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BRUISING

art & literary journal 2008

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editor's note

What an exciting year for Brushing Art & Literary Journal!

For those who have been keeping track, this academic year marks somewhat of a new beginning for Brushing Art & Literary Journal. Having secured funding as a result of the tireless fundraising and lobbying efforts of the 2007-2008 editing staff, Brushing has taken advantage of the insight gleaned from our, shall we say, "near-death experience," and capitalized on what revealed itself to be a perfect juncture at which to begin reinventing and revitalizing the magazine. Starting with the launch of our new website, www.brushingjournal.org in November 2007, we at Brushing have been riding high on a wave of creative energy, innovation and enthusiasm. From a talented pool of first-year students, we have culled the layout expertise of Nastassia Alayeto to contemporize our magazine's look.

The largely reconstructive nature of our efforts this year has occasioned a great deal of experimentation on my part, as editor. Being a student of the social sciences, I sought to explore the elusive ideal of peace and social justice as a major theme for Brushing during my tenure as Editor-in-Chief. Hoping to bring Brushing beyond the pedagogical confines of a literary magazine into the realm of a politically-, socially- and culturally-aware enterprise, myself and last year's editor Fay Pappas have recently begun to seek out partnerships with local community organizations working to promote the arts in underserved communities. Expect to hear more news about these developments as they take shape in the next year!

Finally, I am proud to conclude my term as Editor with the announcement of three new prizes created this year to reward the three most outstanding submissions. The Brushing Prize for Excellence in Art is awarded to the artist whose piece represents the best artistic submission accepted to the journal this year. The prize for the best poem, the Michael Madonick Prize for Excellence in Poetry, is awarded in honor of the man responsible for reviving the near-defunct Brushing predecessor *The Flamingo* 36 years ago, and expanding it to include a new visual arts section, a new staff, and a new budget. Now the head of the Creative Writing Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Madonick has not only returned to his literary roots as a professional poet, but he was also instrumental in the creation of one of the nation's top literary journals at Urbana-Champaign. Finally, our special Art for Peace Prize will be awarded to the creator of the best submission,



Cover Art: Ron Pease - Park Avenue

artistic or literary, that expresses a theme of peace or social justice. Each honor will be presented at our annual poetry reading in May!

I thank all of our submitters, faculty advisors, editors, and all those Brushing enthusiasts who have imbued our humble journal with the vitality and creative energy it presently enjoys, and I certainly look forward to watching the journal continue on its path of innovation and creativity in the coming years!

Jessica Drew
Editor-in-Chief



BRUSHING

art & literary JOURNAL 2008

Rollins College

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Labyrinth Belly - Sandra Johnson

6 a.m. 1992

My father;
Shirtless and smelling of sleep on the goodwill couch
Hollow eyes sipping the morning news,
Lips pressed into a basin of apathetic coffee.
I sit to his left
Hidden in the shadow of my open door,
Wearing the cat as a blanket.

Above us
Mother, heavy with unborn baby,
has pitched a tent
Beneath her tired sheets
To escape the dawn
creeping in through
Clumsy blinds, that slouch
Like adolescent boys,
Against an open window

And then somewhere unseen
the tea-cup shatters.
And we, the forgotten,
Spill streams across the table,
And drip lakes into the floor.

We become empty;
overused saucers
And misplaced cups.

Orianah Blodgett

Housewife

Your burdens roll a red carpet before you—
Swabbing, labouring, caring, posturing.

They stew into sweaty wrinkles,
burning into the sea of lipstick and heart-blood reds that ooze long after you stop feeling so sure...

Though beautifully and intelligently graced in all domiciles,
you are so much more than the movie star mother;
Heartier too than the pretty peach-like shot of a woman I feel you puzzle at in the mirror

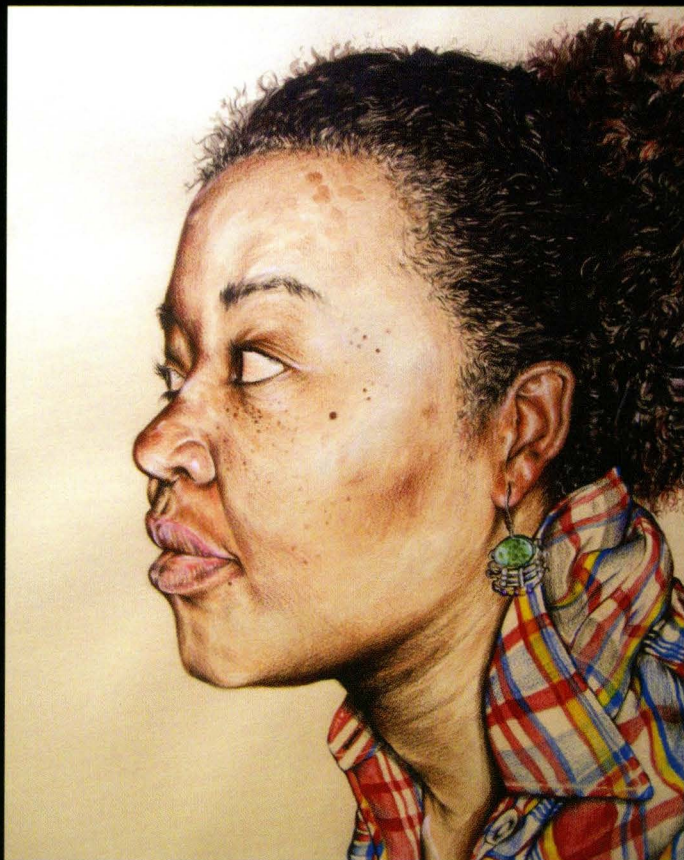
Beware that focal lens on the armoire door that mocks you
as you dust away allergens from your children's bedclothes...

Beware its shoddy claims that angle at your worth
and vouch for the honor of the apron,
for they cast your education and genius as a still-frame memory,
anonymous and pressed into time
amidst too many albums of parties
and graduations
and your other unclaimed, unnamed burdens.

You are a nurse, a psychologist,
as good as any doctor sir,
and with twice the beauty and thrice the instinct;

But the red carpet threatens to recoil back
in apostolic jealousy and squeeze out your
mass, sigh by sigh.

Jessica Drew



Beyond Plaid - Marie Patrick

Last Tuesday

Last Tuesday we were reborn as
ships,
Lifted our anchors from the
contour of
Still sheets
And sailed half-mast
Through common currents
Weathered by years of travel
To rest our souls in a familiar
harbor of
Dusty carpet and pane-shattered
moon.
You peeled off my skin.
Like a grape between child's
teeth,
My veins peeking through like
the blueprint of fallen petals
against sunbeams.
You read my flesh like a treasure
map,
And we set sail.
Below deck
we sipped redemption for after-
noon tea;
faced our compasses south and
Let our hands rove like
Crabs over the sunken
Tombs of collapsed bellies and
crumbling chests,
And we were the
Wasted sand below,
sifted and pulled apart by
The heavy machinery of
Palms
and tongues that could not help
seeking the marrow of
our hollow shells.

Once again,
We have crashed these humble
boats
on forbidden shores, and when
the sun has risen
These currents will change
course and
We will dip our hands
Into the floor and paddle back to
where we came.

Orianah Blodgett

New Love - Ron Pease



The Scientist and the Poet Walk Along the Shore

The sky is ripe on the edge of day, a glimmer of new time
washing upon the beach, luring the sand
from under our pink feet

I note the purples that float like oil on the surface
of the ocean

His gaze penetrates the deep waters, humanity's
first breath

"Here is where it all began," he states, fondling
the tiny shells dotting the sand around our toes, a cue
I know will send us once again into a discussion
of evolution. I envision unicelled bacteria
packing their lunches for work and sending the kids
to school in a yellow bus

I help him with his shells, lined in neat rows
and lower his glasses, now covered in a film
of salt, the purples and reds draining slowly from
his eyes...

"Does it really matter where we came from? We are here
for now....," I question

The sun once again makes a brave entrance, a heat of reactions
unseen by the eyes, as the realization of the paramecia gather
to fruition, compelled by the sea to become more complex
and less asexual, and although we may be spawn of the unicellular,
now rich with molecular structures, we are still dependent
upon the viable macronuclei
within

I gather a handful of your cilia, tangled from the breeze,
as the sand washes away from under my pink feet.

Candy Hamblin

The Scientist and the Poet Talk Nature

Chaos blooms amidst the blazing
leaves late this October day...

He drains their dying hands of life –
giving chlorophyll in a speech regarding
the benefits of the evergreen, while I splatter
colors madly about my worldly
palette, dreaming in orange and fiery red.

I'd rather think of new life
in Autumn than destruction...of how
the rotting leaves feed the roots
that sprout next Spring. Pigment,
is a funny thing, the lack of it thereof,
glass-half empty, vacuoles half-full...

I find the oncoming cold a welcome
embrace within a wool sweater, yet
the scientist in you wants to analyze
the ions that float about the air
we breathe, magnetized by their
unsteady charge

...they float between our words.

Candy Hamblin

The Scientist, the Poet, Coffee

My black coffee sits strong, aromatic
next hers, milky and sweet, as we sit
in the book shop, great thoughts
surrounding us, bound in thick

pages. Like always, her mind is elusive,
where random thoughts wander among
brunette curls and green, curious eyes.
I like to think of her as the magnetic
electron: mysterious, erratic, unstable.

These things I say to her as she glances
around, watching coffee-drinking
bodies mumble in hushed tones,
their lips sipping and talking, passing
intelligent words like Nietzsche, Aquinas,

Freud. I glance into the distance
and she leans in, watches me.
I drink it in.

Candy Hamblin



Revival - Nicole Fiedler

Solstice

Those nights the stars played like marionettes in

Our puppet show

The papier-mâché moon strung out

Against the shady felt

The low-slung clouds arching

Like the belly of a carp.

We played the game of summer

Stealing moments like camera flashes

Brief as fire-flies.

And when we woke

We would crawl out of

the honeyed combs of sleep

To embrace those days

which in their hand-picked

Ripeness

Were unblemished

And sweet

we lived to the core.

Orianah Blodgett



Speaking of Raisins

Barefoot and
wearing a cape of four-year-old skepticism
I began my experiment
Laying each grape with purpose on the quiet sill
I spoke to them in hushed tones
about their revolution,
their sunny spot;
The warmest in the house,
asked them about the shadows,
If they were any less alive than
The trees that cast them?
But receiving no answer I lay
My body down
And My palms
grew roots into the sun painted floor.
When the shadows had lengthened,
And my form grown dark within them,
mother, my tender, came in
Dug me up, and planted me in another bed.

Morning rose and I made silent
my pilgrimage to the window.
Checking my patients
I rested my fingers against their purple skin,
Confirming their elasticity.
Troubled by the lack of change,
I crept the stairs to squeeze
Between my parents,
Humid bodies still heavy with sleep.
But mother – close lidded - told me not to give up
For times of revolution were rarely easy.
She suggested that what my grapes needed
Was a little bit of solitude,
For grapes were a timid fruit.

To pass the time we made a story
And we sang
“inside your body,
Is a lucky cricket
Playing an upright bass”
And she sang

“these are your heart beats”
And I asked
“is it time yet”
And she sprinkled
Dirt onto my toes
Planting me back into
Complacency.

My body spread
Like a table cloth,
The afternoon dripped thick
along my throat
As I swallowed
Down the hot minutes,
Choking on seconds
Stretched and flaccid
Like worn rubber-bands

But at last,
I heard mother’s beckoning
And dashed muddy-footed
Past puddles-
Across lawn-
Up porch-
And it was three steps through the door
that I stopped.
Eyes still,
For beneath the billowed curtains
My fat grapes
In their loneliness had grown
Shrunk and dark
And mother ducked her
Smirked face low,
gripped my elbows
And whispered of
Miracles,
And the nature of change.

Orianah Blodgett



Hands on Love - Nicole Fiedler

We See Each Other and we Don't Stop

The drum beat
Unheard
Follows our set of steps
Walking past each other
In unison
We walk invisible but to one another
Too bad for circumstances
That stop us from stopping
We tell ourselves
A story we like
To keep us from slowing down
But the effect in the end
Is more like a sad scene:
You walk, I smile
I walk, you smile
Past one another without regret
Save the feeling of hope
That the scientists are right
And somewhere there is that
Alternate Universe
Where we are walking in the same direction
Together.

Fay Pappas

Recuerdos

De noche recuerdos inundan la mente
Y, no hay manera de apaciguar aquel flujo
de mejores momentos, inigualables personajes
intensos y vivos

Desvanecieron
Cómo recobrarlos cuando ya murieron?
Cómo revivirlos de manera sensata?
Sin tormentar el corazón
Sin lastimar el presente y su futuro

El dolor del pasar del tiempo y la felicidad del recuerdo
renacen juntos
lado a lado
peligrosamente

La satisfacción de darle vida a una alegría antigua
permanece menos de un instante
la realidad del recuerdo,
que al fin es pasado perdido al progreso
permanece siempre inalcanzable
e interminable fuente de los anhelos

Jeannette Hernando

Balloon, You

I still remember your birthday:
No show cupcakes,
Double feature friends,
And balloons with your face
Drawn on them by a gifted hand,
That couldn't bear the thought of a single one
Popped,
Though it knew what it was doing,
When it chose to place your face,
On the most fragile of canvases.
It will never admit to popping a few
In the making.

Fay Pappas

When Will Joseph Come?

Every morning
brown wispy hair
falls to her shoulders.
She looks into her bedroom
mirror hoping to hide
under cambric sheets.
Wrinkles crisscross
her youthful face.

God gave her
an immaculate
conception
in the form
of a drunken Arabic
man beating on top
of her limp body.
She praised
the birth of her child,
but couldn't
handle walking out
the front door
without looking
out the peephole.

Over the years,
suitors have knocked
out car windshields
and slammed her
against hallway closets
Still she holds onto
her baby's wooden crib
wondering
when the good book's
story of the wise men
will come true.

Robert Clark



Morgan Elizabeth Conroy - Closer

Misplaced

Lately darling,
As we're traveling down the slope of your interstate
(your hand pressed tight into the wheel, my feet up on your dash)
I've been sliding too quickly off-course
Veering east--- stumbling out
onto the side streets of your limbs.
And as you drive on
I explore your ruins
Climbing the thick branches of
Trees planted long ago;
Learning the pattern of their shade.

Without the atlas of my palms as a guide,
Your spine has proved a faulty compass
Pointing me south; further into you.

Lately darling,
I'm becoming to know the landscape of your valleys too well;
And they are beginning to feel like home.

Orianah Blodgett

Seeing through the Noise

He is shouting.
She is crying.
They are lying
Down upon the Earth,
With hands outstretched toward the Sun,
Pleading forgiveness for wrongs not done.
She is hungry.
He is sick.
I too am sick, of a different sort,
Sick of mind,
Sick of heart,
Sick for those
Tired of wars they did not start.
So lift your hand,
And write with me,
As we guide our pens
So others may see
The color that lives
In the black and white
Which we may forever write.

Aimee Cervenka

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Morgan Elizabeth Conroy - Pokerface

Avert

Weight on bare feet
cracked dry by
constant collision with
wind
and
sun
folding a blanket by a bus stop bench

signs screaming about needing:
cell phones
status
surgery
sweet success

Bright blanket
buried by dirt
and passers
eyes
Avert.

Molly Neznanski

On a Late Sunday Afternoon Train from Paris to London

Making its way northwesterly,
towards the coast at Calais,
the train rocks along at high-velocity
through the open French countryside,
as stewards;
Polish, Italian, and Moroccan,
dressed in charcoal gray
and chocolate brown,
with yellow scarves,
begin to serve the evening meal
of poached salmon,
green bean almandine, potatoes,
bread, chocolates, and wine.

I doze,
while the white-clothed
table I share with a businessman
lies covered with papers and laptop
as he relates to his son, in Turkish,
the evening fare—over his Blackberry;
whom, he proudly states is “sailing
off the Portuguese coast on holiday.”

Pulsing past farms and church steeples,
I dream of the history that
I first learned to love in my youth.
My heroes: the good guys, the bad guys;
Napoleon, the Red Baron, General Patton.

I awake to tea being served
and the sound of a beautiful female
voice speaking so softly in French.
Gazing out my window,
I remember my dream;
D Day, Normandy, the Americans.

At the far end of the car,
a broody gaggle of chalky Brits
complain bitterly over the choice
of vegetarian dishes and wines
to a humble, bowing Polish steward.

A young Chinese couple
discusses who will change their infant son;
she leans back sipping wine,
as her pouting husband hurries past me,
child extended before him.

Across the aisle,
that French voice;
a serenely beautiful Indian woman,
more likely Sri Lankan, I think,
large dark eyes, thick silky black hair,
dark skin, red lips.

I close my eyes;
the Treaty of Versailles---the Armistice
Sergeant York---the forced withdrawal
of the 300,000 man British Expeditionary Force
at Dunkirk in 1940.

The young Chinese father and infant return,
all smiles.

She leans back into the arms
of her older, sleeping, Sri Lankan husband.
She, dressed in brown slacks and red blazer;
he, in oxford shirt with a thick,
yellow pullover sweater.
Her arms,
intertwine with his as she speaks
to her young son across their table,
who is humming a little too loudly,
"shush Henri."
His coloring books fill their white-clothed table.

The noisy Brits have quieted down after dinner
and extra bottles of complimentary wine.
The Chinese couple, and child,
Are fast asleep.

I think about the German General,
Rommel---his defensive buildup
of the French coast---the Allied invasion,
the Breakout---the advance on Paris and Belgium,
The Battle of the Bulge.

Dressed identical as his sleeping father,
young Henri giggles
as the train sways
towards the tunnel.
His mother, intertwined
with her husband
—buried into him—
briefly acknowledges me
with a smile and nod,
which I return.

Quickly,
She beckons to her son,
as she draws her husband's arms
into her bosom.

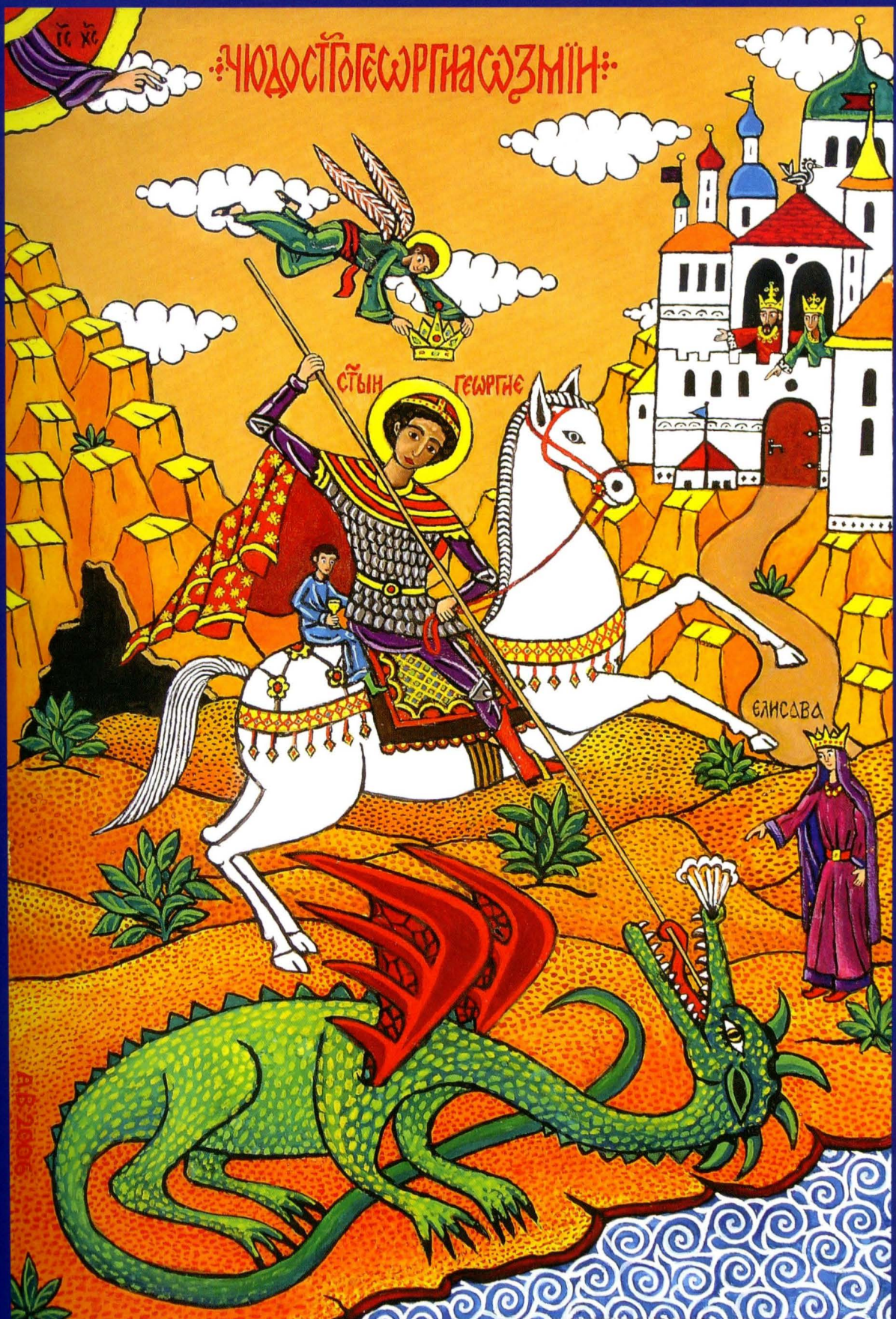
I try to sleep
with the vision
of the beautiful,
dark eyed woman's smile,
who's now enwrapped
with husband and child.

Gene Moore

FEATURED ART



Dr. Alexander Boguslawski - Saint Catherine, the Martyr



Dr. Alexander Boguslawski - St. George and the Dragon

Carnevale

Amy, staring at nothing in particular, sat on a plush red velvet cushion bench that ran the length of one of the walls in Café Florian. It was still early, and the café was empty, save for a couple absorbed in their own isolation catty-corner from her, a male in a photographer's jacket with an oversized backpack as his companion beside him on the bench a couple tables down from her, and Dorian sitting in the seat across from her. The Piazza San Marco outside was mostly empty. Its only visitors were the ever-present pigeons, the left-over pieces of colorful but now damp confetti strewn across the concrete from the night before, and the tourists defending themselves against the bitter cold with their weapon of choice: SLR, digital, and Polaroid cameras. In an hour's time, she knew that same square would be filled with a Napoleonic-sized army all trying to conquer through film the same images of the Renaissance architecture and the statuesque masqueraders.

She lifted the porcelain cup containing the caffè con latte, which revitalized and warmed her still-numb bones, to her carmine-colored lips. The coffee was almost hot enough to singe the roof of her mouth, but not hot enough to burn and leave that annoying, dangling flap of painful skin. Amy could feel the drink traveling through her digestion system and radiating energy in delightful spasms down her arms and legs and into her fingers and toes. The lipstick left a dark pink imprint, as equally detailed as one's finger prints, on the delicate cup's rim. She returned the cup to its saucer, which sat upon a silver tray that took up most of the small marble table's surface and that contained an array of scrumptious-looking desserts, pastries, and biscuits, which she had distractedly nibbled on but would never finish, arranged on a small white doily.

"Be right back," Dorian said, as he got up from his cushiony seat.

Amy didn't bother to ask where he was going, more because she figured he had probably just finished telling her than because she didn't want to know. Her eyes followed his back, as he walked away, and then transitioned to the café's interior.

It was the type of place that made her want to sit up straight and thrust out her pinky finger while drinking her coffee. It was also the type of place which made one aware of clothing that may be wrinkled, strands of hair that may have fallen out of place, and makeup that may not have been appropriately applied. The way the light hit the room made it feel at times like she was sitting in a space made completely out of gold. The walls, where not covered by the plush red benches, were covered with detailed frescoes of people in pastoral settings, surrounded by gold and wooden paneling. She had hated places like this as child because, unless she remained completely still, her mother would criticize her every move, and poke, prod, and fix whatever she felt needed poked, prodded, or fixed. As a teenager, Amy rebelled against these places, and when forced to enter one, she would mess up her hair, sit in hunched repose, and glare

at anyone who looked her way. Now, such places only made her aware of her appearance and movement, but the adornments or traditions, however beautiful or long held, had just become customary. She accepted them and performed them in an autopilot mode.

Her attention was broken by the waiter, adorned in a bow tie and white tuxedo, who made his way over to her table. His name, he had informed her in proper English with a heavy Italian accent, was Paolo: "Just in case," he winked, "you need anything." Amy noticed he did not offer the same civility or politeness to the other patrons or even Dorian, who were instead greeted rapid-fire contempt.

When he arrived at her table, Paolo grasped the top of and leaned over the back of the wooden chair sitting across from Amy. "Signora," Paolo asked, with one eyebrow cocked, "or is it signorina?"

"It was formerly signora, but now I suppose it's once again signorina."

"Ah, signorina." He smiled. "Such a woman should not be alone in Italy, and especially not in Venezia. If you need a companion, I would be more than delighted to show you parts of the city you won't find in any tour book." Paolo stared into her with rich chocolate eyes. She could tell by the look within a look that he gave her that he was a good lover—unselfish and turned on more by pleasing than being pleased. A Casanova-type lover, who loved women and who was aware that women loved him back.

She smiled, not revealing her teeth, and unflinchingly met his velvety gaze. "Thank you Paolo, but I'm here with someone—the gentleman who was sitting there just a moment ago—and the tour books have everything I'm looking for at the moment."

With his lips pursed, he clicked his tongue against the top of his mouth three times, while slightly shaking his head. "Such a pity. Such a pity." He kept his hands on the top of the chair, but stood up. "Would signorina like another caffè con latte or how about a cioccolata calda con panna—the best you'll ever have."

Amy looked over to see Dorian returning the to table, then looked into the white cup, which was still about a third of the way filled, lifted it by its pristine handle, and swirled its remains around. "That's very tempting, but I think I've had enough."

Paolo shifted to the side of the table, as Dorian retook his seat. Without acknowledging the waiter, Dorian said, "The piazza looks like it's coming to life." Then he raised his eyes to Paolo, "I'll take the check now."

Paolo motioned to the tray with one hand, "Can I get this out of your way?"

Without changing the position of her head, Amy looked down at the tray and all its various items, then back up at Paolo. "No, I think I'll finish the little bit of coffee that's left in my cup."

"I'll go get your check."

"Any minute now the piazza will be swarming with

Café Florian

people.” Dorian continued to talk about the tradition of Carnevale and the architectural history of Venice. She heard him quote Henry James on the café, waving his hand about in the air: “No traveler can forget the immense mass of tables and chairs which advances like a promontory into the smooth lake of the square.”

She couldn’t pay attention to his words. Something in Paolo’s eyes made her feel the haunting presence of the solitude looming within her now-warmed body. She wasn’t alone, and she didn’t want companionship—not the kind Paolo had in mind. A spasmodic pain pulsed through her abdomen, followed by a pang in her chest. Crossing her wrists atop her lap in an attempt to block the world, herself, and Dorian from seeing her pain, Amy lifted her head and shifted her eyes from the tray to the couple oblivious to everything in the world except each other.

They looked happy, happy in a way that she had never been with her husband or any one else except for Auden, for eight months, back when she was 17. She cared about her ex-husband, James, but she never loved him. She knew that she never would the moment she met him, and that was why she had found him so appealing. When he finally proposed almost two years after they started dating, Amy was exactly half his age. Her mother was outraged because she would never get to show her daughter and young, handsome husband off to her friends at an expensive and elaborate wedding. Her mother allowed it because he was wealthy. Her father didn’t talk to her for two years after she got married and still refused to talk respectfully to James. Amy didn’t marry him for money, though he certainly had enough of it, and she didn’t marry him for love. She married James because she thought he would give her the security and comfort of being with one person until he died. She could handle being alone while an old lady, had in fact been expecting it and aware that it would be no other way for a few years before she met James.

That Auden’s love could stop had hurt her, but she didn’t know why it made her decide to give up on love entirely. Maybe she was scared of being that vulnerable again, of being hurt that badly again. Maybe she felt love like that could only happen once for her, or that she didn’t deserve it. Maybe it was that she had convinced herself of all these things. Whatever the reason, after that experience, Amy saw love as unnecessary as the doily decorating the plate that Paolo had just removed: undoubtedly beautiful, but serving no real purpose.

She and James had officially divorced two years ago, sans children, when she was 30. He left her for another

woman, younger than both of them. When he told her that he was in love with someone else, she wasn’t upset; she wasn’t even hurt. A distinct feeling of numbness overtook her body, and she replied, “Okay.”

She came across James and his new lover once, and they looked happy like the couple in the Café Florian, at whom she was staring.

“You ready to go?”

Amy returned to the scene in the café, catching Paolo placing the check on the table to her left out of the corner of her eye. She shook her head and looked at Dorian. “Sorry. I was zoning out. The caffeine should kick in any minute now.” She turned to Paolo, smiling up at him, this time exposing her teeth. “Thanks.”

“Di nulla. I’ll take it whenever you’re ready.”

Dorian handed Paolo a single folded bill. “Keep the change.”

Paolo bowed his head, said “grazie,” turned around, and walked back into the bowels of the café.

Lifting the coffee from the tray, she swallowed down the majority of its now room-temperature and sooty remainders, which left a sweet then bitter taste in her mouth.

“Let’s go.” She grabbed her scarf, gloves, the red Burberry double-breasted coat, folded on the bench to her right, got up, and made her way out of the café.

She had bought the coat before she got married with money she had earned. The coat had been displayed in the 57th street store window in New York City for two months before she had saved up enough money to purchase it. She tried it on every Sunday for those two months until she wore it home, on one of the warmest days the city ever experienced in February, which was still chilly, but nowhere near cold enough for such a coat. With its two columns of four silver dollar-sized buttons, it reminded her of something Catherine Deneuve’s character in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* would wear. It made her feel sexy, sophisticated, and classy. And it kept her warm.

Once she got married, she never wore it, and it had hung in the back of her closet in a plastic protector, unworn for the entirety of her marriage. Her ex-husband, James, had bought her many coats over the years, but she held on to the only thing she earned and purchased by herself.

The bitter cold and sounds of the crowd from outside came upon her like a stone wall. She had finished putting on and buttoning up the ruby coat, which extended down to her mid thighs, and had put on her scarf and one glove. With the gloved hand, she put on the other one and hugged her arms around her body. Dorian grabbed the upper part of her left arm with his left hand and placed his arm around her body, hugging his body against hers. She could feel the cold cutting through her body like a knife all the way down to the bones and could feel her face and ears flush. Her black high-heal boots extended beneath her dark jeans to just below her kneecap, leaving a vulnerable section of thigh covered only by a layer of soft but thick denim. She anticipated that sec

tion of skin going numb, soon after her ears and nose had.

It was a clear day, and the piazza's architecture dazzled in the sun's rays. The cracks in the cement were wet, despite there being no overcast. Amy looked over at Dorian. "Do you think it rained last night or that the shopkeepers sprayed down the streets to clean them?" she asked, looking down now at the cement.

"What kind of a question is that? Here is a Bacchanalian feast for the senses, and you're looking down at the ground. Listen." The sound of a throng of foreign languages reverberated across the square, strewn together in an eclectic tapestry against the backdrop of shrieks of delight and awe and the small musical entities that gathered in various corners of the piazza and into the piazzetta. Constantly, rhythmically, and beneath all of that was the sound of the surrounding water pulsating like a mother and child's co-mingled heartbeats in an ultrasound. The pigeons, not to be outdone, added their own mix of cooing and the sounds of percussion their feathers dancing on the breeze created. There was also the sound of camera shutters going off and yells to, "Sguardo qui!" "Regard ici!" "Look here!"

"Look around you at all the fantastic colors." The masqueraders were bedecked in vibrant colors that seared into the retina of one's memory. The colors were not plain, but always joined by a descriptive adjective. Everywhere one looked, there was a festival of soothing corals, rich orchids, effervescent cyans, calming pinks, violent magentas, blood reds, and electric yellows. As bright and blinding as the sun on the bitter cold, cloudless day was, the multitudinous colors were not to be rivaled, even by Apollo. Many of the tourists and sightseers dressed in drab colors that only intensified the contrast. Costumes of black and white abounded, but were adorned in eye-catching gold and silver lining and intricate embroidery, which the sun danced upon, sending its incandescent rays into the crowd.

"Look there," he said, and her vision followed the direction he nodded in. There was a woman in a cerulean dress, with violets streaming down her tulle skirt and exploding like fireworks from her monstrous hat. She wore a metallic aquamarine mask.

"Or there," he said, nodding in the opposite direction, at another woman wearing a fiery orange ensemble the color of a lily's stamen, complimented by gold roping. The orange lady was interrupted by another person in a phosphorescent green getup that glowed like a jellyfish in the night, with piping of the same color that created enormous wings.

Dorian breathed through his nose, expanding his chest and raising his head as he did so. "Can't you smell Venice? Whether good or bad, that's what one remembers of all his travels. The Adriatic smells like any other ocean—of salt, sand, and a couple days dead fish—but there's that something extra that smells different from say, the Atlantic as it merges into the Hudson River, or the Pacific as it enters San Francisco Bay." He took another deep breath. "Then there's the smell of Carnevale itself. Can't you almost taste

the sticky sweetness of friture and galani? Or the hot, spiced wine?"

She met his eyes and smiled into them, wrapping her left arm around his lower back. He was beautiful and knew it—the type of guy that her mother always dreamed Amy would marry. He would be the perfect topper for Amy's wedding cake, a beautiful decoration. But also passionate, full of life. There was something beyond the physical that attracted her to Dorian, something in his random moments in between giving history lectures with an air of arrogant intelligence that made her enjoy his company. He had kind eyes, gentle eyes, and during the moments when he was full of passion and beyond history, his smile was warm, sincere, and comforting. At such moments, she felt like she could really allow herself to love him.

"That's exactly why I ask—both of those options seem too practical somehow," Amy began. "This part of the city seems so magical. I can imagine the water in the canals and ocean seeping through the city's floors. Can't you picture it? Venice as a floating city, suspended like a giant flat balloon tethered to the seafloor by massive iron chains. There are times that the city seems so alive, like now, breathing with the ebb and flow of the Adriatic, that there just has to be life beneath the surface. Can't you see fish and other sea creatures living just below the concrete metropolis' floor and playing games with the chain links? Doesn't your—what did you call it?—'Bacchanalian feast for the senses' make you feel like you're in a dream?"

Dorian smiled at her and kissed her on her forehead. "You're sweet. Venice and Carnevale have made your imagination go wild today, but really, this city has been here for quite a long time. Look at the massive architecture." He removed his arm from around her, and extended both arms out, almost hitting a couple of people along the way. He lowered his arms and motioned to the overwhelming church straight ahead. "A floating island would not have held the Basilica." Then he looked to the monstrous bell tower to their right. "The Campanile alone would have sunk such a fantasy island long before all the bricks had been laid."

Still looking up, he said, "Galileo showed the Doge his telescope from up there. Even Goethe had to view the Adriatic from the top. Do you want to walk up?"

Amy looked down at her boots, pointing her right foot out in front of her, like a small girl showing off her first pair of shiny shoes. "I'm wearing heels." She felt a draft on her back and turned around to make sure her coat had not flipped up. Upon turning around, she discovered a gnarly walking stick lifting the back of her coat. The man holding the stick looked like an anthropomorphic raven. He was wearing a black cape that extended to the floor, had on white gloves, a ski mask that exposed only his eyes, an all-black flamenco-style hat, and a white, foot-long beak. "What the hell are you doing?"

The man yelled, "A Carnevale ogni scherzo vale!"

"Vaffanculo, vecchio sporcaccione," Dorian replied,

shoving the man's staff away from Amy. He put his arm back around her waist, and moved them both away from the masked man.

"What the hell was that?"

"El medico dea peste."

"You know I don't speak Italian."

"The plague doctor. It's just a Carnevale joke. Doctors would wear costumes like that during the plague, so they wouldn't catch it. They would literally use those staffs to touch their patients, since they were afraid to touch them with their hands. It's a traditional Carnevale costume that's been around since the beginning of the festival itself. I'm sure the masquerader thought he was being clever. They often play pranks, another tradition."

"What did he say?"

"All's fair at Carnival.' Come on, we can go inside the Basilica now—it's practically empty during the festival. We can have it to ourselves."

They began walking the short distance to the church. Dorian pointed at one of the embossed golden lions decorating the church's extravagant exterior. "That's the winged lion of St. Mark. It's all over Venice. See, there's another one." He pointed to their left, at the Torre dell'Orologio, the clocktower. Then he pointed to the right. "There's another one, atop the column near the water. It's supposed to represent St. Mark, some say because it's his story that focuses on Christ's royalty and resurrection—the lion being a symbol of both. Others say it's his story about John the Baptist crying in the wilderness upon seeing or hearing God. Whatever the meaning, the lion is supposed to provide protection. When the Venetians stole St. Mark's supposed body and brought it to Venice..."

Amy stopped listening, as they entered the atrium. It made her feel small and insignificant but also somehow safe. "It smells murky." She breathed through her nostrils. "Maybe it just feels murky." She said the words out loud, but not to Dorian or anyone in particular.

They turned right, and they both looked up at the Creation cupola, which was brilliant and incandescent. The golden mosaic glowed and glimmered. She couldn't read the words, creating four concentric circles of text around the three concentric circular strips. The strips contained 26 scenes, depicting Genesis from God creating Heaven and Earth to Adam and Eve's banishment from an earthly paradise.

Amy couldn't take her eyes off the scene after God creates Eve from Adam's rib, but before their expulsion from Paradise and even before their temptation by the serpent. God, bedecked in a halo, looks like he is nudging Eve out to meet Adam, who is reaching out as if to touch her, as if to verify her reality. She could hear Dorian's steady voice continuing in the background, but did not listen to what he said. Behind her, somewhere in the distance, she could hear Chopin's Etude in E Major playing, but didn't know where the music was coming from.

She got lost in the mosaic, and began thinking about that moment, seared into her memory, of both her and Auden sitting atop the glossy black bench of his parent's Steinway

grand piano, back when she played and couldn't imagine a time in her life when she wouldn't. It began with her wanting to play that song for him, but Auden said he hated and could never appreciate classical music.

Leaning over the bench, she pulled it further away from the piano. "Sit here," she said, pointing to the center of the bench.

He complied and gave her a quizzical look. "Well, I certainly can't play it."

"And you won't have to." She wormed between the keys and his knees. Placing one hand on each of his hips, she glided his body further backward on the bench, traced her fingertips down his thighs and to the inner part of his knees, which she pushed apart, and sat down on the edge of the bench. Once seated, she twisted her body around to face him. "If you don't appreciate this song, you must be dead."

She grabbed one hand and placed it on her breastplate, grabbed the other hand and placed it on her lower torso, pressing the small of her back into his body. Looking at Auden over her shoulder, she said, "You have to let me lead. Just move with me and don't tighten up and get in the way. Okay?"

He smiled his slightly crooked smile, which she loved, and kissed the part of her neck to the right of her spine and beneath and behind her ear. "Yes ma'am. You do your thing and I'll follow wherever you wanna go. I promise, I'm just along for the ride, but I'll hold on tight."

She turned back to the piano, placed her fingers on the sensual ivory keys, which became an extension of her body, and began to play the music from memory, her eyes closed. Beginning slowly, she felt her fingers barely touching the keys and could hear each note vibrate through her body. She could also feel Auden's breath against the back of her neck, and, as the music progressed, she began to feel his body move in unison with hers, their bodies swaying ever so slightly from side to side, like a slow-moving snake, with the music.

"Amy?"

The music vanished, and she looked to find Dorian standing in the entranceway to the Cappella Zen. "Huh?"

He held out his hand to her, and nodded his head backward, "Let's go inside."

Amy glanced back up at the cupola and started walking toward Dorian. "Ya." Upon reaching him, he took her hand in his, pulling her close to his body, so that their shoulders and arms touched, forcing the space of arm from their elbows to their hands to become entwined. She turned to look back at the mosaic. "It's breathtaking."

He smiled at her. "That's only the beginning." She was looking away from Dorian at the cupola behind her, when he kissed her in the same delicate place Auden had kissed her almost 16 years before. She turned around to make sure it was Dorian and not a manifestation of her daydream, and Dorian whispered to her, "Andiamo."

Laura Cole



Peace of Mind - Nicole Fiedler

Fall's First Wind

It's considered weak to be vulnerable.

Desperate to call
once or twice every couple of weeks
to see how her father and son are doing?
Alex was hurt so badly in a pool accident,
and old Mr. Marshall is dying of cancer.
She has friends to take care of her
and maybe even a boyfriend by now.

She needs security.
I wanted to give it to her
but didn't make the cut.
I was too young.
I didn't earn enough.
I didn't want to be constantly put down.

Why couldn't she have faith in me?
I was her basis of corporeal love.
We didn't communicate or relate
to each other well enough to survive
June's hot sun.

If she had just waited a little longer,
then she would have seen
My two-story house
My new car
My financial savvy.
I can hit the neighborhood
clubhouse with a short baseball throw right now.

"You're weak to share any of your pain with her,"
smirked the Puerto Rican cabbie.
"You're not strong to her but weak."
he continued to chomp into me.

Gatsby bootlegged for his dough
that way he could get his spot on the Egg.
Daisy just laughed at him.
For trying to be Romeo,
Gatsby was turned into Malvolio.
That green light at the end of the dock
was not the "American Dream"
but the universe's sweaty laughter.

We met in the fall of '05.
She thought I was a little crazy
but cute.
The way her face lit up
when she laughed
is etched into my memory's best file.
I have accidentally called niece
Kelly Ferguson
instead of her proper surname.
She looks like a child we would have had
had you not "moved on".

Sitting on the front porch
only chills fall's incoming air.
Maybe this fall will be different.

Robert Clark

Nuestra Casa

Todos hablamos
Al mismo tiempo
Trying to talk more and louder
Riendo
Gritando
Siendo
Familia
Outside they don't understand
That loud is good
And laughter heals
Aquí en nuestra casa

We all speak
At the same time
Trying to talk more and louder

Laughing

Yelling

Being

Family

Outside they don't understand

That loud is good

And laughter heals

Here in our house

Sandra Johnson

Year's Season

Wielding felicitations,
Kind, subtle, with sensitive
Insinuations intertwined
With promising
Wished winds of peace.

For the peaked soul,
Love gusts on confused
Ears and emotions.

Sulfurous are rains
From lamenting days
That sigh, less, in trepidation
At healed sorrows such waters bring.

Colette King

Mango Brings Me Home

To this day, I can close my eyes and recall the musky smell of my abuelo Blas's store. During that first visit to my parents' hometown, Quesería, I was inspired to love México and all that was Mexican within me. The vacation began with a five day drive from the temperate San Francisco Bay Area to the tropical west coast of central México. During that voyage, Papá stopped periodically at roadside mango groves where he bought the fruit by the bucket, box, or bag full. The fruit tumbled into the van, along with my father's voice; he boasted that he could judge the ripeness of any fruit. With a thick Mexican accent, Papá challenged me, "Which mango you think is ripe?" I naively selected a fruit that nature had painted a red as deep as garnet. Then, a mischievous smile crossed my father's lips. Papá's eyes twinkled as they too smiled, and he said, drawing out each syllable for emphasis, "No! Let me tell you..."

Upon arrival at my uncle's house, we were welcomed with a traditional Mexican greeting —"Tienes hambre?" or "Are you hungry?" Over the next three weeks, my aunts, uncles, and cousins fed me all the different flavors of México. I remember eating tropical flavored ice cream, like guava and hibiscus; drinking strawberry agua fresca, which served to cool me down in the heat of the day; and devouring coconut candy while I stood in awe of the Volcán de Colima bellowing smoke in the horizon. At the age of four, México meant mountains of mangos, sweet drinks, coconut candy, and all the things about family that are good.

"If you don't behave, they'll leave you in México!" my older sister warned me as I set off for Quesería. On my second trip to my parents' hometown, the heat was stifling and the experience was suffocating. The wonderment that I'd felt in my previous visit gave way to a new feeling of being smothered by the restrictiveness of the small town. Again, we traveled for five days in the sweltering heat of summer. Again, Papá purchased mountains of man-

gos. This time, however, the heat magnified the pungent odor of the overripe mangos, making it unbearable to me. As I rejected the fruit he offered, Papá glared and said in his broken

English, "You don't know." For years afterward, I would be unable to smell a mango without becoming nauseous.

At twenty two years old, I visited México for a third and final time with my father. After I woke up each morning, I sat on Papá's balcony watching the fruit vendor's stand on the opposite corner. Brightly colored fruit peeked out from beneath the canopy, and enticed me to come down for a try. Obeying their call, I walked across the cobblestone street to request a taste of the very thing that I had so often rejected. Taking in his large hand a manila mango, which is not the common red mango that we find in the states, the street vendor expertly sliced and seasoned the fruit for me. Fresh mango in hand, I ran back upstairs to perch again on my balcony seat. Uncertain if I could at last indulge, I cautiously brought a piece of lemon and salt seasoned mango to my anxious lips, and rekindled my love of México.

My father died last January; it happened so suddenly that I still cannot believe it's true. Papá is still alive in my mind; he is the fight inside me; he is the Volcán de Colima, threatening to erupt within me. Papá is with me in the pungent odor of mango as I sit, in my mind's eye, on his balcony in México. To this day, I walk slowly through the produce aisles, contemplating each fruit just as he would. As though he is at my side surveying the colorful pyramid along with me, I look over the mangos for the one whose freckled skin shows first yellow, then orange, and finally a bright, fire engine red. With a gentle squeeze, I bring

the fruit to my nose, its honey-nectar glistening at the stem and if I detect the faint, musky smell of my father's México, then I know it's ripe. Mango brings me home.



Raku Tree - Sandra Johnson

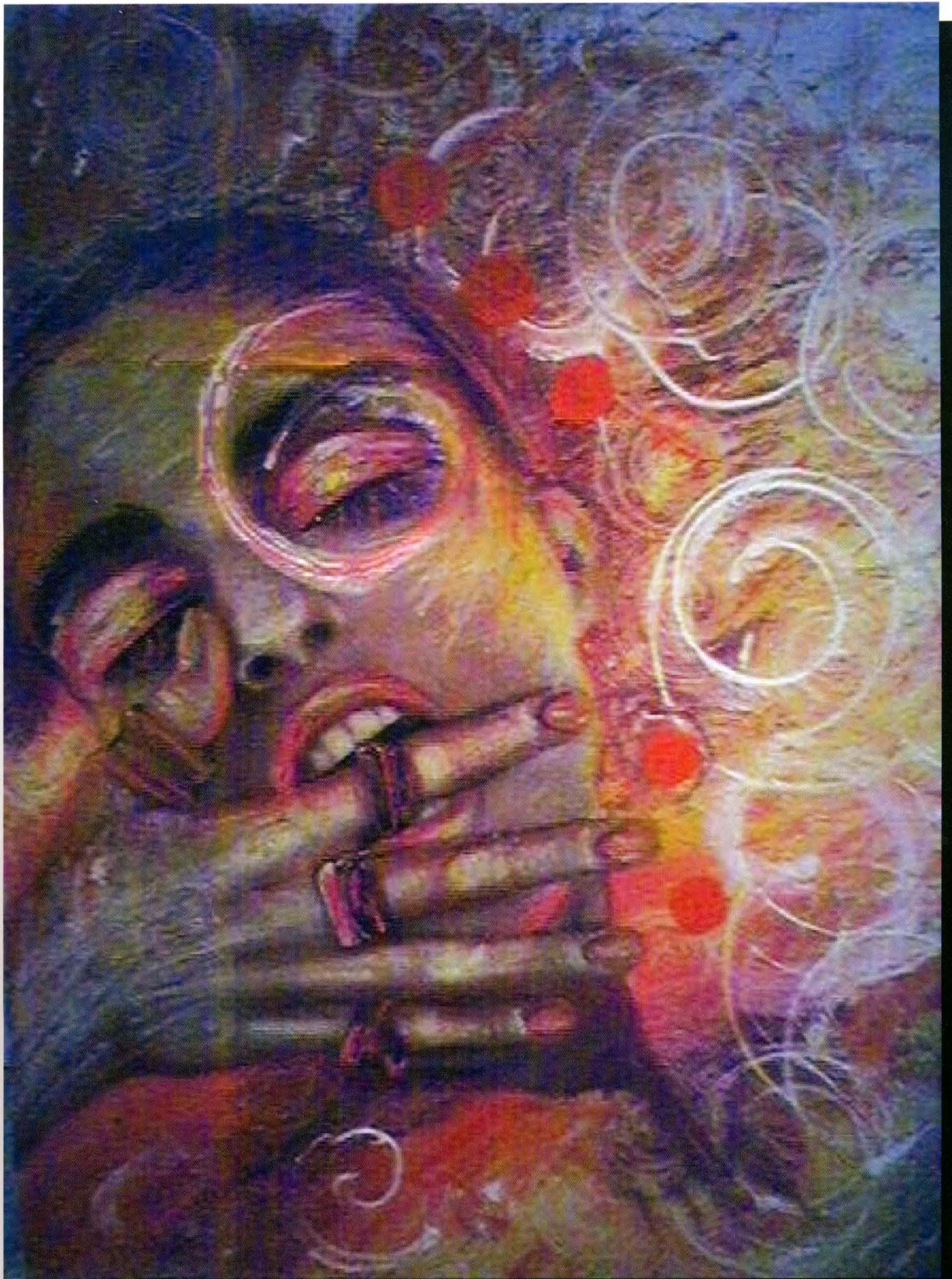
Sandra Johnson



Mexican Inspired Raku - Sandra Johnson



Raku Pot with Lid - Sandra Johnson



Morgan Elizabeth Conroy - Young Lust

SWEET STARVATION

Perhaps it was the moment when
you sprinkled salt from your long fingers
and it fell like snow on the chicken's breast

when you cocked your head toward me
laughing, lighting the room
And the scents formed silhouettes

ancient entertainment
rising
dancing
teasing

my anxious abdomen

or perhaps it was the moment after
when you said my joke was funny
because it wasn't
and you slid the pan too far in the oven
burning your finger tips and
laughed again
because that was funny

when the scent of your flesh joined that of the bird

and then there were the moments that followed
when we sat on the couch
together
and it swallowed us whole while we ate

we peeked over our toes to see the premier

i hated it
you loved it
the show, I mean

it could have been when I finished washing the last glass
belly aching
rinsing the surviving soap bubble
when your soft kiss met my cheek
and your almond eyes
looked up to reflect my dreams

perhaps it was later that evening
when you stumbled through our home
dark as chocolate
slapping dead-bolts shut and lowering the thermostat
to too cold
and then stumbled into bed with me

when the night had finally zip-locked itself around us
and we lay
enveloped
in it and one another

that I knew this hunger
this desire
could not be quenched

that I would always be hungry for you

Shaun Cricks

MUÑEQUITA LINDA

Sit
I sit still
in the fog
of his brooding
Silence.
thoughts have clouded
the laughing eyes
that once protected me
with a watchful gaze.

now his icy glare leaves me
naked
naked
naked

in this woman's body
he has always despised.

I remember how the
liquor
freed his tongue that day
releasing unmerciful winds
an angered drunk
Fool
¡Mira la mierda que eres!
hot breath with
icy sting
and the hail that fell on
Mamá
when I wasn't home.

the thoughts
have frozen his tongue
today.
the fog has
grabbed

my throat
demanding
Silence.
silent
like a Lady
not the
Whore
he claims I am.

he stares
outside
November rains
have drenched the
cascade of white bells
they no longer chime
«La Muñequita Linda»

Sandra Johnson

If She is a Leopard

If she is a leopard and I am a sheep,
I will count all her spots and ease into sleep.

I'll study her nuzzles and purrs in a dream,
And watch her twitch to learn why she screams.

She may be no leopard, a sea ray instead,
But her dots are connected too deep in my head.

I am not her, nor shall she ever be me,
Though ticking her spots I believe sets me free.

On a farm far in spirit from her withering jungle
I cull oinking insight from each of her bungles.

By stringing her actions like beads on a rope,
I become a better animal, one vain with hope.

I know how he caged her, I know why she cries
I see vacancy inside her with both of my eyes.

My memory will learn from mistakes she has made;
Her pain is a float in the human parade.

Jessica Drew

Convo

Life is a subliminal coin of endearment
(iawtc)

Hands are the magical weapons of humans
(bc y?)

Because the earth is our clay and clay is so soft
(oic)

And we are composed of bright felt dreams
(k)

If we combine our minds our spirits can kiss
(me 2)

When the earth explodes, I'll be thankful for the warmth
(brb)

I am made of numbers and hair
(u?)

Tomorrow I will eat better
(omg)

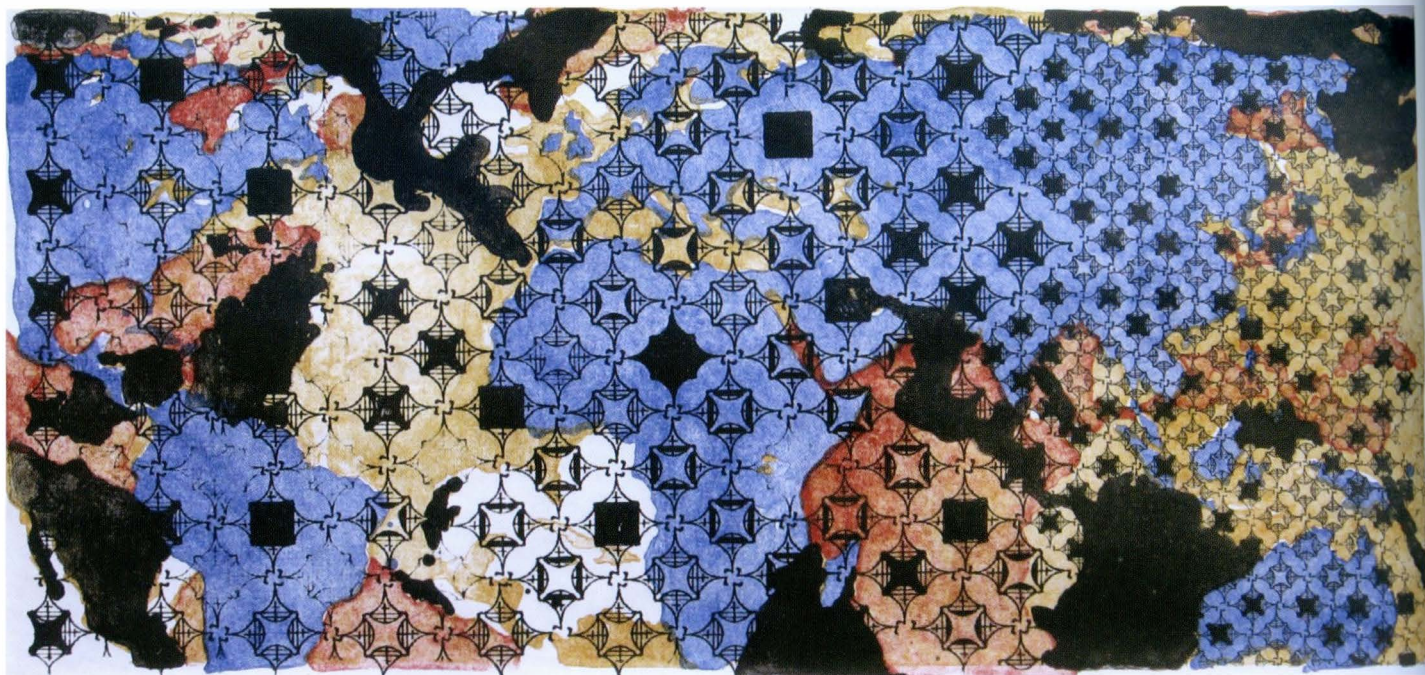
So that when I die my stomach contents will consist of apples and cheese
(lol)

And one day I will be resurrected as something beautiful
(ttyl)

Cathleen Bota



Morgan Elizabeth Conroy - I against I



Dana Hargrove - Hospitalship

Last

Follow a girl down the apathetic hallway of a hospital, into a room where her mother lies dying on a bed. I know it sounds horrible, I know you recoil at those words—dying mother—but come with her. Come with her and bow your head under the weight of her sorrow and embrace it, and understand that a fierce love of life is what makes this horrific, and that such a love is beautiful, despite the unspeakable pain. Understand that that is the great truth, that the girl's mother taught her that.

Walk a few paces behind her, watch her square her shoulders, breathe in deeply. Watch her eyes graze, unseeing, the cheap paintings on the wall—glaring attempts at comfort, exposed as imposters by the fluorescence of the hallway. Watch her wash her hands before she enters the room, catch the look on the handsome doctor's face, the one who knows her mother is dying and that germs don't matter anymore. Love the girl for washing her hands.

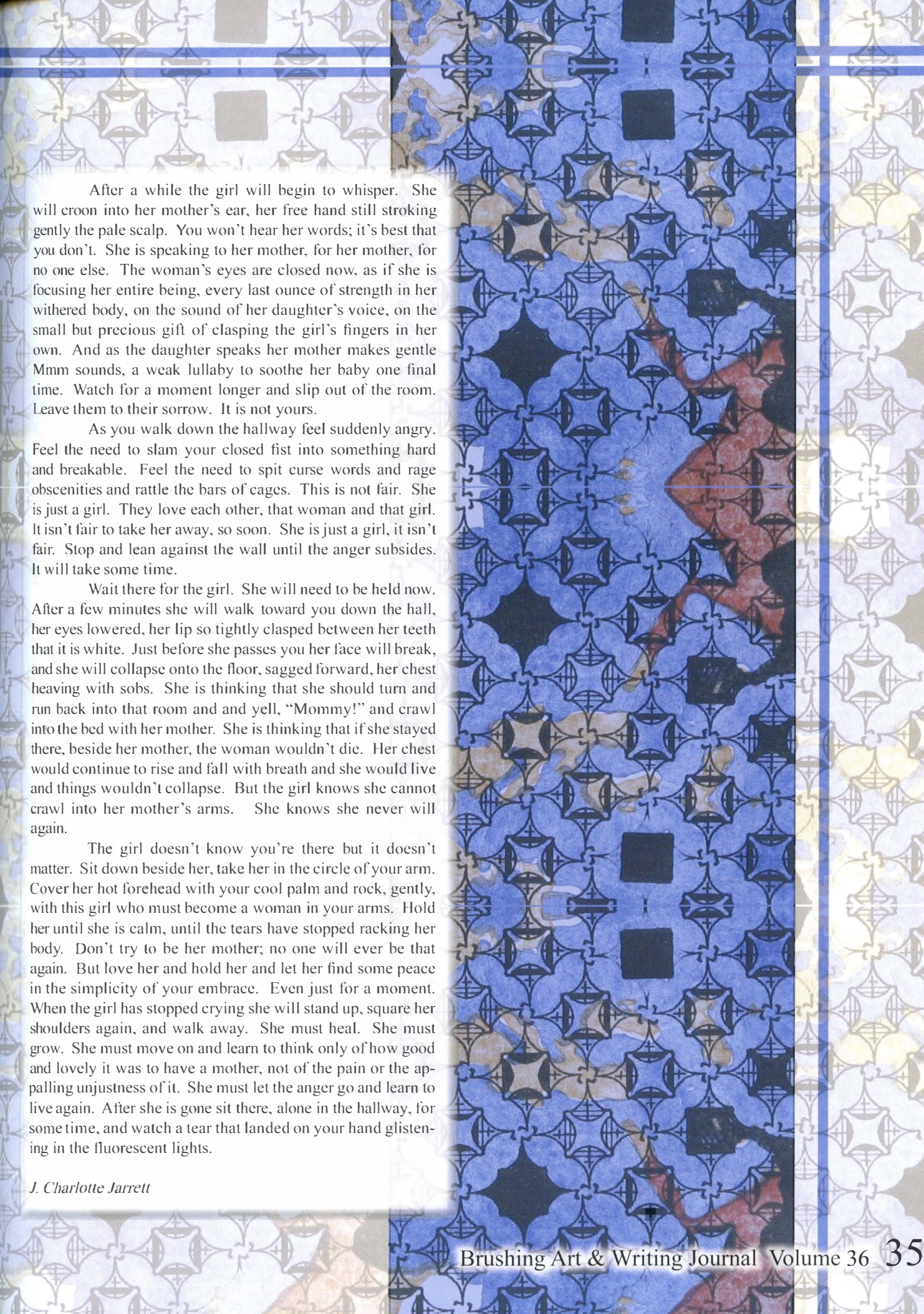
Now step into the room just behind her and stand against the wall. Don't gasp at the horrific sight. Lift the back of your hand to your mouth and swallow hard. The girl will rush to the figure in the bed, while you hang back, unseen, afraid. Realize that this is her mother, she grew and became inside of this woman.

Watch the girl run a hand over the bare blue scalp, gently, over and over again. Watch her bravery as she stares

into the swollen face before her, stretched into a nightmarish caricature by the oxygen mask that is strapped, too tightly, around the woman's head. See the tube coming from the woman's nose, draining a green-brown fluid. Hear the rapid, sterile beeps of the EKG machine, see the girl's sharp glance toward the monitor when the beeping pauses, hesitates, stalls, and resumes. Breathe in deeply and smell beneath the sterility of the room the sour odor of death, of dying.

And now, watch closely. The woman is not sedated, she is in there somewhere, swimming in the hellish waters of this drowning body. The eyes—still beautiful, still aware, shockingly blue—will open. There is the first initial look of confusion, and something of terror, and then the eyes find the daughter's face. And it is so subtle and so fleeting that you will miss it if you don't look hard, but there is a smile in them, then. A soft, sweet smile that speaks of the girl's childhood and bedtime stories and the bond they've shared for twenty-one years. The woman's eyes are beautiful.

The daughter won't trust herself to speak so she will lean down and press her cheek against her mother's. Her mother will squeeze the girl's fingers tightly. A hot tear will fall from one of their eyes, and land on the other's skin. Watch them hovering there like that for a long time. Watch the daughter feeling the sweet sensation of her mother's skin warm against her own for the last time.



After a while the girl will begin to whisper. She will croon into her mother's ear, her free hand still stroking gently the pale scalp. You won't hear her words; it's best that you don't. She is speaking to her mother, for her mother, for no one else. The woman's eyes are closed now, as if she is focusing her entire being, every last ounce of strength in her withered body, on the sound of her daughter's voice, on the small but precious gift of clasping the girl's fingers in her own. And as the daughter speaks her mother makes gentle Mmm sounds, a weak lullaby to soothe her baby one final time. Watch for a moment longer and slip out of the room. Leave them to their sorrow. It is not yours.

As you walk down the hallway feel suddenly angry. Feel the need to slam your closed fist into something hard and breakable. Feel the need to spit curse words and rage obscenities and rattle the bars of cages. This is not fair. She is just a girl. They love each other, that woman and that girl. It isn't fair to take her away, so soon. She is just a girl, it isn't fair. Stop and lean against the wall until the anger subsides. It will take some time.

Wait there for the girl. She will need to be held now. After a few minutes she will walk toward you down the hall, her eyes lowered, her lip so tightly clasped between her teeth that it is white. Just before she passes you her face will break, and she will collapse onto the floor, sagged forward, her chest heaving with sobs. She is thinking that she should turn and run back into that room and and yell, "Mommy!" and crawl into the bed with her mother. She is thinking that if she stayed there, beside her mother, the woman wouldn't die. Her chest would continue to rise and fall with breath and she would live and things wouldn't collapse. But the girl knows she cannot crawl into her mother's arms. She knows she never will again.

The girl doesn't know you're there but it doesn't matter. Sit down beside her, take her in the circle of your arm. Cover her hot forehead with your cool palm and rock, gently, with this girl who must become a woman in your arms. Hold her until she is calm, until the tears have stopped racking her body. Don't try to be her mother; no one will ever be that again. But love her and hold her and let her find some peace in the simplicity of your embrace. Even just for a moment. When the girl has stopped crying she will stand up, square her shoulders again, and walk away. She must heal. She must grow. She must move on and learn to think only of how good and lovely it was to have a mother, not of the pain or the appalling unjustness of it. She must let the anger go and learn to live again. After she is gone sit there, alone in the hallway, for some time, and watch a tear that landed on your hand glistening in the fluorescent lights.

J. Charlotte Jarrett

Bougainvillea

She stands often alone, in solemn display,
along a tree, wall, or freeway.
Deepest of reds, purple pink, yellow, and white;
thorniest of crowns, brittle yet with a bite.
Sometimes a bag lady, or rebellious youth;
always a Queen, from her top, down to her roots.
Steadfast, defiant, alone in her loyalty,
behold Nature in all her Glory.

Gene Moore



Solitude - Elizabeth Hollabaugh

Nature Sings Like Walt at Midnight

The invisible crickets moan from
Behind—in their safehouses.
The wind's loud voice
Prompts the water to scratch
The shore, in its own way.
Traveler's gasps at shooting stars
Echoless in the roaring
B r e e z e.

Mark DeNote

The Eyes and the Rose

Where off in this pale distance do you stand, the wind at your back
Pretending, with your
Arms open, (eyes closed) to bloom?
And your petals to open, keep you far from that breakdown.
My eyes (closed), and you will say
"You could have been here."

The sun's light
Wholly wasted, for I cannot
Swallow it as your rose could.
Only that night shines its shadow through me
And I have endured the moon (eyes closed, seeing)

I will roll my hands gently through these hills,
Rushing down through the green blades
(eyes open)
They can cut me no longer.

David Frantz



Rose - Ron Pease

MORT EN SURSIS

J'étouffe sous une couche de plastique
qui pénètre tous mes pores
Je meurs dans une masse d'air
empoisonnée par l'alchimie perverse
Mon énergie se dissipe sous les pieds
insoucieux de mes souffrances
sous les mains
qui arrachent mes os
et les bouches qui sucent mon sang.
Mon corps saigne, déchiré par
des explosions
des mines
des bombes
plantées par la cruauté et la férocité.
Ma chair brûlée par les déchets pétroliers
les émissions fermentées
Je me noie dans les mers noires
dans les marées rougeoyantes
qui massacrent les poissons et les tortues.
Enfants ! Venez à mon secours !
Venez me caresser de vos mains douces,
de vos regards pleins de curiosité
et d'horreur
face à ma beauté meurtrie!
Venez renverser l'éclipse de mon existence
Et de la vôtre !
Venez exaucer mon fol espoir !
Je suis la Terre
et je mourrai sans votre amour.

Dr. R. Matilde Mésavage

Translation: Stay of Execution

I am smothering under a layer of plastic
which penetrates all my pores
I am dying in a mass of air
poisoned by perverse alchemy
My energy is dissipating under feet
careless of my suffering
under hands
which tear out my bones
and mouths that suck my blood.
My body is bleeding, torn by
explosions
mines
bombs
planted by cruelty and ferocity.
My flesh burned by haste from oil
Fermented emissions
I am drowning in black seas
in red tides
which massacre fish and turtles.
Children! Come help me!
Come caress me with your soft hands
with your glances full of curiosity
and horror
confronted by my bruised beauty!
Come reverse the eclipse of my existence
And of your own!
Come answer my mad hope!
I am the Earth
and I shall die without your love.

THE WOMAN-BEAST

I perch naked in a child's wagon,
knee pressed against my breast,
while you pull me up the just-tilled
furrows of soft black soil.
We have come here to frolic and nuzzle
and buck like the deer.

Suddenly, shadows approach
down the rows: the Mayor and
his Pollyanna wife in a long-sleeved dress,
the Reverend with the nose like a
cauliflower, only sunset-red.
They pass us by and try to pretend
I'm not there.
I draw my knees closer to hide
my nakedness
and clasp my hands around my ankles.
I crane upwards and tell them,
"But we were sure we'd keep alone

in such a quiet, open field, you see?"

They do not.
They march across the rows
tossing seeds all over the earth,
dirt splashing up from their slick heels
onto their cheap, light trousers.
Some of the dirt kicks up and sticks to
my body.
Their eyes trace over me with fear and loathing,
their accusation as ironclad and relentless as a
plow.
We are the salt of the earth, they proclaim silently.
You are the woman-beast. And this
vast fertile land which stretches from horizon
to shining horizon is no longer
free.

Vanessa Blakeslee

B R O K E N



Elizabeth Hollabaugh - A Tree in the City

Do you not know me?
I was a mountain,
Tall against the sky,
And not so gray
As you may have painted me.
Why stand upon me now,
Feigning concern?
Would you have me dust myself away,
Leaving my ground barren
To settle your noble mind?
Here at least, among the rubble,
My broken body may yet feel the wind.

Do you not know me?
I was a great oak,
King of my forest,
And not so old
As you may have perceived me.
Why stare, axe still in hand,
Trying sorrow?
Would you have me burn myself to ash,
Scarring my forest floor
To ease your good conscience?
Here at least, twisted in chaos,
My gnarled limbs may still reach for the sky.

How can you not know me?
I was your Earth,
Teeming with all life,
And not so vast
As you may have assumed of me.
Where will you go to now,
Living again?
Would you have me grow myself anew,
Sapping my failing heart
To heal your pure soul?
Here at least, in my barren state,
My mournful soul may now sorrow in peace.

Aimee Cervenka



Lilly - Ron Pease

Through a Widow's Window

The widowed wife of Mr. Well-To-Do,
A graceful debutante garnished in green,
Examines her hands: her manicure new,
Her ring like the crown of a kingless queen.

She wearily eyes the lipstick smear
Around the cigarette she kissed goodbye,
With echoed condolences in her ears
And solitude lurking in shadowed lies.

The dark-lensed mask she'd worn, made by Dior,
Limo-like windows concealing her eyes,
Is carelessly tossed on the hard-wood floor,
And there it stays, a discarded disguise.

Five hundred count sheets are a shame to waste
On mourning a husband easily replaced.

McKenzie Bennett

Beach Walker

If you see a man
Sitting on an empty beach
Speak softly to him

Choices

All roots cut from you,
One choice remains impending:
Die or dare to grow

Searching

Walking down the path
Winding into the desert
Find your own way home.

Mark DeNote

The Husband

The night you spat into the kitchen sink, ghosts
escaping the ends of our cigarettes, cotton shirts clinging
with sweat, air hissing from the pressure cooker,

you confessed to an empty promise,
like the silent window you stared into, its mirror
concealing the soft grass where we once laid, arms
locked,

we melted together in the summer heat, rubbing ice
along our backs and bathing in the steam
of our passion. Charmed by youth

you clipped my wings with a ring of gold, stealing
me away in a glass chariot, and when I tried to speak
to your hunger that night, bent over the soft potatoes
cooked too long, the ones

I mashed down into the pot, you revealed yourself
to the window and slithered from the kitchen with a
beer. Then I,
without flight, went limp among the

shattered pieces of the broken ashtray.

Candy Hamblin

Into the Woods - Elizabeth Hollabaugh



VIETNAM GREEN MIXED WITH BLACK INJUSTICE

We will never know if they minded
Being in Vietnam with the hailing of bullets,
Rockets flying, exploding and their heads disappear.

Standing on the street corners
Of my neighborhood,
I watched them,
I watched my own Vietcong,
American born Vietcong,
Black Vietcong,

Rebelling against the system,
Seeking freedom,
Seeking life,
From the Red, White, and Blue.

I used the horseshoe ambush,
To escape from the violence,
But I didn't get far.

Those bullets would fly past my head
In the middle of the night
In my nightmares and the blood would fall from my forehead.

I never cursed those times,
I only cried out,
"God, God, Oh, God, where the fuck are you?" No, I did not curse God.

I only wanted to know where the fuck was He,
Facing death will make you ask simple questions of God.

I'm talking to you before I die,

So the black soldier talked to God
Before he died in South East Asia,
And I talked to God in the Nation's Capital
Before I died from injustice.

Michael "Fireeyes" Robinson

THE CREATURE IN THE SWIMMING POOL IS THE NEW CHRIST

Dead frogs caught in my hair,
my backstrokes propel me ahead
like a collegiate crew boat cutting
along the Charles.
While the rest of America
lolls underneath franchise umbrellas
growing fatter and less alive,
pouring doublemint frappaccinos
and sucking sliced pork barbeque
down its throat,
I swim.
Alone,
I will emerge
from the pool the new Christ,
slim and golden strong with shoulders
like a man bearing a pitcher of water,
to walk among the lost herd,
no longer sheep but pigs.
I will not send them over the cliff
but say, Follow me into the spring.
Do not fear a tiny dead frog when
you can peel away your old flesh.

Outside the leaf-littered pool,
The cardboard and Styrofoam and
greasy wrappings pile up.
When you come out, America,
the breeze will have knocked
those empty containers down.
You will pluck a drowned white frog
from your matted hair
And a new hunger will swim
like a fish in your belly.
From now on you will feed yourself
by slipping back into your watery underworld
as the sun finds repose each night.

When you were a newborn nation, and before,
a colony cut off,
each breath was a new beginning.

Dripping, you rise out of the deep waters,
once again the anointed one.

Vanessa Blakeslee





Talented Mr. Ripley - Nicole Fiedler - Medium

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