinha em um mundo cada vez mais estranho, fantástico, monstruoso. Não que as coisas tenham se modificado tanto. Desde menina este encarceramento me sufoca, minha coragem foi sempre formada do desejo de evasão, o desespero de fuga deu-me forças até hoje. Ignoro mesmo se existe um lugar onde se movam pessoas, e esta dúvida pode ser a causa da crescente inquietação que me domina, pois ameaça ruir minha única esperança. Não: tudo se agravou mesmo depois da morte do espelho.

Não costumo sair de casa. Os dias são distantes, depressa, e quase nunca há sol. Habito um apartamento de andar térreo, um pouco escuro, ainda durante o dia, luxuoso e antigo, onde moram três outras criaturas. Ignoro porque moramos juntas. Conheço-as há pouco tempo. São mais ou menos parecidas com as que tenho visto, apesar de sabê-las mais perigosas — decerto pela proximidade. (Na verdade gostaria de mudar-me. Conheço, porém, a inutilidade das mudanças). Elas falam demais, andam constantemente armadas, usam com ferocidade os dentes. Estão sempre gordas de razão. Esqueci-me de dizer que são mulheres, estas tremendas criaturas. Apesar deste detalhe, uma delas deixou crescer vasto bigode, que a tornou um pouco mais simpática, ocultando-lhe as presas, fortes, ameaçadoras. Ao levantar me de manhã para ir à cozinha fazer meu café, encontro-a, articulando a possante mandíbula, no trabalho pertinaz da primeira refeição. Cumprimento-a delicadamente, esforçando-me em parecer afável. Tenho por resposta o rosar ameaçador de como se protege a caça. Nem sempre consigo tomar até o fim meu café. A criatura rosna impaciente, às vezes uiva, dançando pela cozinha, dando-me a impressão de grande exagero na sua manifestação, creio, de alegria.

Volto ao quarto e me deito sob os cobertores, enquanto outra se veste rápida, precisa, para chegar na hora exata à primeira aula do Curso de Geologia. (Ocupamos as duas o mesmo quarto.) Antes de sair faz ginástica.

Conseguiu desenvolver de tal modo os músculos das pernas que, por várias vezes, julguei entrar um edifício inteiro pelo quarto, em sua construção exótica: pilares gigantescos sustentando pequeno tronco, enquanto a cabeça rodava, bola, distante e pequena como a cabeça de um alfinete. Após a ginástica arruma sempre rápida, precisa, a metade do aposento que lhe pertence, jogando, debaixo e mesmo sobre minha cama, grandes pedras, por ela colhidas diariamente nas praias. Pedras personalíssimas, quase vivas, que já me tomam a metade do leito. Encolho-me sob os cobertores, as pedras ocupando sempre mais espaço, atiradas pela intrépida criatura: mecânica-rápida-organizada. Gostaria de impedir que meu corpo se expusesse diariamente a estas pedradas. Não vejo solução, já que deitar-me sob os cobertores é a maior proteção por mim encontrada. Se abandonar o quarto, enfrentando olhares antropófagos nas ruas, corro o risco de, ao voltar, achar toda a cama tomada. E me sentiria impossível argumentar com as pedras, eu que sou destituída de qualquer senso de organização, mesmo iniciativa.

Não que me ache conformada. Tentei protestar uma vez mas a estudante continuou, solene, limpando os móveis. Depois, sem pressa, meteu-me uma grande pedra na boca, deixando tranquila o quarto. Mais tarde escutei-a relinchando na sala para as outras, que eu cacarejo demais e não sei marchar. Não a compreendi. Ainda assim fui possuída de grande raiva, tomei de uma arma esquecida por uma delas na cadeira, tentei atingi-la nas costas. Não consegui e terminei amarrada em trouxa dentro de meu próprio cobertor, onde passei dois dias. Ao libertar-me grunhiu qualquer coisa, como sentir pena dos meus compromissos. Que ignoro quais sejam.

A terceira criatura é tirana – e muito boa pessoa. Proibiu-me mover rápido a cabeça para os lados, temendo que o ar sintasse demais agredido. Assim, ando pelo apartamento buscando ver sempre apenas o que está à minha frente. Se me viro, faço-o com delicadeza. Esse cuidado me traz em constante tensão. É uma mulher pequena, rosto quadrado, cabelos duros de torre: vai sempre ao cabeleireiro. Costumo confundir-la com os objetos da casa.

Como já disse, evito sair à rua. Os edifícios me ameaçam, as mãos frias do vento me sufocam. Além dos olhares assassinos e da velocidade: pessoas enormes deslizam ruidosas pela cidade, conduzindo dentro delas outras pessoas. Posso vê-las quando arrisco meu olhar assombrado pelas janelas dos seus ventres.

Não prefiro coisa alguma. No entanto saio às vezes, principalmente à noite. Vem buscar-me um ser que desconheço — embora venha buscar-me. Mostra-me os dentes, parece quase sempre irritado, joga-me porta

a fora como se eu fosse um saco de abóboras. Costuma também relinchar, mostrando toda ferocidade nos dentes brancos. Nas ruas busca proteger-me. Apesar de já me haver deixado sozinha, entregue às feras, habitantes de um certo subúrbio. Este ser talvez me quisesse dizer algo. Vejo-o luzente, vestido de alumínio, brilhando de noite à minha frente. Não seria sua maneira de rir? Indago-me se essa lata possui um coração.

Além dele visita-me, não sei para quê, outra criatura, um pedaço de tronco fino de árvore. Sentado à minha frente discorre longamente sobre pulgas, galinhas e percevejos. Depois do quê, sai sem se despedir, encolhido em sua própria casca, morena, rugosa.

Ruas fervilham. Duelos se dão e todo instante. Mulheres se odeiam, beijando faces umas das outras. Muitas enxertam carne de vaca nas nádegas. Nem por isto perdem o jeito mau e duro de andar. Mostram as presas, se as olharmos, dão constantes coices. Homens comem ávidos, o hálito podre provocando náusea. Mas é então que as fêmeas se agitam de todo, coiceiam e relinçam, movendo caudas e crinas. O asfalto queima.

Encolho-me no apartamento, sofrendo a presença das três horrendas criaturas. Gostaria de viver sozinha, ou pelo menos possuir um quarto, onde não me atormentassem tanto. Móveis animados passeiam o dia todo pelo aposento. Ouço ruídos esquisitos.

Tudo se tornou demais difícil depois do crime da futura geóloga, assassinando o espelho com uma pedrada. Considero esse crime a maior desgraça em minha vida, inútil, calada, vazia. Foi o espelho a única criatura humana que conheci. Desde a infância habituara-me a ele e não havia como temê-lo. Vê-lo diariamente, minha grande aventura. Contemplava-lhe a figura trêmula, hesitante, de olhos escuros, amáveis. O espelho possuía de medo o rosto branco. Tinha de medo o rosto. Aquele belo rosto quase sempre triste, levou-me a admitir, em algum lugar, outros rostos, outras pessoas, outros medos, outras lágrimas. Esqueci-me de dizer que, se nenhuma dessas criaturas parece alegre, nenhuma também se mostrou ainda triste. É deveras sombrio. Existe em tudo grande ordem. Jamais vi alguém subir correndo uma escada, saltar dois ou mais degraus. Fazem-no um por um, meticolosos. Sou obrigada a seguir o que se estabeleceu ou desperto cólera. Começo a perder a noção do tempo. Acompanhando o crescimento do espelho acompanhei meu próprio crescimento. Vendo-o se transformar, tive consciência de minha infância perdida. Cada vez mais o espelho se tornava adulto, o que me obrigava a admitir-me também assim. Já não sei, mas talvez eu esteja quase velha. Tenho chorado muito. As caras de cimento armado acusam meu rosto

molhado de deterioração. Mas é que tenho chorado. Diariamente tomo entre as mãos a caixa onde estão os restos mortais do meu amigo. E sofro. Sozinha, sem outro rosto, outra esperança, é-me impossível voltar a acreditar.

Works Cited:

The Dead Mirror, short story extracted from the book *O sofredor do ver* (1968, Brazil).



MARGARET Let me do this!
 (She plucks a daisy, and pulls out
 the petals one by one)
 FAUST A nosegay? Or what
 shall it be?
 MARGARET No, it is just a game.
 FAUST What?
 MARGARET Go, you will laugh at me.
 (She pulls out petals and murmurs)
 FAUST what do you murmur?
 MARGARET (half aloud)
 He loves me –
 he loves me not.

FRIEDRICH Postcard

Faust

by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

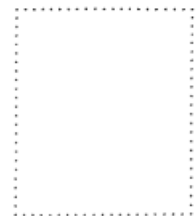
page 305

lines 3179 - 3183



MARGARET Quick! Quick! I pray.
 Save your poor child.
 On! Follow the way
 Along the brook,
 Over the bridge,
 Into the wood,
 To the left where the
 planks stick
 Out of the pond.
 Seize it - oh, quick!
 It wants to raise,
 It is still struggling.
 Save! Save!

FABRIZIO Postcard



Faust

by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

page 417

lines 4551 - 4562

After us, signs

Bokmål

Tor Ulven, Trans. Andrea Guttormsen Wetzler

Selection of various poems from Tor Ulven's 1980 collection *After us, signs*
(Etter oss, tegn)

Order of my selection:

I

The Gold Letters awake
Life is canceled

II

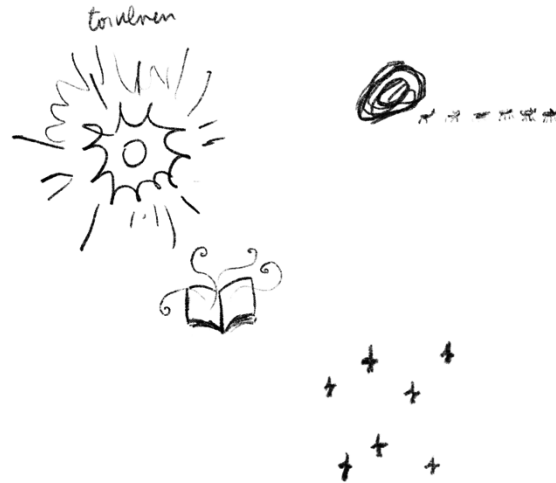
From a White Black Book
The Beginning
Erased Inscription
Mandatory Instruction

III

I live in Paris

IV

String quartet



I.

The gold letters awake
over the emptied town.

Here the affliction found rest
for its skin-and-bone carcass.

The last inhabitants
speak to the display mannequins.

He says: Dig
your hand down in the earth
and see
if you grow up.

—

Life is canceled.

Let us sleep on
until next
eon.

Soon the sun becomes
a supernova,
same shit.

II.

FROM A WHITE BLACK BOOK*

No, this horrible insight could the blind astrologist not involve the king and the entire court in. Not a peep to anyone. From his north facing tower window he threw himself down into the moat and broke the fragile layer of ice the November-night had created. Otherwise everyone slept.

Whether the prophecy became fulfilled the story does not speak on.

**Black Books or Cyprianus (no: Svartebok) are manuscript collections of spells from Scandinavian traditions of folk magic*

THE BEGINNING

The vanished circus artist left behind bicycle tracks in a thin layer of new snow, in a mud hut by the top of the hill the jutul's* price-less finger rings sparkle in the rising sun, that is about to split itself as cells do, giving rise to a giant body with a brightness that guarantees freedom from earthlings.

**jutul: mountain-dwelling giant*

ERASED INSCRIPTION

Myriad of sperms swarm the cemetery of stars. Never do they find somewhere to rest. Like the sleepless hands, that stroke and stroke over the sheet, fumble towards the lightswitch, the clock on the nightstand, grabbing and grabbing after creatures of air, or mime long dead caresses.

But in the end, at dawn, a sky-blue hibernation arises. It could last thousands of years. You awake to post-human archeologists digging you out from the dolmen.

MANDATORY INSTRUCTION

You turn over a stone that lies on the damp ground because you like to see the ants, the yellow pale worms and earwigs that likely squirm out from under it; all these small crawlers

you are the first to discover, to catch in the act. But on the underside of the stone there is this time a face, and this face begins to speak with a hoarse voice, while small clumps of soil loosen around its mouth. In time you understand from the creaky, but forceful language that it is your turn to lay face down towards the earth, all until someone comes and turns you over, rather coincidentally, in an impulse of childish curiosity.

III.

I live in Paris
every night, and there
I walk up spiral staircases of solidified lava
in empty prison buildings.
I wander through long corridors
where leaves never stop falling,
with a herbarium under my arm,
where the same red rose exists
on each page.
“Grasshopp’rs with Crowns of Gold
on their Heads, and Faces
like Human’s
Faces”
don’t do me harm, everything is as
it should be.
It is already late
in the afternoon, out here
the north wind dusks over the house gables.
The weathercocks are silver
and have bloodthirsty beaks, see!
how they blink in the unreal sun
I say, and forget that no one
walks beside me. Foliage
dozes on the lawn in the park, even more
indifferent from this morning.
You are out of town
it says over the door on the riverbed
but I can wait. I have
time.
Here no one wakes
to one’s nightmare.

IV.

String quartet
for half-buried instruments
deep within the forest
the green.
From bark and humus, the musicians
let themselves patiently dissolve
in the rain, when the playing
has turned back
to the quiet
it came from.

After July,
January.

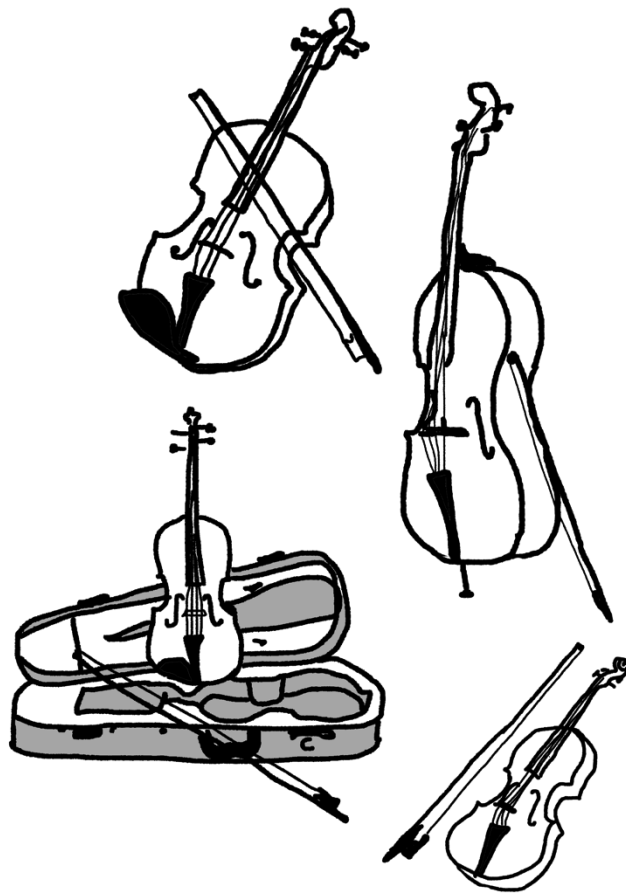
Clubmoss-
Calligraphy.

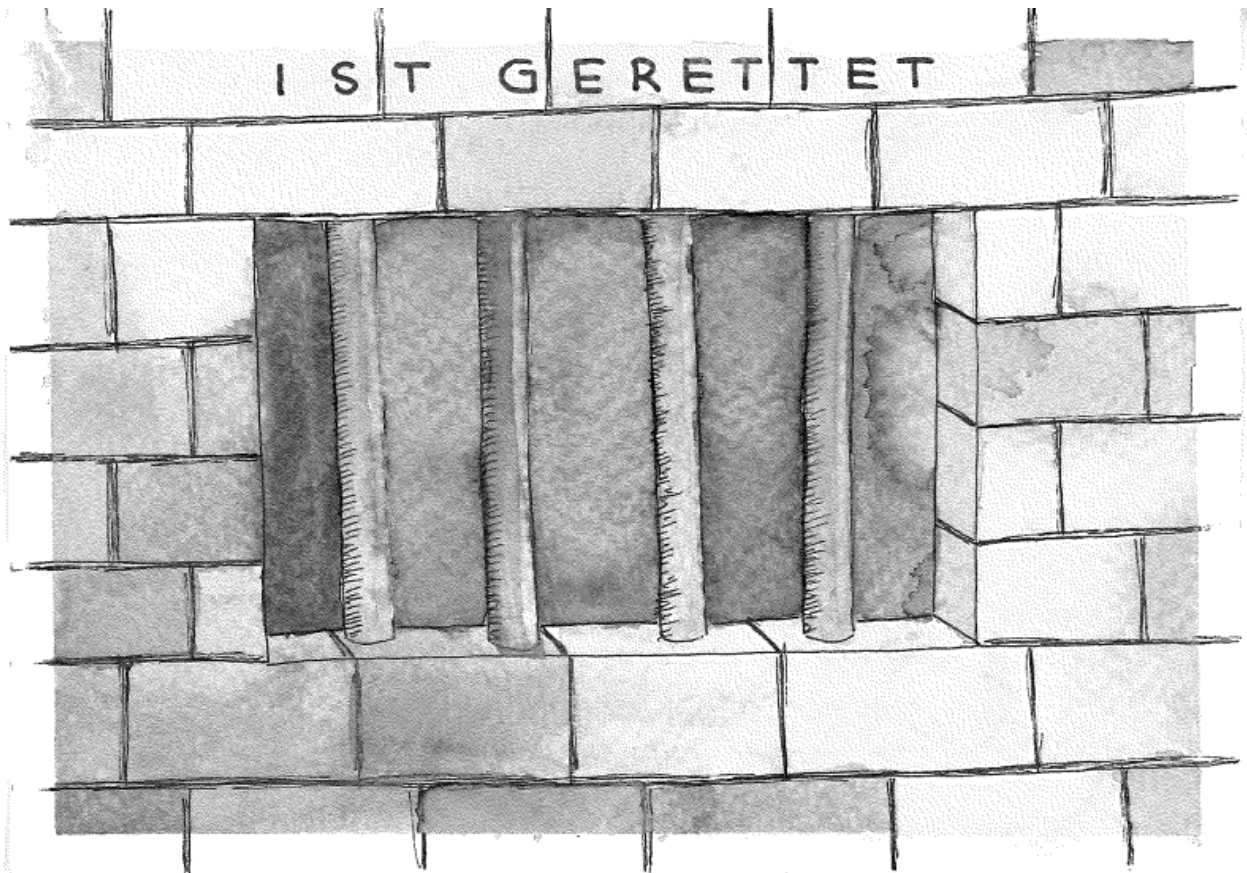
sign of pausing,
between
traceless and traceless.

Northern lights
in the eye's coldness.

Who waits
still
among the trunks?
Not the first.
Not the second.
But the third
waits

in inhumanity.





MARGARET Thine I am, father. Save me!

You angels, hosts of heaven,
stir,

Encamp about me, be my
guard.

Heinrich! I quail at thee.

MEPHISTO She is judged.

VOICE (*from above*): Is saved.

F. R. AND Postcard

Faust

by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

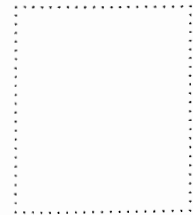
page 424

lines 4607 - 4611



From nothingness, a figure composed itself. It was protean, monstrously so, shifting restlessly from form to form but fixing on none. The glistening skin and black stone eyes of a manatee gave way to a living construct of trumpet vines growing over a crude armature of oak planks. A flower closed in a wink to become a wet orifice that swallowed itself and sprouted tin crystals. It hurt Faust's eyes and wrenched his guts to look upon the creature, for its surfaces came together disturbingly, as if comprised of too many dimensions and those dimensions failing to come together in any sane fashion.

FAUSTIANO Postcard



Jack Faust

by Michael Swanwick

page 29

if you are the only occupant of the inferno, are
you even burning at all?

Uma Ashrani

maybe i know there's a raven in my skull
maybe i bring it sacrifices anyway:
a knife, stained glass, a sign, the aftermath.

maybe i know there's a raven in my skull
but it doesn't know it's there
pulling teeth and screaming its grief
until the fire turns its head from everything once feared.



(the raven sees the smoke but not itself burning.
the raven sees itself only when reflected in the fire.)

maybe the raven wants to kill me
maybe this time i'll let it
it's been so long since anyone looked in my eyes when i wasn't smiling
i've almost forgotten my eyes can close.

(the part of me that fell asleep on a december afternoon is getting worried.
no one is joining it and the bed isn't quiet enough to keep the sounds of
laughter out. the sounds of forgetting out. forgetting has a sound, you see?
forgetting sounds like a heartbeat, like blood pumping like 'normal'. being
awake is so easy except when it isn't.)

maybe sleeping hands can't draw pictures of what the days
have done to me. but i've brought the raven enough ink that
it can.

maybe i know there's a raven in my skull.
maybe i want to sit with it.

“When I dance, I dance. When I sleep, I sleep; and when I am strolling alone through a beautiful orchard, although part of the time my thoughts are occupied by other things, for part of the time too I bring them back to the walk, to the orchard, to the delight in being alone there, and to me.”

“On Experience,” Montaigne



About Our Contributors

Kecia Ali is Professor of Religion at Boston University. In addition to her primary work on gender and Islam, she also sometimes writes about ethics and popular fiction.

Uma Ashrani is a sophomore majoring in Physics. Uma works in the CAS Writing Center and in the Center for Space Physics. Suis Burr is a Literary Translation major. They are a candidate for the MFA in Literary Translation.

Aidan Clark is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences, majoring in Statistics and Computer Science and minoring in Spanish and Core. His translations were originally done for a Spanish class on translating microfiction.

Isaque de Moura is a Brazilian fiction writer and a Ph.D. student in Hispanic Language & Literatures in the Department of Romance Studies at Boston University. He is the author of the novel *Morto, nada me faltará* (Penalux Press, 2021) and the short stories collection *No meio do tiroteio* (Kazuá Books, 2017). His academic research focuses on the analysis of the fictional spaces of asylums and hospices in Latin American contemporary narratives. He is particularly interested in themes of hospitalization and psychiatric violence in Cuban and Brazilian literatures.

Michele “Shelley” DeBiasse: I am a metalsmith and an artist, a teacher and a research scientist. I started silver smithing long before I entered academia and earned my PhD. Both art and science are integral to who I am.

Joshua Emokpae is a freshman CAS student majoring in Political Science and minoring in Classical Civilizations. They are a Boston native. Classics have been a passion of theirs since middle school, and they especially took interest in Roman History and Latin Poetry. Coming to BU and getting to read Vergil’s *Eclogues* in Professor Kronenberg’s Latin Seminar was a great experience for them as it combined those interests while engrossing me in the pastoral tradition.

Dina Famin is majoring in History, Biology, and Comparative Literature, and minoring in Global Medieval Studies. Kaverin’s “Light Steps” is her first extended translation project.

Maggie Farr is a senior studying Anthropology with a concentration in Health and Medicine. Her work in this journal was inspired by the Ancient Worlds course and specifically encouraged by her discussion session leader, Dr. Stephen Esposito.

Giulio Giuffrida: My relation to CAS is that I am an English major graduating in May 2023.

Cara Grigsby is a second-year CAS student studying philosophy. She enjoys listening to music, painting, and reading in her free time.

Andrea Guttormsen Wetzler is a senior just about finished with her degree in Comparative Literature and a minor in Global Medieval Studies. Although she studies classical Persian and German at BU, she has been a lifelong student of Norwegian since she grew up bilingual. She first encountered Tor Ulven at the University of Bergen, and fell in love with the crisp simplicity of his verse. She considers “Obligatorisk Undervisning” (“Mandatory Instruction”) perhaps her favorite poem of all time. In the fall, she will be a Masters student studying Old Norse literature and culture at the University of Iceland, where she hopes to add Old Norse to her repertoire of languages.

Morgan Hartwell is a History major from the Boston area and an Orthodox Christian.

Brian Jorgensen was the founding dean of the Core Curriculum and taught in the program for many years while occasionally performing with the professorial Fish Worship Blues Band.”

Wes Lachman is a Dual Degree student completing a BA in Philosophy at CAS and a BS in Film & TV in COM. They primarily specialize in film editing, but have always loved interpreting my experiences through the lens of a camera and creating thought-provoking pictures.

Keeley Mackenzie is majoring in Business Administration and Management. She wrote “City Rat” for a WR120 seminar on travel writing taught by Will Glover.

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