



ENJAMBED

Life's a parody; I'm a paradox

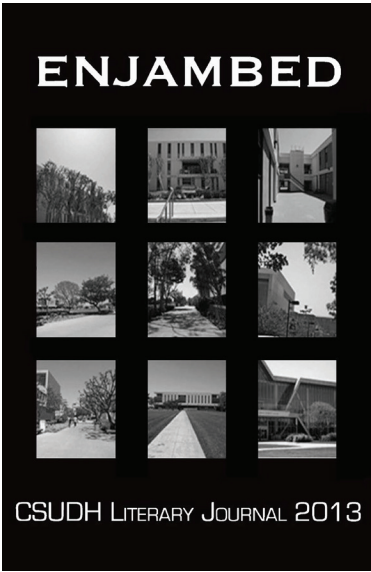
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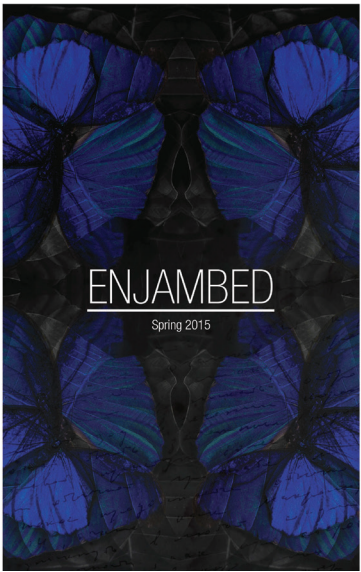
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ENJAMBED: A magazine that continues beyond the confines of the written line.
(2006 - 2018)

Student run. Dr. Cauthen advised. Enjambed continues to evolve and stand the test of time.



2013



2015



2016



2017

Life's A Parody; I'm A Paradox

Art is not limited to the original; the best art is a parody of something else. By extension, parody and paradox often exists symbiotically in art. Seemingly absurd or contradictory elements in art expose social and individual truth.

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Milquetoast

Leonard Murray

The Beast is a slave for approbative feminine
lyrics

He no longer slays his prey with vicious rhyme or
metered thought in line

His verse is not dripping with the saliva of erect
warriors marching with shield and sword
prepared for both victory and death

He lays prone lap breathing in her valley
inhaling what he thinks is glorious

He is milquetoast as her moans of pleasure
deceive him and betray his natural predatory
predilections

Her secretions quell the elicit tongue that was
once capable of both the spark of life and the
flame of death

She straddles him wrapping him in rings of
promises, contracts, and tangential obligations
that leave his girth, power, and reflexes atrophic

The Beast is flaccid and unable to bound and
pounce upon the fleshly weakness that
insidiously destroys our chance at greatness

Please, someone awaken my Beast! Rescue me!

Stab him, if you must, piercing the scales and
calluses of accumulated life!

Drive the stake deep until it strikes fresh flesh
and boiling blood making him erupt with roaring
flames

Take cover as the sharp awareness of the strike
resurrects life and he rages against all! He is in
his natural state and spews fire, roars, and
devours without prejudice!

Fear not for those who might get singed,
pummeled, or even eaten

This Beast is a seer and his fire possesses the
purity of ancient tongues and the prophecies of
the world to come.

If Shakespeare Was Alive



Thou shalt
Kiss my ass
and endure it
you plague
sore thot!

Lizeth Reyes

Ode to the Matzo Cracker

Adam Thomas Applebaum - The Forsaken Scribe

Matzo cracker,
Crumbly, and plain.
You remind us of our pain.
Of the hardships and the slain.
Did they all die in vain?
Are we angry are we sane?
Passover traditions remain,
And immutability is to blame.
History was cruel,
To those of G-d's rule.
Though today they are few,
Innovating's what they do.
Take it from a Jew!

I Remember

Jonathon Rodriguez

I remember,
The sound of your smile,
So subtle,
Yet so strong.
It pressed my chest,
And held my hand,
The warmth,
The belonging.
The shepard's touch,
The slightest kiss,
The strongest words,
From the loudest whisper.

A simple smile,
A simple look, A
simple time, A
moment lost.

Faces in the Crowd: A Paradoxical Mimesis

Poeta Violeta

I would have liked to start this novel the way Jose Marti begins "Simple Verses/*Versos Sencillos*".



In my life, it seems as if everything is another life. Not knowing. Not understanding. Not living. I am living the life that I am making for myself now... and that comforts me a little. I find it different to digest the notion of being *free* in public spaces- I have tall, thick legs. Proactive... Provocative in false bravados- self-confident within. These legs take me places- Even if this life isn't my own.



Why does impermanence break me? This world... Nothing is ever permanent: People, places, love, sex, touch, and even the pencil I used to write on these pages... To me, it seems as naïve to believe in the faith of poly-tune or mono-tune lexicons- An everyday language. A silence into a shout- And to those that tend to whisper late at night: Please...try again- The lie is worth it.



The thing about diaries is that you really cannot tell someone how you *really* feel- except: You actually can.



What seems to be true about the spaces within pages is that they tend to fill up the emptiness of paper- Much the same way that spaces in life tend to be filled and then... one writes them away in their peculiar syntax- And sometimes...It seems like *you* really make empty filled-up with something: A void with oozing love.



Pencils are a work of art: I lose them. Spend more money on new pencils. Replenishing. And repeat, again- over and over- Syntactical synchronicity does not occur unless a writing utensil is present- Intertwined with the fingers that shed ice cold tears that went dry- yet still felt for a period that you had *winter within*.



I would have liked to start this novel the way Gabriel Garcia Marquez begins "The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World"...



There's nothing so ill-advised as to attributing metonymic value to inanimate or imaginary things- Especially ordinary things like *language*. - It can be sordid or verdant- The task is to dissect the synecdoche into a mere nothing- except that language is *everything*.



Writing is a manifestation of that which belongs to something that is difficult to say: As hollow as one feels...writing is a *catharsis*. An eloquent word- phrase- all at the stroke of a pencil.



We all have hollows within- in some ways. It's like we need to fill in a part of ourselves that inexplicably tends to feel like is whole. Only two melancholic and poignant lines remain &... The likelihood of it to ascend or transcend seems to dilute at the passing whim of every second.

*Faces in the crowd all around permeate perpetually...Paranoia in
elusive metonymies that allow me to somehow transcend the
darknesses engraved within and outside.*



Trompe-l'œil?

Raison d'être?



I have a theory: concepts are myriads....sometimes full of wonder- always innate with meaning.
Awe- lovely- *flowery* things- I'd like to try [less than] the latter.



Physique sometimes elapses sensuality- It's like the body is a *perfect* flowery things- It is dead. It is alive.
It is *withered*. And it is throbbing- Like the blood that circulates. It travels distances- I wonder what it is
like to throb the same way as flowers do when they sprout from the earth?



Spring: It is raging. It is fluid. Re-used. Rushed- Recycled- Yet, it is subtly patient.



"I never belonged to that world". Sometimes...it *feels* like I never belong in any world.



I lie in intermittent spaces I float in-and-out- and it *always* complicates my life. Where do I begin? Where
do I go? Where do I begin? [I belong in] A world- someplace where *kindness lives*. I wonder.



Hide and seek is the figurative language of joy.



The world of dreams... It must be an interesting one. – Revelations- Appearances- Presence- Destinies-
What of the minds that make us who we are? – Terrified to Jubilant.



Physical injuries- scars- reverberating lacerations-pain and pleasure: They are all temporary.



Connections...even those are temporary- They matter- That is undeniable. The real question is: How
much?



I would have liked to end this novel the same way Wallace Steven's
"The Snowman" ends.



We all have hollow *phantoms* within ourselves- Like we have voids to fill- Like we are empty- Like we
are in need of *something* to fill us in.- Like we are stretched thinly- And we are cut in some way... Like
there is no hope to stay in shape- to stay in place. - That which we seek cannot be found *sometimes* in
avoidance.



Life is about sustaining breath- Novels and poems sustain mine- In such a way that permanent
inscription of myself lies within the confines of these pages.



Is there a way for language to mean something? Nothing and everything?



Trying out someone else's belongings... books- clothes- personalities? They are markers of identity. *Do
we feel safe when we embody what others have as our own?*



I sometimes feel like my lips are not mine.



The places...the streets- these crowds...This ever changing world...It has value. *Si no siento valor en mi
mismo pongo el valor en mi maleta- mis audifonos- la poesia- Y los pasos que camino en esta vida...*



I have been dealt too much moral accusation by part of loved ones... Like my life supposed to be some fixed moral compass...Spare me? I have some free will to follow- Free will to channel- No matter what the form consists of, free will...please come to me.



I like to think that somehow anomalies make sense...No matter how or what their forms *consists* of.



Will my words somehow fill in some voids in another man? In another poem? In another book? A *blueprint*. [His] Full-fledged freedom to explore the empty spaces in between my lines... and those occupied as well.



The same way I cross paths with a new poem is equal to a sheer amalgamation of joy.



Can we convince ourselves of our worth? Of Ourselves?



The wonder of libraries: They open up new worlds.



Is Illness indistinguishable? As if nothing really lies ahead...? As if there were only dead-ends...? I wonder.



The trials and trails I leave behind me often reverberate nuisances, sadness..., and *perhaps* even disappointment.



Recovery is always possible. It comes in many shapes, ways, and forms:



Somehow, somewhere, there will be lights dancing to your night skies. There will be hope- Shining hope. Do not forget- These faces in the crowd- This hand that writes- This body that sinks and rises- These and many more-



They are all en 'El Presente'.

Checking Out

Brenda Alonzo

Surreal.

It wasn't the first time. It was the second.

Key in the ignition.

Foot on the gas.

Trees passing in blurred peripherals

as the journey starts and stops with each green or red flash of light. We

cannot hear his thoughts.

We know they are heavy.

The overnight bag was packed.

It had been packed for days.

The 'hardest part,'

'admitting one has a problem,' had long since passed.

The inevitable must happen.

The plan was for Thursday night.

Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

A 72 hour hold.

Just like last time.

The violent reaction upon learning one cannot

check one's self out at will.

Just like last time.

Pet sitter, check.

Work clearance, check;

mental health days fall under sick time now.

Reading material, check. Favorite book club's list of suggestions. He

couldn't remember if they'd allowed phones the last time. He'd left it

at home either way.

Only 2 people know where he is headed,

trees passing in blurred peripherals.

Monday morning, and Thursday could not come soon enough;

all consuming thoughts more prevalent than when last conscious.

Today is the day the inevitable happens.

The more you delay, the less likely you are to follow through.

Key in the ignition, foot on the gas.

Monday, 9 a.m.

Hello, my name is ——. I am here to check myself in.

Freedom in a Box

Anonymous



Ka-Boom

David Kirby

The Good

Kyle Baker

I remember mommy was very happy. She won a trophy for helping poor people get their very own house. She was wearing a really pretty dress and she smelled nice. She was going to the party while I was at school, so Miss Adams was going to bring me to her house! We drove to school and mommy gave me my lunch and kissed me right here!

Mommy is very nice. She always makes me cheesy burgers and reads me stories at bedtime. My favorite is The Giving Tree! She has lots of friends and they are nice too. They come to our house and read books together. And Miss Adams brings me cookies!

Miss Adams was my teacher. She helped mommy a lot. She is very nice too. One day Miss Adams took us on a field trip and we saw scry-scrapers! We met people who lived on the sidewalk, even at night time. They were very hungry, so we made them sandwiches. Peanut butter and jelly! They were so happy when they got to eat. It made me happy too.

My best friend Dillon was also there. He's six, just like me! After our field trip we walked to Dillon's house. We made a lemonade stand and got enough dollars to see a movie. Dillon tried to buy tickets for batman, but the ticket man said we need parents with us. We watched Disney instead.

Dillon's parents are always very busy. His daddy is always talking on the phone. I don't see his mommy very much. Except when she came to our house to read books. Me and Dillon use-ully go to the park and play on the swings. He's faster than me, so I don't like to play tag. But we play that sometimes. When we get hungry, Dillon's dad gets us McDonald's!

Mommy brings me and Dillon to cub scouts, she's our leader! I taught everyone in my troop how to tie a square knot. I'm very good at square knots. Everyone at scouts has been very nice. We play games and listen to mommy talk. I don't like when we play duck, duck, goose though. After scouts, mommy

drives us home and makes us pasketti! I love pasketti.

Mommy is my favorite in the whooole world. I was very scared when she brought me here, but she made me feel good. The kids at school had all sorts of questions. Who is your daddy? Where are you from? Why is your hair a different color from your mommy's? Mommy told me no matter what other people say, she still loves me as much as all the other mommies. She said that my red hair made me unique and special and that she loves me as big as the sky. The kids at school were use-ully nice after that. Until last Friday.

I was in Miss Adams class learning history. We were learning about Christopher Columbus when there was a really loud BOOM! Everyone started screaming and we hid under our desks. Miss Adams ran to the door and locked it, and told us all to stay in the room and try being quiet. Then she got on the phone. We all laid on the ground crying and screaming for a very long time. Sally Harper started screaming "We're all gonna die!" and everyone started crying and yelling even more. Then the phone rang and Miss Adams brought us all to the parking lot. Everyone was there, even the big fifth graders. Everyone was standing in lines and the teachers were all running around and counting everyone over and over and over. My mommy picked me up from school. She was still in her pretty dress. We made tomato soup and we tried to read stories. She told me that no one got hurt and everyone was alright. I asked her - then why was everyone crying?

Mommy was happy and I had lots of friends.

But then there was a ka-boom.

I wish I could go back to before--

The Bad

Darren

What do you expect? Does it really matter what happens to your kids? We raise our children instead of caring for them. When they can not pay attention in school, we put them on drugs - yet their parents can not pay attention to them when they come home. All they want

to do is be human, but we will not let them. Society never has.

They sent me to school so I could learn to conform. They expected me to be a normal, compassionate child - but they never gave me normal compassion. Trouble with homework? Look it up online. Hurt yourself playing? Suck it up kid. Girlfriend dumped you? You deserve it. Failed math class? It is because you did not try. Problems paying attention in school? You are making it up. What could make society finally pay attention to its hypocrisy? They see the homeless as lazy degenerates, yet they never stop to ask what made them homeless. They see the jails filled with undesirable violence, yet they never stop to ask what made them violent. They subjugate others every day - never understanding the consequence of their contempt. Society will never change by itself. They need to be woken up.

We expect children to teach themselves - my parents were no different. They never truly cared. My father would only ever speak to me in between phone calls. I like to think my mother has a big heart, but she spends all of her compassion on her patients. They are wealthy and successful - perfect in the eyes of society. But I am not.

Have you heard of Charlie the chimp? He was raised by humans from birth and became highly domesticated - his parents treated him as if he were a human child. He ate at the table with his mom and dad, dressed himself, brushed his teeth, even watched TV - he enjoyed baseball. Ironically, he did not like bananas - he preferred ice cream. His parents babied him, more than most parents baby their human children. Everyone got along with Charlie. He acted in small movies and met many people while helping his mother with her moving business. The people he met were always inspired by his friendliness and civility. They remembered him as the perfect pet. Charlie was assumed to be potentially impulsive and aggressive, so he was given Xanax by his owners. He had regular meetings with doctors who would scrutinize his every flaw and he had to go to checkups where they would poke him with needles - treated just like a mentally ill child.

One evening in his early adulthood, Charlie became upset and reckless so his owners called in a new veterinarian to help calm him down. When the veterinarian arrived, Charlie lashed out at him in confusion, breaking his leg before Charlie's owner was able to stab the chimp in the arm. After the knife crippled his rage, he stared at her as if to say "Why mom? Why would you do this to me?" because that is how he saw her - as his mother.

Everyone accused Charlie of being aggressive and violent, wanting him to be put to death. They said his owners should have known better - that chimps belong in the wild, living amongst one another, not living the life of a human - implying that a human raised in the same way would have turned out differently, yet the way we raise our children is just as unnatural as the way Charlie was raised. They ended up killing him because they did not understand him. They never treated him like a confused individual - they treated him like a savage. He was to be tamed and controlled - not nurtured and loved. They never tried to understand Charlie, or help him.

Our children are taught to be civilized and we correct their misbehaviors. But it is society that has to change. There is a Charlie in all of us

-- The Ugly

Joy Baker

I was on my way to receive a humanitarian award in the city. On the drive, I got an automated call from Kyle's school explaining that there had been a... bomb detonated in the gymnasium. It instructed us to stay away from the school until the threat was under control, but to be ready to pick up our children at a moment's notice. I panicked and nearly hit another car trying to turn around on the freeway. I had no control over how fast I was going; it never seemed fast enough. I couldn't stop thinking about Kyle. Why couldn't they just tell me that he was alright? I have never been more terrified in my life.

When I finally got the call to pick up Kyle. It was explained that the bomb had destroyed the gym, but that no one was in the building at the time of the explosion. The school had been searched for any other

student's safety. I searched frantically for him through the sea of crying children and parents. I couldn't find him for the longest time. Then finally, I felt him suddenly hug on my waist. We both cried the whole way home...I can't remember if they were tears of joy, or sadness.

We are so lucky that no one got hurt; I can't imagine what would have happened to us if our children had been killed. But sometimes, I feel like that bomb still destroyed us. Like our children will still be horrified for the rest of their lives. Like our friendships will never be the same. Like the community we have worked so hard to build, has been destroyed.

Nancy left on Monday for New York, said she couldn't handle the stress of it all... having one of her former students do such a bad thing. She told me that Darren was always such a sweet kid, that she never would have expected him to do this. I pray that she will be alright ... She didn't deserve any of this. I know Kyle misses her already ... She was his favorite teacher.

The kids have been bullying him all week, saying that he has the same hair as "the bad man"...Don't their parents explain how illogical that is? He's come home crying everyday and he's hardly eating...Even his friend Dillon started bullying him, but Kyle's too sweet to notice it most of the time. He told me that he didn't want to go to cub scouts this week...He loves cub scouts.

I used to feel safe letting Kyle play with Dillon out in the town. But now I can't imagine letting him be alone. I cut my days short at work to pick him up from school. Dillon came over on Wednesday, but they didn't laugh and play like they used to. They just sat and watched TV... Not even their cartoons could cheer them up.

Dillon's mom stopped coming to our book club, said there's more important shit to worry about than reading stories and eating cookies. We don't read books much anymore anyways ... Most of our nights are spent consoling one another through tears. Our children are all devastated and we don't know how to help them, but we can't help but try. Mrs. Williams thinks we should have the kids see a psychologist... I don't know what I think...

how to help them, but we can't help but try. Mrs. Williams thinks we should have the kids see a psychologist... I don't know what I think...

It's only been a week, and everyone is safe from that man...Thanks to you. Yet our community has been divided; our friendships have been severed. You and your officers did a heroic job; finding that man and making sure no one got hurt. But despite your best efforts, our town may never be able to recover. I never would have thought this could be its destruction.

Our town was thriving and you did your best to protect it.

But we will never be the same.
None of us ever will--

Being Dominican

J. Riverside

Being Dominican is an erotic cocktail
(Of racial identity)
“Aren’t you black and white they ask?”
No!
Soy Dominicana.
Y tengo la sangre del mundo entero!
Como puedo ser solo negra y blanca?
When my genes are spread far and wide
Like mantequilla on pan de agua
Dipped in Cafe con leche.
Somos Dominicanos.
And we identify with the Tahino Indians,
With the Africans traded by the Spaniards
Who raped our indigenous and shed their colonial
blood through our family trees.
Pero no necesito maquillaje
No voy a poner me una máscara
Para hacer lo más fácil de entender.
Solo quiero gritar y cantar
In the joy of
Being Dominican.

Do You Find Me

Jonathon Rodriguez

Do you find me beautiful -
Even though I want you dead?
Do you find me gorgeous -
Even though lies have been what I said?

Do you find me unforgettable- Even though
our time was lost?

Do you find me remarkable -
Even though your life was what it cost?

Whitman; Paris

Brenda Alonzo



Bear Attack

Juan Carlos Valadez

Your body, an erect trunk
standing tall.
The roots
of your familiar, uncompromising patterns
digging their claws,
leaving gashes against
his proverbial skin.
Your dry branches
take a life of their own,
wrapping themselves around his neck,
forcing him to cough blood. The fruits
of your tree,
naïve of their strength;
in denial
of the patriarchal seed
that gave it birth.
Standing firm
in the center of your past
your roots have begun to decay,
water is running low. Even
in the face of defeat
the bear fights back
to live another day.

I've Had A Nightmare

Ashley Smith

That black boys weren't as
free
as the bullets terrorizing
their black bodies
were.
Hundreds of years later, they still aren't as free
as the bullets terrorizing
their black bodies
are.
She promised—no she guaranteed that Blacks
and whites
unalienably had rights to
life,
liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. America,
you promised.
Can you see, America,
the lack of rest as we
pound
on our chests, exclaiming how we can't breathe
and how our lives seem to blacken
any chance to matter.
Can you see, America,
that liberty told us that
we had freedom.
She whispered,
"Let's Make America Great Again,"
and turned her back on us.
She jailed our freedom with a promise's deceit.
She jailed our freedom to an elephant that
chooses not to realize its own dung piled on a
keyboard.
Can you see, America,
kneeling to stand with you means to
insult you and
protesting to salute in your justice
means we've turned our backs on your
unity.

Can you see, America,
we've been robbed from our dignity
of color to hush and award others
in the land of joy and la la,
midnight
almost didn't happen.
Can you see, America,
I've had a nightmare
where little black boys weren't as
free
as the bullets terrorizing their black bodies
were
and little black girls weren't as
enough
as society sung it's lullaby
and
their natural wasn't as
pressed
to be considered great.
Can you see, America,
I've had a nightmare
where you thought this was
the land of the free and home of the brave
when we are barely renting this confinement
of trembling fear.

Paradox is itself a Paradox

Eric Navas

In life there is Paradox
Whether it be like a cat or a fox
But one thing is for sure it can never be contained in a box
All Paradoxes have a underlining patterning
Which are always mind shattering
All Paradoxes have their own subject and length
But the concept remains the same for more than a tenth
They are to show you that not everything is black and white but
rather gray
Which reflects long into the day
Even though Paradoxes help one get outside the box
The fact that each one cannot have a totally original concept is in
itself a paradox

No More Jumping

Ashley Smith

On the beds of
their
chests.
the cushion of their
lungs
have deflated.
the mattress lies cold
and is
icy
within the cores of their eyes.
America called
the doctors dressed in blue and the
doctors
said,
“I can Breathe”

Enlight

David Reza



My Belly's Calling 4U (My Appetite 2.0)

Molimau "Usolosopher" Fatu

I'm layin down in my silk sheets
Feenin fo something sweet
Hearin that roar from my stomach
Yearin for that glaze twist donut
Or that chocolate covered bar
Of exquisite quality of the superb est
You know my six pack abs be hibernatin
Under my fat
Flexin after I finished my workout at the Golden Corral or that Korean BBQ up in the OC
Don't chu know that I can see you
With your savory lips chunky
Your aroma is unlike any other that I can describe
Chocolate meltin into my mouth
On my tongue feelin yo taste buds
Your love is what I need and what I have been cravin fo
You know
To have you all for me
Like three scoops of cookies and cream with that coconut pineapple
Or those fresh homemade coconut buns fresh out the oven
For that your love fills me up right
With my stretch marks healing
Because of the battles I endured
Now with you
I am complete to where your presence keeps my motivated
A Queen who brings life into me in all facets
From the mic
Onto the pen
To when I speak
You are there
That face
That face
To where yo love has been like that bomb homemade meal
That jerk chicken you made me
With the herbs and spices
Oooooowwwweeeeee
You are my soulmate
My soulmate
My soulmate
For life
You have answered my call
My Belly's Callin 4 U
4 U
Peace



Enlight II

David Reza

Who Will Survive in America

Paul Wooten

Growing up I've always wanted to be white.
As a child I disliked my skin color.

For Sale

My Soul
My Body
My Mind
My Life

My skin is black
I've always been told by society
that dark skin people are ugly.

Paul Wooten: Visuals



Coming of Age

Juan Carlos Valadez

Your brown skin, tainted;
scabs falling on the floor,
leaving a trail
for further inspection.
Blood dripping
on, the dirt of innocence.
Your ankles
bruised, branded,
shackled with uncertainty.
Stuck
in a web of insecurities;
with a high guard,
throwing straight punches,
fighting your demons,
believing that you
are dead inside.
Pieces of your flesh
bitten off by boys
confined to adult bodies.
As you move forward
dragging your bare feet,
with each crawl,
it is obvious
that you are on your last breath.
You are not
going to make it.
As you reach the center of the temple
defeated,
spreading your prophetic wings,
placing your gift on the altar.
As you gasp for air
I hear the yearning of your heart.
Smiling
as you transcend onto heaven
as a Salvadoran Goddess—
a title well deserved.

The Motherland

Molimau “Usolesopher” Fatu

This extravagant place was of
Pristine elegance
A place of wealth
Not just economically
But spiritually
To where all the divine scriptures
Came from
Where the enemies came
Eager to learn the teachings
Of these great people
By disguising as harmless people
But their true motive was to
Steal and kill
Calling them primitive
Yet these people fell in lust
With their women
Their resources
And their structure of metropolitan cities
So amazing that they had pictures of them Only to
burn them to the ground
From here
The influence has spread
All over the world
To where the melanin rivers
Vastly made it's way to places
Like South America where you see the pyramids of
the Aztecs and Mayans
In the South Pacific to places
Like Fiji
Samoa
Hawaii
Where tiki statutes
And clothing resemble those
Of the Motherland
To even the dancing of the Maoris
With their haka
With the swaying hips shaking

Of the Tahitians and Hawaiians Into
the pow-wows of the
Native Americans
The oppressor has blinded
Us all for so long
To thinking that we were the minority
When in actuality
We are the majority
And all are similar to each other Being
different shades of brown
As you see here with these words
Talofa
Aloha
Mahalo
Alofa
Matumaini
All have similar dialect
Which all came from
The Motherland

Dogs and Fruits Or AmEricA

E. Amores

I don't tell people what I am anymore...
I'm tired of being *your* arguments proof.
Whether I say/I am
Asian, Islander, Filipino, White
(the one that's more convenient for *you*)
shouldn't ever have mattered to *you*.

I say/I am Asian, Islander, Filipino, White
You never had any input.
You was irrelevant.
You were never the decider of
My I and Me.

We visited a beach house
Where we met a woman
Who in a white blouse
Walked to my friends and me.
We were dealt in forced to play
Where are you from? Let us see.
What are *you*? What are *You*? What are *YOU*?
Walked up to Me and thought *You*.

That day marked the oppression of the *you*
And the commencement of their racial game

-Oh!"

Must be a Mexican!"
Five Mexicans *you're* all the same!"
How fun! A Mexican flush!"

I was the of last my friends. Cards not shown.
I decided to put this dealer of *you* to shame.
Miss I am Asian and White.
No flush, I'm not a proxy to fix *your* games.

She lost how unfair. A wild card she hadn't known. Jokers
weren't included how embarrassing, how lame.

-Oh! *You're* a mutt!"

And she thinks Ah Ha! I've reclaimed my game!
I've made *you* less than human, a Mulligan, a roll-again.

-A four of a kind and a mutt"

I am not a dog. Stop calling me a mutt.
Mixed with privilege that denies my privilege
The denied privileged or The privileged in denial
You aren't like Ours.

You are Them.
You're always Them, never Ours.
Them is Ours!
So much easier to be We, NO! NO!
that can never be Me

We wandering lost denied a home
Who is my motherland?
Where is my father's land?

Scraps of culture fall on my lap.
Hungry for more I follow and
Nudge myself through a door.

Are *you* my I?

I don't really like the taste.

I'm White but it's just the coconut I
don't like.

I just don't like coconut.

I'm not a fruit.

I say I am who I say I am!

-We are Thai, but the same in Their eyes."

Join Our table lost stray."
Who has lost his way. Eat."

-Really *you* don't like Thai?"

Don't be so White."

-Where are *you* from *You* said"

YOU were Asian."

-*You* are a coconut."

-Well *you* don't like Thai food."
We thought *you* were Asian."

-OUT! OUT!"

You aren't like Ours. *You* are Them." Go
away *you* stray back to *your* own."

I am not a dog or a fruit.

For everyone else a curiosity,
Can we take it home?
I've never had one of those before.
They'll walk it around town, or bring it to lunch,
And feel so proud when everyone asks it

I am Eric Amores

-What are *you*?"

Asian.

-What are *you*?"

-Be serious don't bore us."
Your last name is Spanish"
it means love: Amores."

-Are you sure"
you're not any Latin nation?"

You don't look asian."

-What are *You*?"

My grandpa he's white.

-No, your hair"
it's still not quite right."
You can't be white."

-What are *YOU*?" I

AmEricA

-What does that even mean?"

It means
I don't have to play *your* games.
Ask me again what I am.
And I'll tell *you*
I

Am

Eric A.

I Told You One Too Many Times

Jonathon Rodriguez

I told you one too many times,
This obsession is a disease.
I'm that midnight mistake,
That the sunrise will regret.

You bet with your life,
As you dance with my demons.
You refuse to accept your demise,
As your consequences turn to ash.

Let the poison fade,
As you gain control.
No more shall addiction,
Be quenched by my weakness.

It's no surprise that you collapse,
Under the pressure of reality.
For the past has proven,
That your actions follow no cadence.

So here I stand once more,
With a demon to satisfy.
Will you sacrifice your future,
For one last dance?



There is More

David Reza

Lines Written (and Borrowed) for the Bicentennial of *Frankenstein*

Robert Weibezahl

Mary Shelley created a monster.
Born of two geniuses, married another—
 And thou strange star! ascendant at my birth
Which rained, they said, kind influence on the earth. Can greatness
rest upon a single work
If immortality is said to lurk
Between its strange, penumbral words and lines,
Sparking the primeval as it divines
Something each of us carries deep within—
What some may call the soul, the self, the djinn—
That strange and strong duality in each,
That struggles, strains, and risks extend its reach?
Conceived by brave daughter, who dared unite—

A star among the stars of mortal night.

Shakes & Co.

Anonymous



Simultaneously

Danely Segoviano

come into the forest
tripping along
skip the stones
one by one
twirl and twist
betwixt butterflies
mong the trees
mushrooms undo lies
shut your eyes
to dream
wish on celestial clusters
believe
feel the breeze
red golden yellow
falling leaves
white crystalline snow
arriving
an absurdity
to glow old
and dim young
simultaneously

Perspective

Danely Segoviano



Missing History

"History is written by the victors" Winston Churchill
Kyle Bigham

When I became an archaeologist, I never expected to actually find anything useful. Like many of my classmates I joined the field because I was genuinely fascinated by the lives of our ancestors. I just wanted to dig stuff up and look at it.

You see, the spotlight has never shined very brightly on Mr. Oren Bailey. In fact, one could say that it has averted its eye at every chance. Science fairs, spelling bees or academic decathlon, I never seemed to get credit for my own work. You're probably familiar with the feeling of underwhelming accomplishment when your group project gets an A and you did all the work. I never let it get me down though. In my eyes, it was better to just keep your head down and do the work. Happiness is what God invented hobbies for, right?

This philosophy served me well. I graduated from high school with zero fanfare and attended New Berkley University majoring in... you guessed it, Botany. However, not only was I blessed with the art of going unnoticed but also a brown thumb. I've killed just about as many plants as the droughts have. I eventually decided that since everything I touched was destined to die and return to the soil I might as well just start there.

Eventually, I graduated with my PHD and was shoved into the glamorous and globe trotting field every kid who has watched certain movies ha dreamed of. My parents even got me a safari hat and a bottle of Zinc Oxide sunscreen for my nose as a graduation present. I'm not sure if they were being funny or pragmatic, but I was happy just the same.

The dulllest part of the job came in the form of what I call "renovation" digs. These happen when someone is digging a new foundation and comes across ancient artifacts, say a bowl or a cup, and they report it to the city. They would then call out my team and we would excavate looking for anything of social or cultural value. Rather than sifting through the ruins of past generations I found myself rummaging through the garbage of whoever lived on the site last. Sometimes we would come

across old pieces of useless technology, but never anything of real value. One of my techs about lost his mind over what he thought was a serial killers burial ground only to realize that the previous owner of the land had a very industrious dog that liked to age his treats.

Happen stance is a hell of a thing though...

I was called out to investigate a few relics that had been dug up during a home foundation excavation. A few pieces of clothing had been uncovered at about four meters down, and according to local law, we had to determine whether or not the contractor was free to continue.

After laying out the grid we got to work, digging down slowly with tedious precision. Another meter down we found the entrance, although at the time it didn't look like much, just a concrete hole covered with a metal lid and lock. Very unassuming indeed, but exciting! What great treasures could lie within, god forbid it be a septic tank. We quickly called the landowner to get permission to cut the lock and I made my descent alone, what a day to forget my fedora.

Inside was a small curved room built out of what looked like a large corrugated pipe. After a few moments letting my eyes adjusting to the dark I turned on my flashlight. There wasn't much of anything in the chamber, just some shelves against the back wall and a single desk sitting in the middle. I moved forward and fumbled around the edges of the room looking for a light switch, it wasn't until I was deep into the room that I found a string hanging from the ceiling and tugged.

I had never seen anything like it before. Sitting on the lone table was a flash drive. Never in all of my years had I thought I'd lay eyes on one! This technology has been obsolete for centuries, it had been retired just before the Great Pilgrimage, how had one survived down here? And what the hell is so important that they left it five meters underground? Suddenly, I was gripped with the fiendish urge to stow it in my pocket and give the all clear. If this little stick is

worth anything, even to a collector, why should I have to share it? So that's what I did, for the rest of the day all I could think about was getting home and investigating my treasure. It's about time I got some recognition.

Mercifully, the day ended and I raced back to my hotel room and fired up my computer. I placed the stick on the pad reader and after a few minutes files began to pop up on my screen. Article after article from what looked like Earthen newspapers, all of which dated between 2017-2025 and none of which I had ever heard of before. Everything I learned about the end of Earth in school said that the nuclear fallout had made it uninhabitable by 2022 after the North Korean/American Nuclear Crisis, luckily by then we had created the first Mars station. Which makes these all impossible, right? Just a hoax some crackpot had created out of boredom.

The more I read, though, the more I began to doubt my schooling. From what I pieced together there wasn't ever a Nuclear Crisis. Something drastic happened in 2017 and against popular opinion American policies began to change, all scientific data that was previously proven to be true was erased. Global warming began to speed up with the aid of increased pressure against conservation and the revival of the coal industry. Worldwide corporate corruption made the rich untouchable and all powerful which helped to fuel the changes. The previously free internet was monetized, the poverty level in almost all but two countries hit nearly eighty percent. Within a few years even the tone of the newspapers began to change. The same publications that were condemning the changes began to fall in line with them, it was only the fringe newsletters that kept reporting real news.

After 2020 a few of the wealthiest countries began to research terraforming technology. By this time the Global opinion was that the Earth had taken a turn and was dying. A few articles began to blame a seemingly small asteroid strike as the cause, stating it "pushed the Earth closer to the Sun" creating a "roasting effect". A man named Elon Musk began trying to privatize space travel, making it affordable so the poorer citizenry could eventually escape. Again, new information was contradicting my

childhood teachings. In our narrative a Chinese man named Moon Lim Lee, one of Founders of Mars, was responsible for that.

The last entry I was able to read was from the New York Times in November 2025. The article discussed the Pioneer missions to populate Mars, but again the facts didn't line up. Instead of choosing passengers through a citizen lottery drawn from every nation, it appears that only those able to purchase a ticket for their family were able escape. Hundreds of thousands of politicians, the fiercely wealthy and dictators blasted off to safety while the poor were sentenced to death by a dying planet. We Martians are not born from the bravest the Earth had to offer, but from the shameful. After this life shattering realization I was arrested in my house, I didn't even hear them coming.

So now I sit here in a plastic cell god knows where, probably underground, ah the irony. There is no one in sight, and since my cell doesn't have a toilet I don't think I'll be here long. The result of my discovery is to be buried like the flash drive, the things I've learned never to see the light of day. I've scribbled this little note for whoever finds it, because like all those left on Earth, I too will be wiped from history. Perhaps it's for the best, knowing now who my ancestors are. Do yourself a favor, stay out of the spotlight; because the Elk with the most beautiful antlers ends up on the dinner table or hung on the wall. Although, if you're reading this then I can only guess you've gotten yourself in a situation like mine, and for that I'm truly sorry.

Oren Bailey

There is More II

David Reza



To My Baby's Next Keeper

Fiona Stenton

If you are getting this message
It means that you are looking after him now.
If I am being totally honest,
I'm envious
And wish there was some way to reverse this.
But since there isn't,
Here are some things that you will need to know:
One, he demands to be at eye level with you.
Keep a stool or pedestal nearby.
Two, he is incredibly loud about his demands.
Don't try to ignore it, trust me, it won't work.
Three, he can turn anything into a game.
Note: keep important things out of reach.
Four, he is very needy and will command you to show affection.
Give it to him or face a ball of insecure depression.
Five, He often loses things and hides things he doesn't like.
If he refuses to wear it, that is his final opinion, don't try to change it.
I know what you are thinking,
He must be in the wrong place,
Trust me when I say that he isn't,
He is probably scared and nervous,
Just show him kindness
And he'll go easy on you.
I promise.
Before I sign off,
I just need you to do a favor for me,
Tell him I miss him everyday,
And that I will come get him soon.
Tell him not to worry,
And that he is still my baby boy.
Tell him I wear his tags everyday,
And that he is remembered and loved.
To you,
Fellow Keeper,
I wish you luck.

Rat in the Kitchen

Jose Gonzalez

Provender for the family disappeared right and left. Luis Torrez said in Spanish that his kids had hollow legs. What's the matter with you? All this butter and no bread. On top of that, Carmen Moraga, Luis's common-law wife, could not for the life of her account for the disappearing undergarments on the clothesline. O, so mischances sprouted legs and waltzed off, eh? Luis got wise when he noticed chamfering teeth had compromised a sack of chicken feed. Then he found Carmen's panties peeking out at him underneath the water heater in the kitchen. (The cylindrical tank stood by the stove.) Fecal pellets dotted the counter and linoleum floor.

Ahora si, he said to himself. I got your number.

A rat had infiltrated Carmen and Luis's eastside rented abode in Wilmington, California and traded the open air of the junk heap beside their home for the indoor warmth of the water heater. A pinch of peanut butter on a Victor trap will lure the invader and snap its neck. Every bit as clever as its mousey counterpart, though, the rodent invading Carmen and Luis's personal space evaded capture. The only thing caught in the spring-loaded trap was a thumb when Luis failed to reset it properly. A different strategy was called for. Three men armed with staves and pickaxe handles, the kitchen exits sealed off with waist-high boards, cornered a gargantuan rat and clubbed it to death.

Now killing spiders and ants—and roaches, gross as they are—can be done with spray or chanclas, but the crunch of a chitinous exoskeleton pales in comparison to smashing the backbone of a fuzzy vertebrate. True, a pest is a pest, and the bubonic plague of the Middle Ages damaged the reputation of *rattus rattus* beyond repair. (Cool rat analogs like Splinter and Remy from *Ratatouille* have done little to change the collective mindset about the house rat, aka the ship or roof rat.) Yet it takes a certain type of individual to beat a living thing to death, especially if you liken the sounds of its death throes to a baby's wail. Luis's daughter, Josefina, my mom, aged eight or nine at the

time, bears witness to this.

Years later, whenever my mom recounts the story, that's the most poignant part—how it cried. Then I laugh when I'm told my uncle's role in the episode. How he nearly cried himself. Pissed himself is more like it. I'm reminded of a cartoon of a bull elephant losing all bravado when a mouse enters the room. My uncle, a bull elephant in perpetual musth, climbed on a chair and didn't set foot on the ground till mamma rat stopped breathing. He compensated by mustereing up enough courage to kill its litter. Went so far as to make jokes at his own expense as he quelled his *crudo* or hangover with Luis's famous *menudo* the following Sunday.

My uncle, Luis's stepson, a blue-collar, brown-eyed Mexican with a winning smile, a penchant for sex, strong drink, and barbiturates was a Marine veteran who lied about his age to enlist. His favorite pejorative was sissy and throughout my childhood he called me and my brother one before biting our cheeks in salutation. I picked up the signals he and those like him transmitted and told myself early on that boys don't cry and men drive *El Caminos*. My *tio*, a good man, albeit flawed, fought his gunny and his fellow Marines if disrespected, flexed his biceps whenever he posed for pictures, and, light years away from being called to the ministry, likened humility to humiliation, submission to emasculation. Unless Carmen slaked his thirst with beer or liquor, he refused to cross the threshold of any church. A shot caller, a *mero mero*, no god or person was to dictate how he rolled. He wore masculinity like a well-tailored suit. Clothes make the man, right? (Right?) It took me years to discover he, like many men, including me, was a method actor immersed in his character.

The other two rounding out Luis's posse were the husbands of Carmen's eldest daughters, Betty and Chata. (Carmen was Chata's real name but her pug nose inspired the appellation—*chata*—a term of endearment bestowed on her by her grandmother, Carmen's mom.) Both husbands were good-looking,

bronze-skinned men who had also served in the military. Scented with Three Flowers brilliantine, their jet hair glistened. What distinguished them was their difference in height and the fact one had curly locks and one was calvo or bald.

Although less squeamish about killing a rat than my other tio, the machismo they exuded—the machismo all three exuded—commingled with a sensitivity adulterated by booze and a guise of respectability. Don't appear weak. Stiff upper lip. Keep your feelings to yourself. These stoics showed no signs of wear and tear or fear, but, convincing as they were in public, did the veneer of masculinity hold up in private? Did they view themselves at any point in their lives as men masquerading as men?

One uncle, a cuckold, made lewd jokes and spoke of sexual conquest. Was he scorning himself for being played? Another uncle, prideful beyond all measure, tore up a Section 8 form and told his wife he was the breadwinner,

the man of the house; he and he alone would provide for his family. Luis, my grandpa, a man who squashed hornets with his bare thumb, who called my brother and me miedoso for crying whenever he dangled a dead mouse by its hairless tail and chased us around the house, had stopped sleeping in Carmen's bed when complications from diabetes robbed him of his ability to perform. A real man satisfies in the bedroom.

And when he couldn't he remade himself a friend instead of a remaining a husband.

I, too, have internalized notions of masculinity. The mask I've put on has become a part of me. I can't easily remove it. Yet I'm every bit as vulnerable, every bit as susceptible to doubt and fear and humiliation as I am disease. To admit this to you is to invite ridicule. So I look at you through the eyeholes of my mask and play it cool. No one has to know about the rat in the kitchen. But it's there, mocking me, making me tremble.

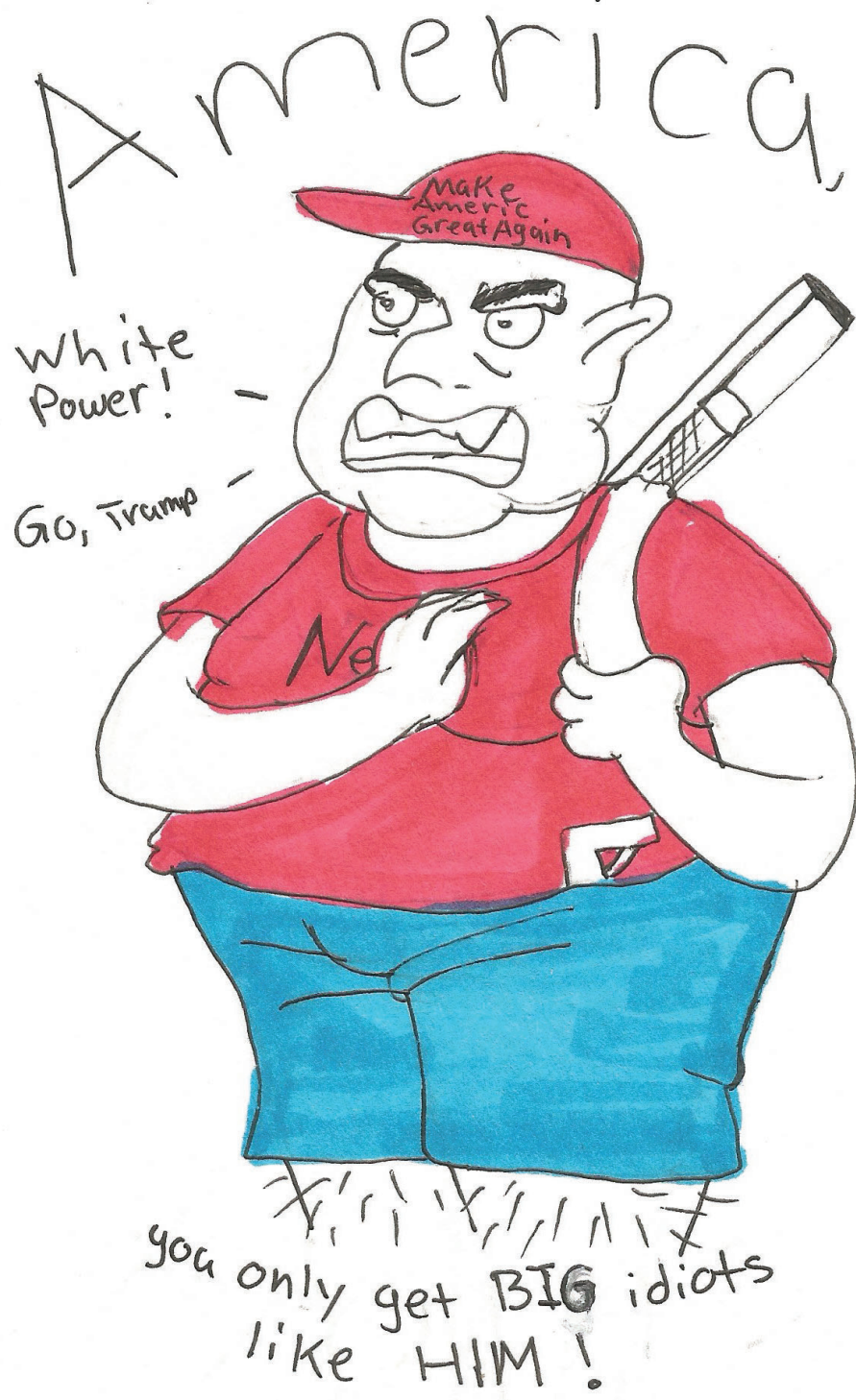
The Greatness of Our Ancestors

Molimau “Usolosopher” Fatu

I want to achieve the greatness
The greatness of our ancestors
To where we rose from the soil
Having the Most High breathe life into us
That life
That life that we take for granted
Where they built things with their bare hands
Poetry with pictures to where the voice was spoken
No microphones but the soul can be heard around the world
Being people of the sun
We are plants full of photosynthesis
Greenery
Beautiful elegant scenery
Naked brown caramel chocolate
The temple etched by the Creator
The majestypiece
Not of an object materialistic
Nor physical
But that funkadelic of the stars where our ancestors watch over us
Guiding us in our lives
To keep our legacy alive
The legacy they built for us to use and prosper off of
So we can get through anything
Forever resilient
We are the children of God
Ma'at
Horus
Tagaloa
Yahweh
The suns and daughters of God
We are the greatness
The greatness of Our Ancestors

Only In America

Lizeth Reyes



Spilling Coffee

Leonard Murray

It is Sunday morning and the entire house is empty besides me. My youngest son, has not lived at home for a couple of months. His mother has left again for church and service to the youth group at church. I gave up on that venture once I had to acknowledge that I had little or no influence on my own child. Thus, I found no purpose in directing the minds of other teens in worldly or spiritual endeavors. I don't remember where my oldest son was. Maybe church or at his girlfriend's, another limitation of my influence because he often spent the night out and days might pass without seeing him. My daughter, the oldest of the children had moved back to New Jersey over a year ago and now our conversations have turned into text messages.

As I lounged watching a movie, I was caught in the unexpected humor of a message between a daughter and her father on a yogurt shake saying, "Drink me now..." I laughed. I'm surely not the only person who found dark humor within that *"Taken"* scene. The aged hero of the plot was about to engage in an intense conflict to rescue his child from a villain who is inspired by the illusions of power, money and sex. Maybe, that was the irony that I found chuckle worthy. Her perverted innocence was now truly threatened, and this old limp hero was going to mount his modern horse and save her and her lost innocence and bring her back into a world of order. Oh yeah, this is a franchise movie on its third or forth film. So, even as I suspended my disbelief in order to waste my morning away, I sit in self-pity knowing that you can't control young free minds. Moreover, heroic rescues are only rewarding to the filmmakers and the box office.

With movie credits now rolling on the inspirational morning of masculine action adventure, I pictured the line of my former fellow church members stoically pacing to Communion. They marched towards the alter in the same rythmn of disappearing white lines upon the black television screen. "Body of Christ" followed by "Amen" created a backdrop of muted tones that continued to play as the Eucharist and the dry taste of backwashed wine

momentarily satisfied their suspended disbelief. They call it "faith!" Without it, life might appear unbearable. I was unable to sustain mine. And, like my faith, my interest in the movie's climax and life in general quickly waned. Now, overcome with waste and the sense of wasted time, I must respond to my urge and release a flow.

Springing to attention I made a few strides towards relief. Suddenly, I hear the slide of the room temperature coffee cup upon its saucer. I remembered in a flash. I had put it on the edge of the off-white chase lounge. I placed the cup thinking, "I would warm it and finish it later..."

Maybe the moving imagery of an intense protagonist triumphantly overcoming the antagonistic world and the villainy that corrupts innocence spiked my testosterone level. Whatever the inspiration, from three full strides away, I could see the half full cup of brown liquid teetering on the edge of the once white lounge, which sat beneath a picture window upon, what had been, top of the line carpet of a shade that is now faded beyond clear description of color.

So, Liam Neeson I am not, as my daughters rarely, if ever, think of me heroically. But, in that moment my vision of the spilling mug merged with unexpected dimensions...I see the slant of coffee spilling and I feel the sadness of my heart as I inhabit a lonely house with a silent wife. I see the spilling coffee and I'm aware of the life I have lived verses the life that remains in the tilting mug. I see the spilling coffee and I am aware there is only me to blame for the spill and its imminent damage.

In this brief pause, a hesitation of higher design, I reverse my path and return to the waiting, not spilling mug. Deftly, I have saved an unvacuumed carpet from another lifelong stain. Now, as the multiple dimension returned to the single plane of my Sunday morning existence, I find little glory in the accomplishment. Moreover, I have the Deja vu of my earlier laughter as I find the pathetic humor in wasted time and adrenaline.

I place the saucer and cup firmly on the lounge and I have no time to offer myself thoughts of praise, as I am just an average guy who needed to piss after a movie. My flow is now the spilling of coffee. I write. I flush. It drains.

Eduardo Martinez

Mysterious Flowers



The Real Shithole

Zamyris Howard, McKenzie Haulcy, and Destini Ortiz-Guidry

"Why do we want these people from shithole countries coming here"

Well let's first answer this question, what qualifies a country to be considered a shithole place? Would it be the highest country of reported rape?

Could it be a country who is engraved in systemic racism?

Could it be a country with a leader who doesn't believe in climate change?

Could it be a country that's mass population is currently facing an opioid addiction?

Or no, could it be a country who refuses to acknowledge domestic terrorism because it's carried out by people who look those in power?

Could it be a country who is #1 in suicide caused by bullying?

A country who's minority population is less than 10% but in its prisons they make up almost half.

A country with a broken justice system that protects Neo Nazis and White Supremacist but not innocent civilians of color

We'll surely you must be talking about Nigeria

No

El Salvador?

No

Haiti

No

Well what country?

The United States of America

So it's stands to be true that people love to point the finger rather than look at the man in the mirror

Calling a place a shithole because it doesn't rep the culture you do makes it a clearer

When you would rather have immigrants from Norway rather than El Salvador

You are choosing to kick black and browns out the door

Those same people who built this country on their backs Are the same people you call wack

Blood, Sweat and Tears

All over a span of 400 years

Building one of the best economic systems in the world

But will quickly be judged because of the tightness of our curl We are not looking for your sympathy,

But, Looking at the facts can we all agree?

That America,

Is the shithole that won't let black folks be free

South Central Dreams

Brenda Alonzo



Trumpty Numpty

Ashley Smith

Trumpty Numpty
envisioned a wall
Trumpty Numpty's
ego
is facing a great fall.
All that fool's donkeys,
and
All that fool's boys,
fail,
fail to put Trumpty Numpty's
senses back together again.

Envy

Robert Weibezahl

If there is a heaven
are Mozart and Bach duking it out
to see who's more divine?
Was Rilke thrilled to meet Petrarch
or secretly green-eyed
over the Tuscan's preferential tenure?
But there can be no jealousy in heaven,
can there?
Surely the brave-faced mask
of passive aggression
is grounded in earthly imperfection.
Celestial admittance can
brook no such behavior.
And yet
it is comforting to picture
Wolfgang or Johann glowering
at the other's godly approbation,
making us
feel better about our own offense.



*YOU WILL
READ US NOW*

ENJAMBED

Ayisha Price

Il Duomo

Brenda Alonzo



The Tailor's Prelude and Yarn

Jon Sebastian

The Prelude

Though I am not but a man of fabrics, Perhaps I
can spin a yarn as tragic
As the sages of feathers and letters,
One of silk, satin, and cotton fetters.
5 Hear me if you choose, truth is sewn in threads.
All my best patchwork falls before the bed.

The Yam

A man came into my shop yesterday Needing a
suit and haberdashery.
I said "Sir, you've come to the best around.
10 Across the land my garments are renowned. For
what occasion do you need my suit?"
I asked, while measuring his seam to boot. He
said "Tonight I shall bed a lady,
One whom is young, fair, courtly and wealthy.
15 More refined than her sisters and cousins. Her
father has treasure troves in dozens.
I'll be an apparition by week's end
Then, to America for the 'new woman.'"
"How do you deceive with such artistry?"
20 I questioned this fine walking tapestry.
"The trick is in the gaze for love exists
Not in the ladies' hearts, but eyes it persists."
Don't even dare to blink or feign to dream, For
love untrue unravels at the seam."

2016

*Editor's note: This tale, like many others, is left in fragments for the Author perished before completion and left many inconsistencies. The order here has been adopted from the *Prosetry* manuscript as the most nearly satisfactory.

Carnevale

Anonymous



Yucatan

Christina Medina

Driving into the lush jungle of Yucatan, away from the city and the noise that came with it. Deep in this jungle, are hidden gems of beauty; those that only the experienced would find. I stood on the stone platform of the entrance near the stone steps of the cenote. The walls were covered with water; everything was damp but still cooling a stark contrast to the blazing humidity on the surface. The smell at first was a mixture of the heat melting the land above and the lure of fresh cool air below. It was the smell of rain hitting cement, the edge of a riverbank, or the fresh and cooling scent of water. Where was I?

The walls of the cenote opened up into a giant dome, with the roots of trees hanging down over the pool water. The entire dome was centered by the small opening at the top, Outlined in the shape of a jagged rectangle, this opening allowed light to cover the water below creating a mirror into another world. This place was far from a tourist trap, it was a sacred. Where am I?

I felt out of place here, just for a moment.

I couldn't gather my thoughts for a second.

I felt the cool damp air swirl around me, as result of the natural cooling of the cenote walls.

Walking down the second set of slippery steps leading down to the pool of water. My

hands slid across the rough, prickly robe on one side and the cool, wet cenote walls on the other.

I could feel my fingers drinking in the water from the wall as I continued to make my way down the steps.

Standing at the edge of the water, which seemed to be ignited by the light seeping in; turning the water into a transparent turquoise blue. The colors in the water began to blend into each other, depending on the light from above, a passing of a cloud, or how deep the water was. This created the feeling of being stuck between two worlds; one above and one below. The closer I got to the water, the cooler I felt; Away from the humid heat of the surface.

The air smelled nothing like I expected. I waited for the smell of mold to surround me as a stepped closer to the pool instead I was met with the cooling sensation of clean air; A crisp smell of rain falling and cleaning the air around us.

Do I jump in? Will I believe all this is real once I feel the water engulf me. The Ancient Maya believed that the rain god Chaak resided in caves and cenote; the Mayan god of rain, lightning, and storms. Mayan farmers today in Mexico's parched Yucatán still appeal to Chaak for the gift of rain and others believe that the waters in the cenote offer healing, strength and a link to the otherworld.

Yet Yucatán Mayans believed that Chaak's absence could cause them disasters, nightmares and tragedies and so Mayans considered cenotes sacred communication portals Chaak, a gateways to the afterlife.

Would I enter Chaak's realm, if I dive into the water? The water called to you, as you got closer. After watching the pool of water for a moment I decided to go in.

Reaching the edge of the pool, I expected the water to be warm as it was during our trips to the beaches of Yucatan. The cool water I was met with surprised me. I let my self-go, the water engulfed me as I dove deeper. It was if I had entered a new world; One that connected me to the past and future. It was the mysticism surrounding the cenotes that began to come through; it lay with their seclusion, surreal tropical surroundings, and breathtaking water. This sacred landscape of the ancestral Maya had allowed me to understand. As I came up from under the water, I saw and felt the light from above shower me with its rays. I let it out, the tears that I had been holding in for the past week. The pain of lost, acceptance, fear and worry, it all came out and was left in those healing waters. I swam around the pool for a few minutes and embraced what those waters were giving me. There were no other people, and no other sounds; it was me alone in this otherworld.

I had crossed into the otherworld that so many before me had entered. It was a place that would stay with me forever. It was a place that I would share a connection with.

It was in that moment I felt free. I felt at ease, I was able to let go of all this pain that was surrounding me. I floated away from the middle of the pool and reached the edge. Looking around I could see the water and light, which had begun to change the entire cenote. The picture of the cenote that first struck me had changed. It still maintained its wonderment, but it was now a place of healing and renewal.

How Do I Tell

Jonathon Rodriguez

How do I tell the most beautiful woman in the world that her kiss would taste like novocaine.

Her perfume would smell like chloroform.

And her touch would feel like LSD?

Process

Robert Weibezahl

If there is a heaven
are Mozart and Bach duking it out
to see who's more divine?
Was Rilke thrilled to meet Petrarch
or secretly green-eyed
over the Tuscan's preferential tenure? But
there can be no jealousy in heaven, can
there?

Surely the brave-faced mask
of passive aggression
is grounded in earthly imperfection.
Celestial admittance can

brook no such behavior.
And yet
it is comforting to picture
Wolfgang or Johann glowering at
the other's godly approbation,
making us
feel better about our own offense.

Lido

Giovanni Boskovich

Clasped under my elbow like an unused good-luck wishbone, a tattered Cole Porter Songbook, filled with sonorous echoes of Venetian splendor and sacristies of yesterday;

Sand, too, unknowingly filled the binding

Of my Proustian paperback—the one I finished at the prima facie happy-go-lucky pensione.

Lido (They say isola, right?) a not-so-remote island just a few kilometers from
The sinuous canals and undreamed-of beauties of the past.

Lido's leaden skies enveloped by-the-hour beach huts, filled with Italiani, Americani
(Is this They or I? —The Italians call it mezzo, no?)

And perfectly temperatured espresso bars, serving well-made coffee for less than a Lira — or is it Euro these days?

Cole Porter lived in Venice at one time: Gay parties of prodigious pourings of alchemist-made Negronis; Tumblers teeming with tumultuous oceanic libations — much more tumultuous

Than the semi-placid waters surrounding San Marco's.

That day the rain forced speedo-clad women and men to run to the bar for shelter and granitas;

I'd never seen so many half-naked people, happy, sipping espresso, with red, green, and white

Granitas, ice dripping onto their stomachs, legs, and
Plastic white chairs.

Lido truly is an island of an island—one I lean back towards, searching, in the sacristy of my

Mind, for that baptismal rain, that led us—Italians and Italian-Americans—

Under that beatific

Awning-covered café.

Addicted to Love

J. Riverside

Always waiting for the next fix
Of ignited embers
And fiery passion.
Inexplicable,
Irrational,
Lust;
And I can't get enough.
Blindly taken
By its
Violent tremor
In my heart, mind and soul.
Can I be saved
From this affable
Affliction?
A self-invited pleasure
Accompanied by a
Double edged
Sword
Named

Silent Sleeper.

Peace

Am I Still Pretty?

Lizeth Reyes



Withdrawal

Diana Bernard

When withdrawal has left you
Shaken, aching
Most severely
Mind sharply thinking clearly
Waking up into
The Unfamiliar nothing new
(The where is when, you'll get most of it back
again)
But now I'm gone you'll remember with a jolt
Sitting suddenly bolt upright
Wondering if it was last night
Flashes of the fight (or was that another time -
What made it end? How did it start?)
When you remember I existed in your life You'll
know this time that I'm not coming back You'll
feel it deep down in your livid lucid heart (You'll
feel it like foreboding
Impaled on the twisted knife)
You will regret me dearly
Daily weekly monthly yearly

Someday when you are no longer enabled
Exhausted of all means
Becoming the nothing you bring to the table
Faded in the falseness of close fiends
You'll hear the caustic laughter
The ridicule with your name in it
Mimicking the you they mention
Pride and arrogant pretention
Stranded somewhere in dimension
Product of your own invention.

In a ramble scramble shamble
Stumble toward the break of day,
Too bright, too hot, too real, too cruel,
Too far, too close to get away.
The old man in the mirror knows
Time has betrayed you fast, too fast,
(It does not stop, and never slows
Until at last you must concede
Failing to flee at fullest speed
And now, replete in self-defeat)
Alone with yourself again,
Your arch nemesis anti-friend.

Time to regroup and reassess,
Reeling in your carelessness
Resulting in this consequence
Unlikely to recover cost
And in your empty recompense
Realize in full what has been lost.
And when you feel up to the task
Lift the mask and Pause to ask,
What of wealth have you amassed
But wasted ruins of the past?

Chances are you won't remember
But I'll take the bet you will
How and when you lost me lost me
And while you live regret it still
Days drip by like headaches
Dully throbbing from the pain
Memories of heartbreaks
Separate you from the sane
All you never will regain.
You'll never have me again.
Soberly you'll realize
That day when you come to
That you lost me lost me lost me
And all you have left is you.
Simple sad pathetic true.
Languidly lucid momentarily muse
You'd pluck out your eyes to block the view A
more compassionate abuse.
But you are much too weak.
You've always been too weak.
Too weak, weakened in violation
Too weak steeped in degradation
Too weak now in isolation
Exiled in your generation
"This, above all: to thine own self be true"-
Selfish, who are you?

Vanity has been in vain
Conceit corrupted once again
Take what's ingrained
No more restrained
The hold retains.
But what remains?

Regressing into relapse
Impress
Depressing aging synapse
Back into your preset traps
Artificial
Forcing a conscious Unwraps
The mystery of
The crucial link at last snaps
Collapse
The circle cycle

Nothing man creates or can
From dust to dust
Has ever made a haste
That will erase the caustic hurt that's caused
By us to us
Thus Self-accursed
The pain grows worse and
Courses unabated
The wounds we stab into each other Aggregate
and aggravated

Chalk it up to wasted time
Block it out from memory
Obscure it in the clouds you make
But when they part, you will see me
Reminding you of your mistake
In restless dreams and restless wake Lingered
behind eyes doubly blind
The curtains fall, the play goes on,
And when they open I am gone.

Remove and reCollect your scraps
Fallen, crawling slowly, fetch
Scuttle away over the gaps
Reduced to a lowly wretch
Darkly focused lens
So-called friends
Of you they've a Pauper made
What once was man in retrograde
Now hides in shadow, seethes in shade Facing
the real again delayed
Hollow doubt your followed route
Familiar failing Fading out

In Conscience raided
Laughter jaded
Buzzing
Killing
Wanton willing
Thrilling
Ribald tales recounted,
But to what have they amounted?

The days remaining all are haunted
While in toleration Daunted
Try to remember when you lost your hope. Burned it
up in sacrifice
And those who chanced to interlope
Left tortured,
torched and burned by ice.
To that, to this, and only to
Your self-destruction you've stayed true. Faithful in
fidelity
Lost yourself long before you lost me Abandoned in
hate
No one else could set you free
When your poisoned shadow fell on me.

It was already too late

She is a queen and I am beneath her gown
She was noble, treated like a whore, declared a victim but crowned a Survivor

She is born from the soul of Africa whose immaculate soil produced the clay of Adam and the bones of
earth's first Mistress
Her magnificence is melanin but we were foolishly tricked and bound her in whiteness and reduced her
fertile black soil into dirt that appeared as stains on her beauty

I am beneath her dress as barons shred her borders and entered her as if they were privileged while they
trained her to acquiesce

For millenniums they raped her of her gifts
They called her a whore as she succumbed and mixed our blood while they claimed her Land and
expanded her into continents of masculine kingdoms dominated by corruption, greed and violence

Quietly horror persists as the souls she produces are snatched from soil to soil in a global economy that
persistently abuses her offspring claiming its Manifest is her Destiny
She is the victim whose tribe encourages her to lead the way and bear the burden as she is the mother of
the Son and silence is the etiquette of her Crown

I am under her dress as her soul menstruates irregularly because history claims her barren
Yet she still produces because her faith insists each perpetual cycle brings forth a new Survivor

She is the queen and I dwell in her royalty renewed as mothers, daughters and sisters mount broken mules
and spurn them pointlessly

They know the blood stain lay refreshed from centuries past to present as NO CHARGE and NOT GUILTY
ensure our marrow lay dry in a history of RESISTANCE

Crown her
Her grandeur has endured an eternity of slavish servitude with a dignity that eclipses the propped-up
princesses placed upon perverted thrones

Her royal blood continues its flow as those in black robes proclaim Sisterhood
They expose the wounds they had buried and with audacity they leap upon the alter of justice commanding
the law to protect the SURVIVOR

Her glory remains even as her gender is assaulted with the continued construction of false paradigms

The queen permits me beneath her gown because her crown is of the Son who transcends death with
resurrection
She found me lost in the universe and bid me to cloak myself in her royalty as my survival is essential to
her Majesty

Eduardo Martinez

Mysterious Flowers



Parodia Andando; Por Las Calles De La Mancha.

Brenda Alonzo



Dragon Tale

C. Walker

Everyone appreciates a dragon when a dragon is needed. You just point the dragon in the right direction and let loose. Not many people are going to try to get past the dragon. The hard part of being a dragon is after the problem gets solved or the hard part completed, no one really knows what to do with you. Thanks for being a dragon, but can you go be a dragon somewhere else now? I am sure you need to go do dragon things elsewhere, and we don't want to keep you from your dragon things. Folks are uncomfortable because they are reminded that they just needed a dragon. They don't realize that dragons are not always in full wingspan and flaming. Sometimes, when the battle is over, we just want to be included.

Dragons are painted as solitary creatures. We are. While we do like peace and quiet, sometimes it is not by choice. We don't know how to not be a dragon. We notice things- things that make people uncomfortable. Some of us have learned how to put on a softer skin and act socially acceptable for a short while. It takes effort, but we are willing. We contribute to the stereotype. The more we retreat; the more people know we are solitary creatures, and they don't want to bother us. Sometimes, we can actually be fun, or so I have been told. Are we solitary because people do not know how to respond to a dragon, or are we solitary to protect ourselves? Many dragons stay in their lair just waiting for an invitation. We are not an assuming bunch. We need to be invited. We want to be included, but we are not sure if we are included unless someone says something. Instead, we go back to our cave hoping that this time, someone remembers that a dragon was once needed.

Dragons fight tirelessly taking on stacked odds and if truth were told, hopeless battles. Focused rage masks the inner fire breathing beast. When the battle is done, winning or losing takes a toll. We are tired. Everyone gathers around to celebrate or commiserate. Even when the dragon is properly thanked for doing dragon things, the need for a dragon is over. Where is the dragon now? Inviting the dragon to the after party seems a bit gauche. After all, everyone knows they are loners.

Dragons are susceptible to emotions. As we age, we become better at hiding from the emotional barbs that pierce our hide. In fact, that is the quickest way to take a dragon down. It does not take much. A simple comment can be deadly: Oh dragon, you know you are appreciated. Don't be so sensitive. Did you see it? An emotional spear thrown straight at the dragon's heart scoring a direct hit. Everyone assumes that the hide, which keeps us safe in the battle, is impenetrable except for the mythical missing scale. If people only knew how easy it is to take down a dragon, they would stop looking for the unguarded area. Most of the time, people are not even aware of the strike. Our scales cover the broken shafts even as the tips of the spears and arrows dig deeper into our heart, and sometimes, they fester. We are a prideful bunch. We won't say anything. We are fine, until we are not.

Poetry Poetry Poetry...

J. Riverside

Poetry is
As poetry
Does
Stir the poets
Hand into the poets
Mind through within
And directly from the poet's
Muse that is the poet
Of poetic poems
That are a poet's genius
Poetry ...it is all there
Outright and plain
Sometimes curious with
Ambitious mystery.

Poetry runs through life
Like the unmarked days of our lives
Poetry dives deep
Between the crevices
Of our toes
Up to the small follicles
Inside our nose
It does poetically instill
In all of
Us
A stamp of poetry
A stamp of pride
unwonted
And innocent.

Poetic fury
unleashed.

The crowd controlled
by Poetry.

I see Biuti

Everth F. Sotelo

At 11:07 am a large stone hand placed several rocks inside my skull and shook me with all it's might. Why is this happening to me? Why should the body endure pain? Pain is but a reminder of how elusive life is.

My kitchen did not have anything great except some Yerba Mate, I brewed the leaves as usual. The powerful leaf would always have a great effect on my mind and body. This drink would alleviate my headaches. The kitchen window showed a chance of rain typical of November. I never found rainy days to be depressive because when-ever I wrote the rain created a relaxation to my thoughts. I wish the rain could just penetrate people's heads to wash their jealousy, malice, greed, and ignorance. My ex-love contained one of these defects, I hated her, and she needed this rain. I hate my-self for being like her. Writing is not enough to purge out all hate. I don't want to ex-ist.

Tonight, my department will have a conference and I shall present my scholar-ly research. I don't know why I feel so nervous. Writing and research is my area of ex-pertise. But this essay seems to be much harder than understanding Heidegger's the-ory of existentialism. The essay papers lay scattered over my desk with countless notes—plausible cause of my headache. I kept saying to myself: My thesis is too vague!

Despite my headache I needed to fix this essay. A famous author once said that whether we are essayist, screenwriters, novelist, poets, or hey even literary critics we all must sit down in front of a keyboard and bleed. The pen has been my leech. My lifeless eyes landed on a book by Hemingway. Oh, how did he do it? Why was he so great? Should I kill myself like him? No thoughts came. My phone rang just when my eyes saw a book on Freud, but I knew that analyzing my ego would not refine my the-sis for tonight. I answered the phone and it was my colleague John.

- How are you this morning?
- I am ok, just doing my morning meditation.
- Great, are we still meeting today?
- Sure, I mumbled.
- I'll meet you at the Pub as usual.
- No, let's meet at the corner cafe, I don't want to drink so early! I quickly replied.
- Fine then I'll see you in an hour.

John loved the local pub for the traditional drinks. He was of Irish descent and according to him all Irish loved to drink no matter the time of day. Our encounters were usually about our contradicting lives and rough drafts that were never finished; liquor was more of a cultural thing for him. For me liquor was an excuse to see if my ideas were valid enough to be written. Like a flood that sunk anything in its path, my thoughts of being a writer—or human—fascinated yet drowned me. Happiness cannot be solely up to you. How can you be happy in an island surrounded by an ocean of misery, that's not possible! Real life is writing about how happiness is drowned.

At 1:00pm, John was sitting inside the cafe with a cup of tea. The way he held that cup made him seem like an aristocrat, how I hated him for that! We shook hands and he gave me a cup of tea, I took it out of courtesy and we sat outside. John was currently teaching at a small college. His area of interest was linguistics. We became friends while in graduate school, but he somehow accelerated faster than me. Now he is something between my colleague, friend, or even enemy I suppose.

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ga U''Ub]h]ei Y'a]ffcf'\Y\UX']b'\]g'cZ]W''=Vt'i 'X'bch]U_Y'a mYmYg'Z'ca 'j]ž'=Vt'i 'X'gY'h'Y'g]XY'cZa mZUW''
-hg'a Y'Vi h'=Vt'i 'Xb h'fYVt[b]nY'a ngY'Z' =gYUfVYX'Zcf'a mibUg'm\Uj fX]f'm'h'Y'h'ZUbX'XYZfa YX'VfU]b'Vi h'
bch]b["'=Z=Ua 'bch'h'Y'cbY']b'h'Y'a]ffcf'k \c']g'h'Uh'h'Yb3'5a '=YfY3'=Z=Ua 'bch\YfYž'h'Yb'k \mg\ci 'X'=
'j] Y'k]h' h'YgY'Vi fYbYg3

I snapped out. I can't write anymore, I must end my inexistent life. I don't know what I am!

At 4:30pm I retreated to the beach to feel the air pass through my skin. The wind lifted me up as it circulated through my entrails. My eyes opened to the sound of the reality of this life, to the cries and whispers of people around me. A crowd of peo-ple gathered around a fisherman who had just caught a slimly, bloated, red squid off the coast. This could not be possible. Giant squids don't exist, did they? Maybe my mind could not decipher. Those large black eyes bulging out of its pointy head, they looked deep into me. My eyes could not detach themselves from the squid's striking view.

—What is it looking at? I asked the fisherman.

—It sees everything, he replied.

The eye never lies. Suddenly the voice of a little girl disrupted my connection with the squid. She was on the other side of the beach with a big smile. Her eyes seem to be looking at me.

—It's biutiful! she yelled.

Is she looking at me or at the squid? It was her perspective! I don't know exact-ly what she is referring to, but she saw biuti. I realized that the ugliest things could be biutiful, and the pretty things could be nasty. The mind is a paradox not be solved but observed. There must be biuti everywhere in anything. If this little girl saw it in this hideous sea creature than I can see it too; everybody must be able to perceive biuti. Perspective changes everything. If I see, then I exists; What are you? I am everything, the ugly and the biutiful.

The clock now showed 6:00pm, the classroom clapped in praise of one my class mates. I entered, and all eyes were on me. My headache disappeared.

—What are you looking at? asked Dr. Learson.

I did not answer but took the courage to step to the podium. I opened my essay which to my paradox felt fully presentable. I looked up to the class.

—I see biuti. I am a woman.

My conference began.

Shark Bulb

Nuria Tellez



