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White Trash & Southern

Collected Poems, Vol. I



C. S. Fuqua

Pairings

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by Linda Imbler



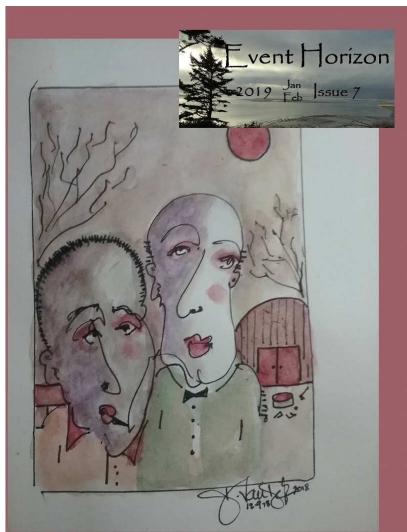
RADIANT HUNGER
a novel by Diane Lefer





~ a literary and graphic arts periodical

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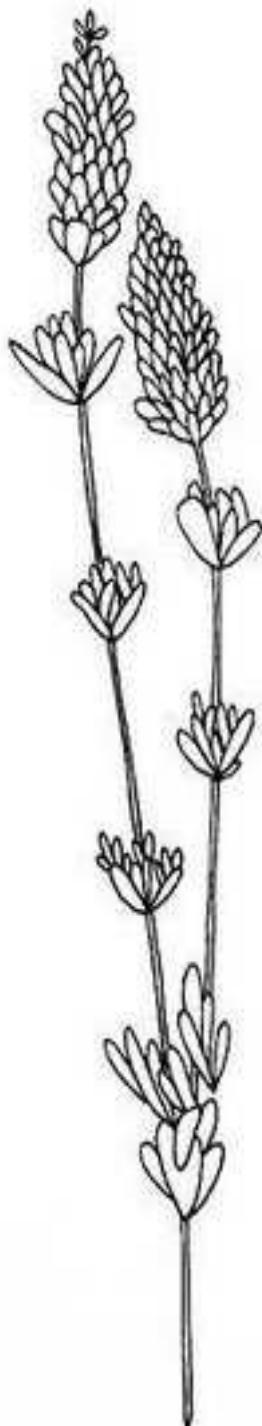


front cover Legalization



back cover Dollmaker's Dream

David Van Dyk was born in Texas and lives in New Mexico. He has an MFA from the University of Wisconsin. David is a world traveler, photographer, producer and media specialist in Africa. He works in his studio and in his garden. He shows online and has retired from "old school gallery representation." His goal as an artist is to "draw like children do."



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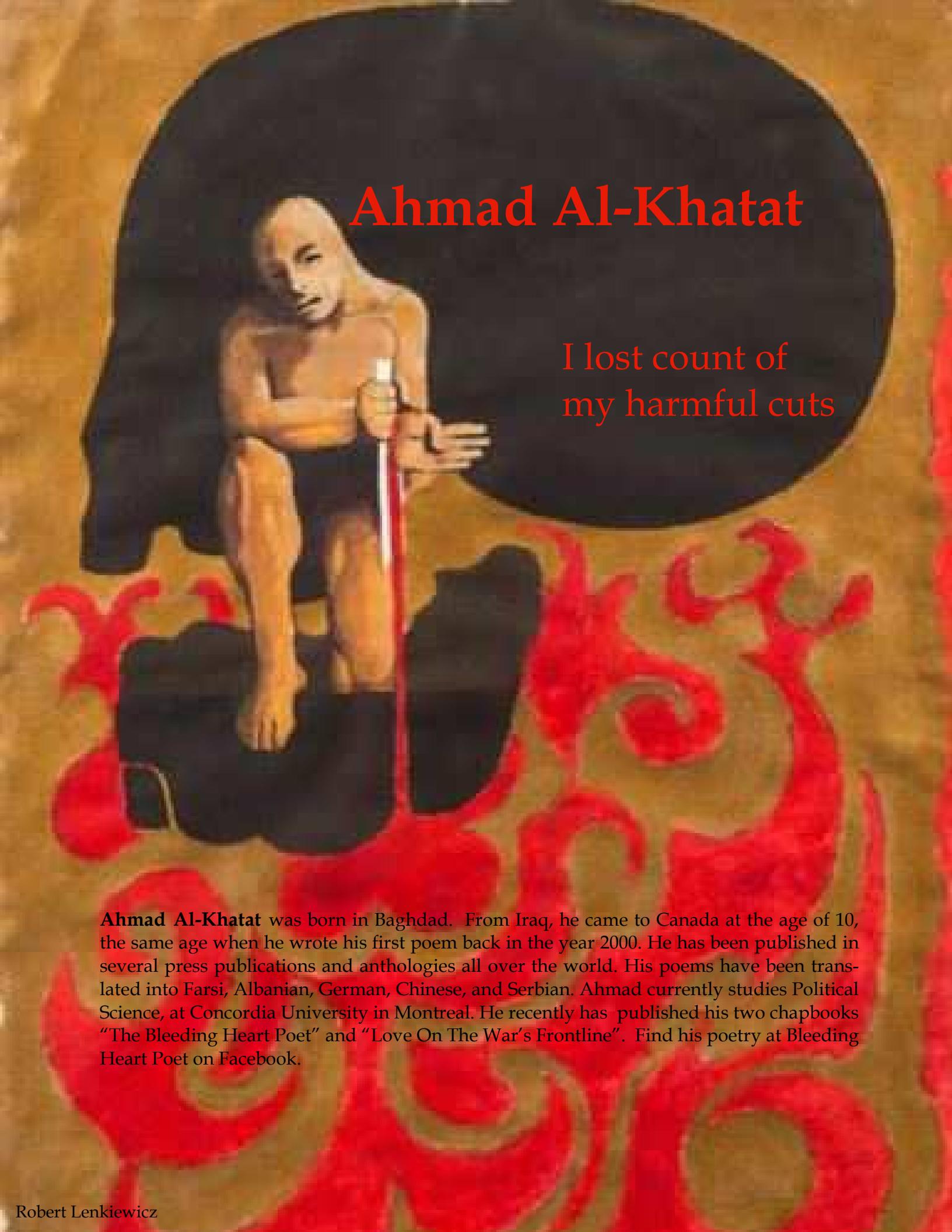
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Ahmad Al-Khatat

I lost count of
my harmful cuts

Ahmad Al-Khatat was born in Baghdad. From Iraq, he came to Canada at the age of 10, the same age when he wrote his first poem back in the year 2000. He has been published in several press publications and anthologies all over the world. His poems have been translated into Farsi, Albanian, German, Chinese, and Serbian. Ahmad currently studies Political Science, at Concordia University in Montreal. He recently has published his two chapbooks "The Bleeding Heart Poet" and "Love On The War's Frontline". Find his poetry at Bleeding Heart Poet on Facebook.

In the Cemetery

In the cemetery, I was standing on my knees,
reading verses of the holy book to the tombs

I was praying with tears on my cheeks
until the graveyard stopped me and asked me if

I was reading verses or reading sorrows
with an emotionless face, he asked to repeat

I started reading again and, his face was getting
red as his eyes were dropping my unrhymed tears

he stopped me with anger and screamed out
why more grieves, why more death, and less peace

I responded to him, why did hope sold us to traitors
why life is struggling with us, why did the wars rape us shame-
lessly

we cried together as he was saying that he's listening to
spirits weeping with us, as the clouds will rain again

he asked me again, why our world is no longer bright
instead, it's full of darkness and lots of bloody cuts

our grandparents were the farmers, who lift the sunshine
and brunt themselves to death, just to protect the seeds

our mothers stole the moon from the wall of the night
they hid in their coffins and the stars after our fathers

turned the rainbow into a solider in the zone of death
and made the snow into a drinkable water to survive

Inside of My Dream

Inside of my dream
there's a bird flying
from one nest to an-
-other, without wings

Inside of my dream
there's a man holding
a sign that says, I
have serious cancer

Inside of my dream
there's one refugee
with tears of grief
because he lost hope

Inside of my dream
there's a young lady
smoking, and waiting
for the train to suicide

Inside of my dream
there's a black cat
staring at me, and
waiting to the end of my dream

Adoption

When I was a teenager
I donated to a little orphan
since then I made a vow that
I would adopt her, and marry her

Days go by and nights come
I learned how to hurt myself
by doing bad habits that will
guide me to die below the bridge

I lost count of my harmful cuts
I lost all the joyful memories and
moments from weeping beneath
the lights of the miserable bar

My mother thought that I was well,
As my smile hid the tears that
damaged my physical therapist
within minutes after hearing me

I lost many chances and luck
until I met a broken heart,
she cried when she knew that I
found what was missing of me

I found her
between all of my poetry
between all of my cigarette smoke
I tried to lose her
as I saw my shadow following her

Ann you didn't adopt a regular girl
you have definitely raised one angel
that showed me life with colours
From your love and care for my princess

the grief inside of me has smiled when
your daughter kissed my salty lips and
wiped my tears, hopefully she will
close my eyes after my smiling face rests

My Surname is The Night

I once applied to work for a company,
the manager saw my surname and asked
the meaning behind my first name
I answered him that it means that during the
night I live as a joyful person in the rain,
and realize that I am not lonely when I cry
nowadays, my name is the night itself,
due to my daily sorrows that rise with
the presence of the moon along with the stars
my spirit becomes the star that lights
my path to a broken heart, walking back home,
my eyes become the autumn season that rains
yet, nobody has a moment to listen to me,
the sightless flowers whisper to the deaf branches
as I want to wipe my falling tears, but I have failed
I see death play as the responsible adult
As we low human being's, destroy
each other's bodies to mangled beings
the reason that holds the night as my name
is to rest the children's mind of poverty, the
river of blood, and the imaginary of an endless war

Good Morning

I wake up on my alarm clock,
It doesn't say to me good morning
I drink my first cup of coffee,
It doesn't say to me good morning
I eat my first bites of bacon,
It doesn't say to me good morning
I see my same old neighbour,
he doesn't say to me good morning
I take the bus to go to work
Nobody says to me good morning
I arrive at work, my coworkers
and customers don't say good morning
I am so lonely that I forget to say
to the photos in my office good morning

City of Joys

My days are like dry leaves,
they are everywhere and
always in the corners of
Sorrowful streets, in the city of joys
Every love story dies in my dreams,
people are more hurtful than before
And the night is longer than what they say
life is short so drink until you fall asleep
Nowadays my eyes wish to be blind
like the candle that celebrates marriages
and funerals, the sky watches and apologizes to
the clouds and rain, waiting until my eyes stop weeping
I will never understand how to smile
by the broken branches and dead trees,
My happiness will come back to me
after I drown my laughing face to death

Five Stages of Death

O world, take the cup from me
I already feel the damages of
The last sips down my throat
Exploring the five stages of
Death
Denial
Isolation
Anger
Anxiety
and depression

Museum of Corpses

Inside
museum
of corpses
there are
dead refugees
bodies who
died 'cause
they were
not characters,
but priceless,
experiments
That helped
humankind,
with plastic
surgery, they
test dangers
And feature
The weapons
Of flesh
and blood,
crash test
dummies,
design body
armour against
the aliens
from the
spaceship
and women,
private body
parts were
all set
to put on
sale, since
all the
hairstylists
and
cosmetics
had been
working
hard to
keep their
belief in
Death.
It does not
have to
be boring
inside the
mind of
Lively souls

Painting You

I will be painting you below
the curious moon next to
a pallet of mixed emotions
with a brush full of feeling

The truth is I am a sad tear
and not a colour of rainbow
in your eyes all the colours
dance all over your canvas

I see the smile of yours truly
similar and the arrival of the
summer sunrise and feel the
thirst of your lips from the rain

Make me your model for a second
catch me with your will for an hour
my soul and eyes must be awake
to feel your touch like an angel kiss

And I will colour your moisture
lips with a rare leaf from autumn
with your hair, I will draw the running
horses around your scent forever

Death of a Poet

Tonight is calm but windy
It feels like someone is around
To murder the drunk man in the bar
Or maybe it will be the death of a poet

Perhaps, that means I will die
Death will strip my spirit bare
To see my family and watch their tears
As I observe if my friends are the loyal ones

Unfortunately trust is lost to me
As I have deep sorrows inside my life
My eyes weep with tears flying as
Autumn leaves to the front door of my neighbour

Painful grieves draw my darkness below
The moonlight and colour me with colours
It will be the way to lift me up and be strong
As a flower dancing from the sensual drops of rain

I would love to envision my own funeral
Since there is wrong or right to observe the
Faces will be dark as a raining cloud or the other
Ones that smile as the rainbow is seen from my coffin

The Scent of Death

All writers smoke cigarettes
and so I smoke cheap cigars
All poets drink wine and cheese
and so I drink vodka with nuts
All dreamers talk about romance
and so I talk about love in an erotic way
All workers take a break from work
and so I do not take a break from life
All students share ideas to help me
and so I share my knowledge voicelessly
All ordinary people sleep well and warm
but I do not sleep well because death take me
until the unknown day my flesh will release
the scent of death from the four walls of my room

Sign of a Bitter End

Next week,
I will be older than usual
Tuesday coming,
I will meet with a sign of a bitter end

Anxiety, depression, low self-esteem
Are in my mind and heart growing
With no strength to talk about them to anyone
I can't offer to meet with a psychological

I tattoo love, joys, and inspiration to
The people I love and to the ones that
Still have a death wish against me without
Realizing that I can't be happy anymore

In my days, I met with so many clowns
Some they taught me how to cry with
No falling tears, I have learned how to
Hold my broken heart like a homeless

I always wanted to live a life of a angel
No worries, no more stress from haters
I wish if I can chose and live a quit,
Simple, and basic survival of the day

I can never judge my life as wonderful
It's full of downs more than ups
Even though, I don't go to clubs or
Bars to meet with priceless bodies

I'm very sensitive and my friends stab me
Like if I won't bleed by myself in darkness
My problem is I never appreciate my life
And I can't weep for my own grieves

The rain forces me to dance by the mist
Without the moon and the stars I see you
From the lights of my homeland in which
Death could observe well and not you

Five of my good friends passed away
I will be the sixth to reach them sooner
But I can't because you are my true love
I learned from you to be stronger than ever

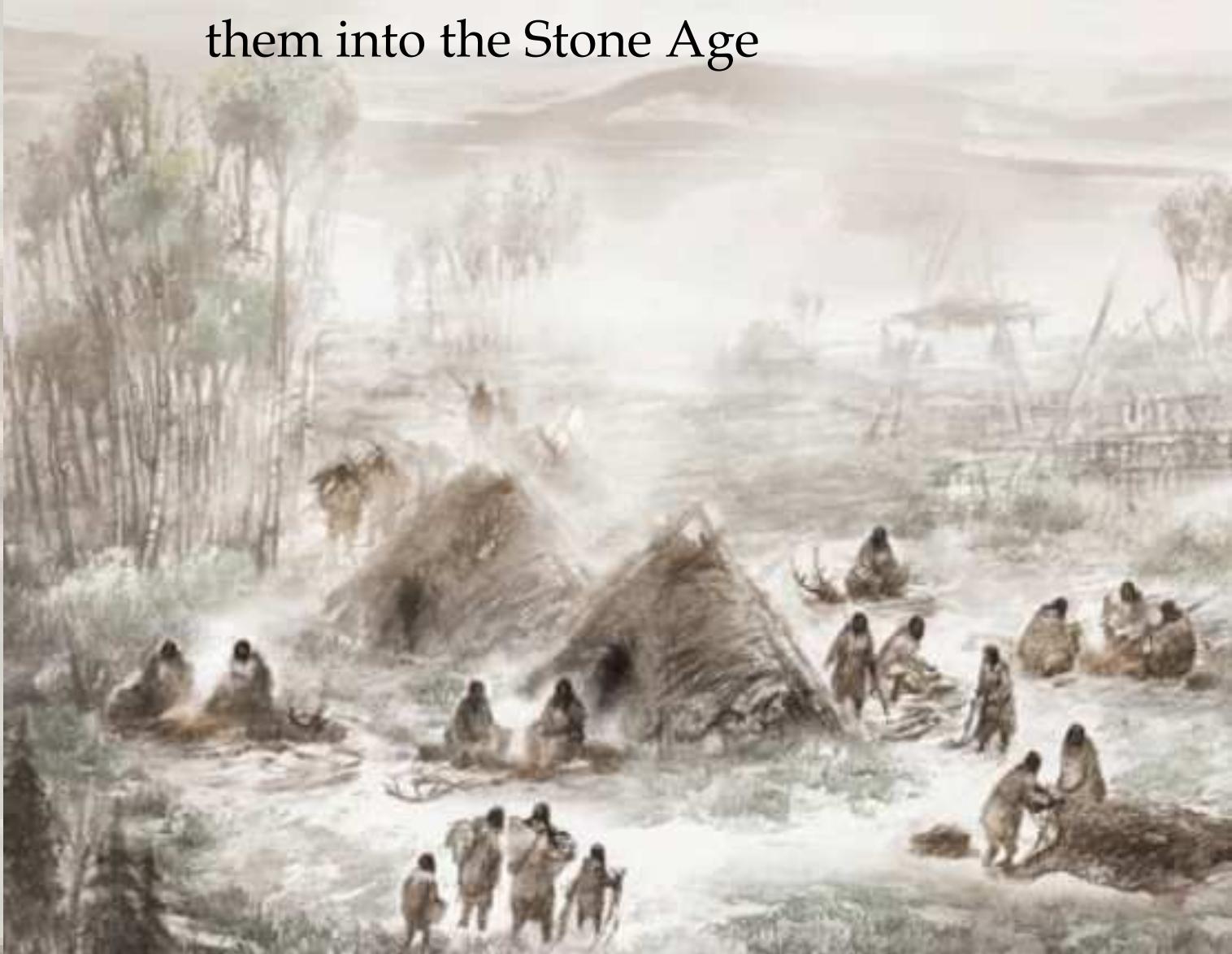
The Rainbow who Saved my Life

The last rainbow that appeared,
recognized me from my eyes
he told me that I survived the war
and that he saved my life
he said that back in my homeland
he can't be seen when he appears,
instead he helps the angels to paint by
Marking the children with my colours
he painted red on the ones that died
he painted orange on the hungry ones
he painted yellow on the ill ones
he painted green on the orphaned ones
he painted blue on the heavily wounded ones
he painted indigo on the ones with last breath
and lastly, he painted me with violet
to live between all of my old friends

Who died, and I did not

Petra Sperling-Nordqvist

someone said to bomb
them into the Stone Age



Petra Sperling-Nordqvist hails from Europe where she received an education in languages, literature, and philosophy (in Germany and Oxford). She has spent the last twenty years with her husband, horses, dogs, and cats in California, dabbling in teaching, writing, acting, dancing, swimming, singing, and playing music.

At the Dawn of the 21st Century

Once upon a time, not so long ago,
People were just fine –
Once upon a time, in countries that enjoyed first-world status,
People were just fine, not so long ago,
Enjoying free higher education and health care.

Then people died, and why?
Someone said to bomb them into the Stone Age.
People died, and why?
Bombed into the Stone Age they were.

Children die, and why?
Cancers and crippling birth defects
From countless radioactive weapons fired.
Children die, and why?

Air raids destroy the infrastructure and water supply.

They die, and why?
Sanctions stop the supply
Of sanitizing chlorine, of life-saving medicine.
Children die – and why?

No medicine, no pesticides
Against the fatal sand fly.

Children die – and why?
Pesticides and chlorine are forbidden “dual use” –
Somebody could use them to build a bomb.

Meanwhile, children die – and what’s the use of that?

In this day and time, with sanctions and no supply,
People are not fine –
In this day and time, in countries
Robbed of hope and dignity,
People are not fine, in this day and time.

At the Dawn of the 21st Century

Amputations without anesthesia.

Somebody says: "Rid the world of evil!"

Somebody said that before, Pope Urban II.

He had no exit strategy, either.

Amputations without anesthesia.

Humans need meaning. War gives meaning.

We define the higher good,

We decide that suffering, killing is necessary to defend it,

That war is necessary to defend it,

Defend the higher Good –

Amputations without anesthesia –

That torture is necessary,

That violation of international human rights,

Violation of the Geneva Convention,

Violation of the Nuremberg Code are necessary to

Defend the higher Good – which higher good would that be?

In this day and age of secret torture and open rage,

People are searched and surveyed,

In this day and age lacking human rights education,

Children are rounded up,

In this day and age, without due process or access to anyone,

In a deformed democracy.

WOOL

the wool my grandma got from friends
in the village sheared spun on their wheel
with the natural hues of gray and various browns
is so very gorgeous to feel and admire and wear

a sweater and poncho thick comforting warm
with celtic knit and patterns crocheted of yore
i slip them overhead and don the scarf to match
worthy protectors of a nomad crossing the steppes

fancy fashionable shape I did not design for this garb
nor weave an intricate tapestry to ornament the wall
neither the luxury of exhibitionism nor the idea of
futile function this wool seems destined for

wooly armor transforms me into a
warrior protected in its cozy embrace
heritage ancient culture ancestry--
hunters and gatherers farmers and fighters to this day

Amirah Al Wassif

people in the huts waving to me every day



Barbara Cruz 2007

Amirah Al Wassif is a freelance writer. She has written articles, novels, short stories poems and songs. Five of her books were written in Arabic and many of her English works have been published in various cultural magazines. Amirah is passionate about producing literary works for children, teens and adults which represent cultures from around the world. Her first book, Who do not Eat Chocolate was published in 2014 and her latest illustrated book, The Cocoa Book and Other Stories is forthcoming.

far as the sky

far as the sky
close as a wish
we all those sailors
who never caught their fish
far as the sky
close as a wish
we think of the only question
though our poor or our rich
far as the sky
close as a wish
life starts with " why "
days role is to teach
far as the sky
close as a wish
hello equals goodbye
the great wisdom we will reach
far as the sky
close as a wish
the words of anybody die
when he meets the death!
I love you despite everyone knows!

far as the sky

I love you despite everyone knows!
despite the traffic jam
despite the audience blame
and the chatter of my toes

I love you and I mean what I say
a confession of love does not accept any delay
this type of the immortal love
can not be temporary or tough

I love you despite the spread of boredom in the world
despite all my long night I was totally bent
I love you despite the breaking news and stammering of all correspondents
I love you despite my classic shoes and the currency of the tents

despite the urgent calls every midnight
I love you
despite the loneliness of shores after escaping the light
i love you

despite the world difficult rules
despite the absence of " because "

I love you despite everyone knows!

An African Child

I crawled on mama's arm
Searching for an imaginary house
Which bear me with a fancy view
Of the coming clouds upon my head

As an African child
I jumped many times for seeing the clown
Who laugh and cry
Making jokes
Acts an excellent spy
With many children in their bed

As an African child
I saw the bitterness on mama face
And tried to chase
Her shadow before her cheek is wet

As an African child
I drew my plan on the clay pot
I insisted to fly
Asking my sun to let
The charming of justice light
And asking the darkness to rest

People in the huts

People in the huts waving to me every day, every night
But mental forces I have got told me that was not right
Beaming stones and comfortable zone if I still am unbelievable
Midnight lies and shortest of sight if I say it is reasonable
Oh! My brain! Could this daily scene be unreliable?

People in the huts waving to me every dark, every light
And my shocked eyes turning my thinking into a fight
Global channels, national banners talking regularly about me
Human Battles, the press covers making a fairytale about me
Oh ! my soul ! is this a fool
Dreaming what I see?

People in the huts waving to us every day, every night
Their clear truth at their bigger than being on a diet
Sensibility drawing here their faces without quitting
And their words silently heard, more Emotions need to be written
huts human Certainly Exist, every eye cannot be denied
Only these seeing them upset, The unfaithful eye or the blind!

traveling on the angel wing

traveling on the right wing of an angel
takes me away, away to my first dance
dragging ourselves through the fancy castle
shakes me today, today as it is my chance
oh! how far our starry night
oh! what a rare any scare or fight
oh! how wonder your face sight
oh ! oh!

traveling on the right wing of an angel
reminded me how did I ride my horse?
a supernatural scene, unreliable or a dream
it was a fairytale, of course!

traveling on the right wing of an angel
visiting the marvelous towns in his eyes
shouting like a child, a pleasure made a circle
for walking in the land of wise

traveling on the right wing of an angel
led me to be a true crazy lover
your warm at this night transfer my simple
immediately heal my suffer

oh! how far our starry night
oh! what a rare any scare or fight
oh! how wonder your face sight
oh ! oh!

greetings from the dark!

I remember! Yes, I remember this letter
When my tears decided to escape
Out of me, I felt that is better
My soul took over my shape
I heard him laughing at me and clearly makes fun
I could not aware how his love for me
Became hurtful like a gun

I remember! Yes, I remember this letter
When I fell to my knees
Crying with my pets
Grieve together
Watering our pain tree

I remember your face within the paper
Looking slyly at me
I seemed like a victim of a kidnapper
Or a tiny boat in a big sea

I remember! Yes, I remember my love
Feeding my eyes your words
Your words, your shots!
Ah! I remember how I would
Keeping it in my soul, my heart
But tell me how I could
Welcomme your greetings from the dark?!:

A question from the refugee camps

I asked them
How the sun says hello to everyone ?
Then, they laughed bitterly
Without being sorry
And told me "ask the gun"
Her red spark
Sharp like a dark
Permits entering the light for none

They asked me " what is the sun"?
When our expected meeting will be done?
Since their question
I did not ask again
Cause everything was very clear
Through the war stain

There, in the Somali lands you can find the answers
Upon the clouds , in the camps even on the children features
There, in the Somali lands all the details written with no ink
The only truth here required from you to think
About those people who do not have the fun
But you still ask about their sun ?

Among the refugee camps in Baidoa
I found a baby crawled
On the arm of his mama
Who seemed to me frowned
The baby opened his eyes widely
Looking for the next light
But his mama knows
No light comes with fight

In a crowd of the lost African bodies
He hold my hand tenderly
He was selling water to the ladies
were sitting on the docks
With their pots
Waiting for the day- early

In the Somali lands
They asked me
How the sun says hello to everyone?
Then, I replied with no hesitation
No sun comes with a gun

An urgent call in the second life

red rays of the unknown sun came down to my new window
warmly shiver touched me, made me laugh as a fresh baby
I decided to think about the source of these unknown rays
but, suddenly a kind of musical sound covered my ears
the sound did not seem like any earthen sound I ever heard
it was a mix of waves dancers and creation of colorful bird
it was like a smell of honey and the secrets of gold
red rays of the unknown sun came down to my new window
fingers of nature throw the fabulous jokes on my road
all the trees here like the mothers, each tree gives me a kind hug
and I call them through songs of paradise
my songs are part of the skies
and my skies are all my world
in my second world, I do not have the time
to put my hand on my chest for wishing
all the clouds here are wishes
and I am a successful creature in hunting them with my glances
red rays of the unknown sun came down to my new window
fields of roses upon my head
rooms in the paradise full of upper poetry
my soul thrilled for sewing the art of dream
and I am hungry for knocking on the door of memories
I know that nobody will respond
however, I insist to wait
day after day
night after night
moment after moment
in my second world, I am walking on the roofs with bare feet
listening to the music makers in the tunnels of the heaven
here, we all are children of the upper world
and as a child, I am still waiting
an urgent call in my new life

Before my death!

before my death,
I would like to sit beside an innocent homeless girl
in front of one of the UNICEF banners
in our hungry wide street
talking together about the biscuits
and the magnificent toys and the ice cream

before my death,
I will try my best to make her
taste the childhood flavor
and she will try her best
to draw a false smile on her face
and because her cheeks will be
mixed of rosy and dirty
I will convince myself that
she is very happy!

before my death,
I would like to kiss all the flowers
especially the lilacs
I will be able to toss my grieve aside
hoping to find a supernatural sign
one of those upper signs
which touches us gently
one of those upper signs
which take our souls for a long fabulous walk for free

before my death,
I would like to laugh in a loud tone
cause I will be close enough to the political posters
which will be hung everywhere
and I will sing one and last song
for the love and the freedom
and I will dedicate it to the lonely and the frightened
and the immigrants and the dreamers

before my death
I would like to throw
the most creative jokes
among the boys and the girls
and I will gather the most delicious fruits
sending them to those who used to plant them
but never tasting any!

Before my death!

before my death
I would like to kiss the famine babies wide-eyed
and saying "sorry" in another way
I will say it like a poem
escaped from the bottom of the heart
and appeared itself
in no-words

before my death
I will praise the woman who works in breaking rocks
who fight in the day
and come down in the night
an extraordinary woman knows how
to struggle under the angry sun
an extraordinary woman know
how to fold her begotten cloths
among the mess of rocks
an extraordinary woman know
how to be a soldier in the battle
and clown in the theatre in one time

before my death
I will salute all the women
who work in breaking rocks
I will salute them with love and pity

before my death,
I would like to give
endless tickets
to the orphans around the world
and I will break my ego mirror
for getting rid of my old grins
and trying to find a true
smiles similar to their ones

before my death
I would like to share my food with a lost dog
in the corner of the road
or in the dirty narrow tavern

before my death
I will learn how I have to live?!

Ryan Quinn Flanagan

the lucky jersey most of all



facebook - Mustang fan club

Ryan Quinn Flanagan is a Canadian-born author residing in Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada with his wife and many bears that rifle through his garbage. His work can be found both in print and online in such places as: *Evergreen Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Event Horizon*, *Literary Yard*, *Red Fez*, and *The Oklahoma Review*.

The Sitting Room Sounds So Much Better Than Standing

I am a guest at the house.
A friend of the family.
Invited to sit down.
The chair that holds me up
has more legs than I do.
I am jealous but say nothing.
All the chairs have more legs.
The couches as well.
They must be more evolved
than us.
Darwin never spoke of upholstery
so I can't be certain.
But they feel better than us.
The inviting fabric and many elaborate patterns.
When I sit on people there are lumps
and gyrations and many complaints.
I am a guest at the house.
Perhaps a few times a week.

I wish I was a chair
and not a guest.

Then
I could be there
all the time.

My arms
always at rest
and never
seizing.

'68 Mustang

My cousin Kent
worked as a bouncer
at the Brookdale on weekends
and was a pipefitter the rest of the time
and had these giant muscles
for arms
and dark curly hair all the girls
seemed to love
and he drove around in a black
'68 Mustang
with little ten-year-old me
in the back seat
while he dropped another nice lady
in heels off at work
the morning after
before letting me sit up front
with him
and turn the music up loud
so he could take me on the highway
to show me what his car could
really do.

Silent Walking

A friend from OZ
has posted a compilation video
on the internet
of him scaring his wife.

It is hilarious,
though she doesn't seem
to think so.

I watch the video alone
and roar with laughter
like some mad frazzled
circus thing.

I do the same thing to my missus.
I have for years.
She calls it my silent walking.

Sometimes I sneak up on her
and yell,
other times I just stand silently
behind her until she turns
around.

Of late
I've taken to wearing this blue and gold
cat mask
that I picked up in New Orleans.

She says it's creepy,
that I will give her a heart attack
but she seems a little young
for such things

so the show
goes
on.

Merch

your favourite team,
it must be
you have the ball cap
and the large foam finger
like you've been stung by
a bee
and the pennant
and the decals
and the personalized licence plate
like a tramp stamp sitting
in traffic
and the flags
and beer coasters
and the lucky jersey most of all,
to be worn on Sunday,
as though god himself
is dropping back to
pass.

Power Structure

The trick
is not to get too emotional
about anything.
Even if you are emotional
about everything.
There is a discipline involved,
like being your own
dominatrix.
Putting cigarettes out
on the words of your poems
so they can know a simple pain
worth knowing
and thank you
for it
later.

Natasha Kafka

the tree of life pulsating on
the inner side of an eyelid

Natasha Kafka is a poet, performer and video artist from the Balkans. She creates under the heteronyms Galadriel, Flora, and Charlie, and this time you're reading the works of Galadriel, which is the most serious of the three. Before that, Natasha was awarded artist in her country which treats artists in a not so very good way, so this summer she decided to make a fresh start in English. Her poems were published in Credo Espoir, Omnistoria, Academy of The Heart and Mind, and One Sentence Poems.

Unremembered Memory

It's a kind of strange

When you're falling through space

People look at the night sky

Show at your way with their hands

Thinking you're just a part

of the endless starry vault

They show you to their kids

And everything is

so beautiful and lonely

Sound of Zero

A tiger will eat you
But he's only

an executor

In truth

the iron bell tolling

The end of immortality

The tree of life pulsating

On the inner side of an
eyelid

On the branch the cockatoo sleeping for eons
Now trumpeting
age of awakeness

When They Came

A multimillionaire

In his dying room

Staring at the ceiling

And the ceiling for some reason

Has thousands of little black eyes

- Don't watch me - he begs

closes his eyelids to pain

- We don't, we can't look, sir,

we're dead, we're dead...

In the Dream Building

You told me
To go away
And I did
And then
I dreamed about
Stairs and stairs
Going down and down
Two of us
And holding candles
And I wasn`t sure anymore
Which pair of us is the real one

Gary Glauber

blame this cold country with
strange vodka comforts

Gary Glauber is a poet, fiction writer, teacher, and former music journalist. His works have received multiple Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominations. He champions the underdog to the melodic rhythms of obscure power pop. His two collections, *Small Consolations* (Aldrich Press) and *Worth the Candle* (Five Oaks Press) and a chapbook *Memory Marries Desire* (Finishing Line Press) are available through Amazon.



Four Cups

This copper beech is thick & old & sturdy,
a great source of shade & comfort,
yet I am unhappy with my surroundings.

There is great work to be done,
repairs calling my name,
paint & potholes abounding,

all requiring the kind of capital
that is currently beyond me.
It makes me buy lotto tickets,

enter into games of chance
to turn tables, change the odds,
reverse fates of the moment.

Things break down over time,
fade & peel & break & weaken;
this is the power of entropy.

In this universe headed toward ruin,
I abhor the inevitable destruction.
It is our purpose to resist the force,
slow it down some, or to employ
those more keenly able to do so.
I sit & ponder the rising ruins.

I am weary, disgusted, vexed.
I sip my wine & pretend
it is a personal gift from the gods,
but it merely softens the edges
of this otherwise harsh reality.
I want to keep drinking

if only to distract me
from consciousness, realization,
the monotony of the journey,

to fill the spaces of longing & yearning,
to ignite the imagination,
to encourage the dream.

After three cups, I finish
what had been left in the one bottle.
I find another at the bottom of my rack,
a blend of three varietals,
a gift from some distant occasion,
a celebration long gone.

The source is a mystery,
I pour the fourth cup
& it is a sweet discovery,
a fruity, complex mix
of pleasant notes that linger.
I sip & slowly savor this wine
capable of great miraculous things,
action, thought & inspiration,
exotic kiss from the grapevine gods
a liquid of consolation.

Locomotive

Mother had lately fallen out of favor,
a direct result of brash aggression,
a long history of emotional turmoil
boiling hot underneath frigid plain.

This fine lady with a heart of good intention,
overtaken by unquenchable desire.
A peripheral wave soon upended her vessel,
a course of predictable ruin, a journey with no return.

Blame this cold country with strange vodka comforts,
its ancient tradition for marrying young,
its gossiping nobles & penchant for posturing,
its hard life a theater of raw emotional judgment.

High style becomes open season for critical noise,
& this dollhouse sensibility invites disaster:
a world power of crushing jealousy & guilt,
an unsettling perestroika, a guarded glasnost.

Again we ride this iron train endless hours
hoping to amend embarrassing indiscretions,
seeking compromise, if not restitution,
temporary tolerance in lieu of resolution.

Emotions never stay buried in this snow long,
diamonds shine & sparkle, nestled dolls still in place,
the tragedy only an ancient tale writ large long ago,
a heightened glimpse of loves destroying lives.

Prestidigitation

Words are easy,
actions hard.
We gather
each morning
to recount
past escapades,
ways to rise
from night's
inevitable injuries.
We are imperfect:
hurting, hurtling,
eager to share
scary dreams
with longtime
companion.
You don't say.
Diversion is
daily magic,
providing illusion
that time passes
as selfsame progress
roots us firmly
in this place.
Voices cry out
in unison,
sleight of hands
reaching up,
seeking help,
eager to stand
for something
before final curtain
drops, signaling
trick is done.

Agitprop

Romance replaced by remonstrance,
emotions channeled toward dark fury,
moral grandeur become obligation
with politics infecting art.

Sitting shivering at the stop,
awaiting a bus, a deliverance,
escape though brisk purple sunrise
to where they gather with signs,
chanting in angered choral reproach,
that this is the limit,
they can take no more.

The lying scoundrels in power,
push boundaries of credulity,
living in this fantastical world
of their narrated prescription
without apology or remorse,
stentorian proclamation
forcing new reality,
baroque & so broken
it provokes provocation
a surge of adrenaline,
a gallon of bile.

It boils beneath
an ellipse of a smile
contorted, distorted
insanely reported
asylum for no one,
asylum of all.

This is her commitment
to resist & promote
necessary change,
for silence is complicit
& history has shown
moral outrage requires
a powerful collective voice
beyond disenchantment
of frustrated individual.

Rachel Levine

the comedian's lips melted into red wax



Chagall

"The year I was born Albert Einstein died and Disneyland opened. There is probably no cause and effect here but it might explain something; the serious and the silly have always collided in my life and my work. I can't write a straight drama without some comedy, and vice versa."

Rachel Levine is currently working on Draft Two of her new novel (yet to be named) and looking for a reading for her new play, "Entanglement." Visit her web site: RachelALevineWriter.com

Alone With America

"Having failed to rivet the eyes of the world on their city on the hill, they were left alone with America."

Perry Miller

The land,
like the dreams of a mistress
who allows every conceivable act.
Who says, with a smile,
'This is my true calling.'

On Sunday, wooden wheels scatter the dirt,
in God's hands they quake while the land below
welcomes their seed, and their good wives wait
for their fix;

sewing gingham to taffeta to an occasional sigh, and
'oh dear,' while her sleeping child dreams wildly, his
father's dream of being left alone with America,
of seven minutes in heaven as he dances across the
Appalachian Plateau,
Mississippi Valley,
The Rockies,
into thick arms of a mistress who welcomes and is vast,
her vagina the shape of an hourglass.

The Comedian's Kiss

In the dream he tried to kiss me.
His sweet funny disposition
was a penny candy from my long,
somber childhood.
And then he kissed his wife
and his flock of tiny children,
on each of their tiny crowns.

I was a miserable wretch,
sleeping on a dirty mattress
in a stifling apartment
with my slovenly family.
Spiders of all kinds
marched across my headboard.

No one cared.
There was nowhere else to sleep.
Terrorists plotted around the corner.
The city's grid was gone;
it was now amorphous and infinite.

The comedian's lips melted into red wax candy;
an unkissable mess; a soft, red aroma.

What kind of dream is this
in which the dreamer
cannot dream?

EVENT HORIZON

There is a tiny hole into which all things fall eventually,
a crazy density that holds light a prisoner.
And there are all the things you ever owned, but tiny,
and also, all the things you never owned,
because they were too crooked,
and too silly, and
they spoke,
and they
shouldn't.

The imagination ambles down a path and lumbers towards us,
crooked and silly and curious: stumbles into
the black hole where Isaac Newton's pyjamas
are trapped with yesterday's left-overs.
Where light cannot escape even though
this place is so small
it may not even
be.

And it cannot illumine either, is
reduced to atoms trying
insanely to leave at 9.46053
miles per second: a pretty
quick clip
for going
nowhere.

One Lousy Poem

1979

Not even one lousy poem.

The City won't spit back one lousy poem
to relieve the stench of urine in the subway.

(I never thought I could stare so long without a
single thought or strength for anger.)

All the apartments are left like confused old people.
Everyone is walking around, too hot to stay still.
And today someone peed in the kosher bakery
even though there were women and children in the store.

(There is a force moving this city,
it is the dance of the dead,
an army of people,
marching straight home to bed.)

The Soprano Listener

for Winnie

When she was eight and cross-eyed her teacher stood her against the enormous auditorium wall with several others like herself. She stood behind her glasses while everyone sang around her, proud of her new title, "Soprano Listener," and wondered where the voices went when their echoes finally died.

Her mother brought her to the Relief Office monthly where she had to listen very hard, then repeat soundless words, slowly, so her mother could read her lips.

Her mother was deaf, she tone-deaf.
She owned a doll and a shoebox but no dressy dresses.

When she was eighteen, she married a school teacher with a ukulele who taught their children to read music when they were each eight years old, while she wrapped left-over pot roast and hummed a different song, a song without words
for the Soprano Listener.

On school day afternoons she hung the laundry out to dry and watched water-heavy clothing plummet to the alley with a slap.

Two years after her divorce she woke her kids at midnight for a pancake party.

When she was middle aged her eldest son died. She listened to the rabbi's litany, to the office ladies she had worked with for seventeen years, and, finally to her little grandson who asked if his dead uncle had any bones left.

Linda Imbler

to sit with him on those seats and to crush the fabric



Linda Imbler's poetry collections include "Big Questions, Little Sleep," "Lost and Found," "The Sea's Secret Song," and "Pairings," a hybrid ebook of short fiction and poetry. She is a Kansas-based Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net Nominee. Linda's poetry and a listing of publications can be found at lindaspotyblog.blogspot.com.

Valor Unimpeded

Keep your personal vision bright.
Overlook bitter words from jealous hearts
whose envy seeps from them
like blood into cloth.
Stay cheered and maintain a confident essence.
Let anger at those begrudging you be removed.
They, tangled within their webs of esurience,
their torment must be considerable.
Be heartened forever;
for if not for your own intrepidity,
you could be them.

Secret Love (For Myers and Jo)

Inside the lake cabin,
bearing many chintz covered chairs,
a secret love,
contained within these wooden walls,
soft kisses and dreams shared.

Depressions from their body weight
indented on these plump settees.

They dread the city and the road,
fearing that each parting will be the last.

A later walk, on a secluded pier,
she hears the labored breath,
sees him quickly fall
and knows their time has ended at this spot.

Her life, once more sad, will remain so.

She wants the past,
to sit with him on those seats and to crush the fabric.

She dreams they're there when nightfall comes.
She dreams of the place where
the only dents on those now dusty chairs
are seen in the memory of their secret love.

Final Ride

His nose, out the window, smelling the smells,
eyes closed with pleasure as he recalls other fun rides.
But this is the perfect best one, because he
knows that this will be his very last.

He senses the shutting down of his organs,
but smells the good smells,
and the feel of the wind on his face.
Feeling his ears flap, these sensations as strong as ever.

Whatever these creatures take,
into the next part of their existence,
after this now time has passed,
they'll remember.

If joy and companionship were their experience,
the old memories will remain intact.
New memories will be gifted
to those who once hoped for love and a jubilant final ride.
For them, the once unlucky, they will now have their wish.

Royal Salvation

A smiling face,
within these silver walls,
the newly crowned Queen,
steps from her dais,
exits out the flung open egress,
glides along lily strewn paths,
and comes to meet her King.

Together they visit gardens filled with reason,
both antiquated and fresh,
to salvage hope,
a chance for peace,
before the world could go dark.

Mud

Don't drag me through the mud, sully my soul,
fill your mouth with all nature of words evil.

I pay the price for your sins, suffer your iniquities,
rely on you to get me through the day.

Quite wrong,
I should be on the other side
in the light, where all good things lie.

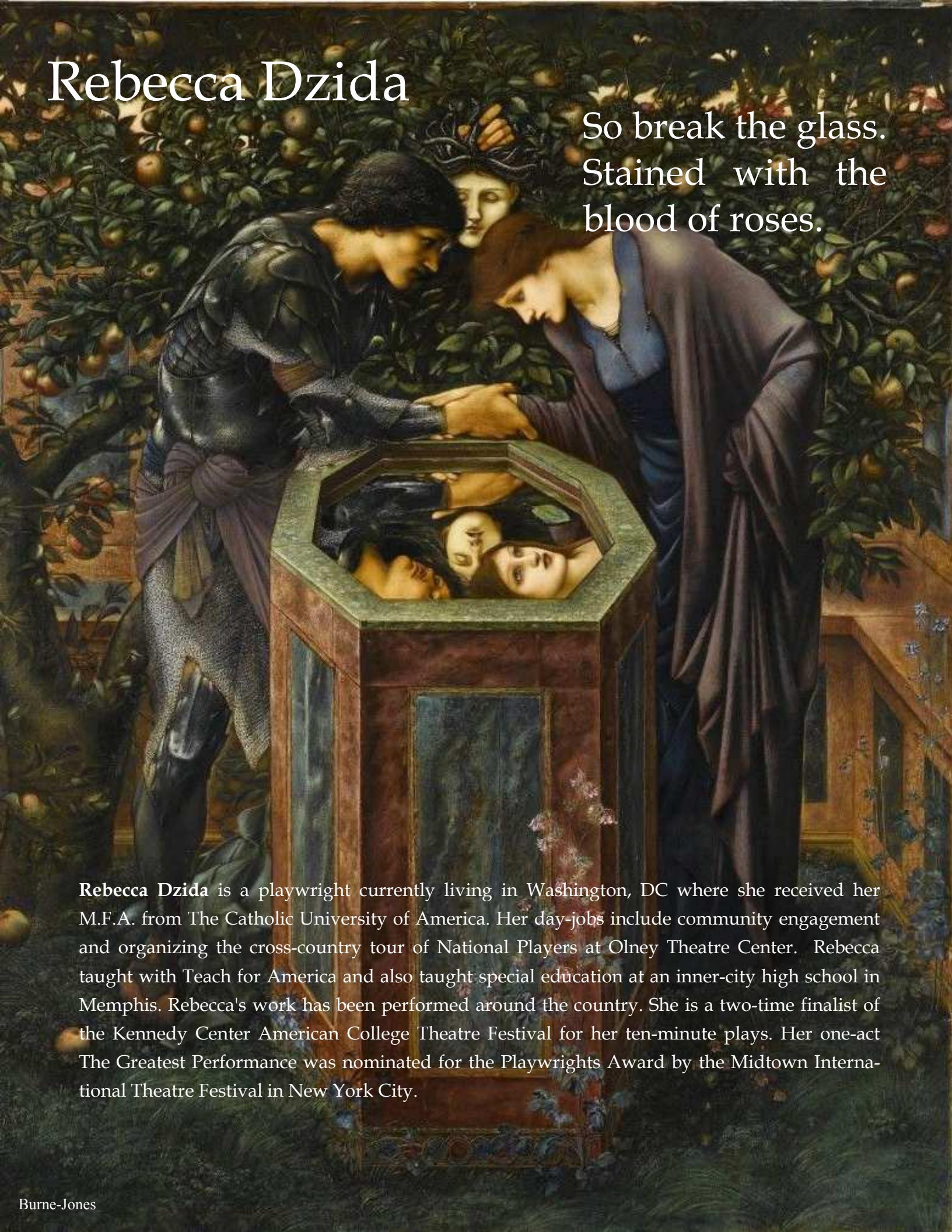
Instead, I'm still here, with you,
and then you lie in another way.
So, I'm suffering a little longer,
waiting for the next big wave of hurt
to come rolling over me,
never to subside,
crashing-causing pain and damage.

Why do I go near you?
Why do we continue carrying on as we do?
We're on a new path to hell every day.

I caution you, cease the wave,
stop the scarring,
Make it right for both of us.
I am not strong enough to do it on my own.
For once, help me find peace.
It will serve us both well.
Mud is fine for warmer weather,
but winter is coming
and I must tuck in and strive to survive.

Rebecca Dzida

So break the glass.
Stained with the
blood of roses.



Rebecca Dzida is a playwright currently living in Washington, DC where she received her M.F.A. from The Catholic University of America. Her day-jobs include community engagement and organizing the cross-country tour of National Players at Olney Theatre Center. Rebecca taught with Teach for America and also taught special education at an inner-city high school in Memphis. Rebecca's work has been performed around the country. She is a two-time finalist of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for her ten-minute plays. Her one-act The Greatest Performance was nominated for the Playwrights Award by the Midtown International Theatre Festival in New York City.

Thread

*"Someone told me the sight recalled
a fly stalked by a strange spider,
and the fly a soul that had been saved."*
-Victor Serge

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

The fly had fallen to its knees and prayed,
Prayed and prayed for forgiveness.
Meanwhile,
the spider,
who had been waiting
and salivating,
excreted its thread
and tickled the fly's nose so it sneezed before it could say
Amen.

The spider,
along with its spider cubs,
slid like spaghetti
down to the fly, tore its legs off
 tore its wings off,
 ripped its head off,
 and gorged on it all.

The fly's last thought was one of bitter sorrow.

Break the Glass

Our fairy godmother has forsaken us And is replaced by a gun.

Take the locks of hair, Testament to the resilience of nature and the pride of generations.
Shave it off.

Maybe one day it can weave together from the piles into a rope To lasso hope from the depths of the dragon's lair, To set it free...

Take off that false silk and satin and don your garment of truth, Of coarse despair. And yes, befriend the rats.

Isn't this backwards? That the glass breaks to force the bloodied foot into a wooden barrel. It lacks the snakes and scalding oil, but nothing compares to the noxious gas.

Of Ash – Aschenputtel – Who we are, where we dwell, and what we become.

We are past sorting through lentils and peas But bodies and bodies, Or shoes without the feet to occupy them.

And this is what we do at the ball: We don't dance. We howl At the sky in a pit full of fire.

And our shoes stay behind. All the while the birds' heads bald and vulturize. How I'd wish they'd peck out our eyes.

Perversions are the remedy to ignorance, So break the glass. Stained with the blood of roses. No matter the version. Let it shatter.

Scott Thomas Outlar

between the time spent in fields of freedom
and the moments lost drifting through chaos

Scott Thomas Outlar hosts the site 17Numa.com where links to his published poetry, fiction, essays, interviews, reviews, live events, and books can be found. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Outlar was a recipient of the 2017 Setu Magazine Award for Excellence in the field of literature. His words have been translated into Afrikaans, Albanian, Dutch, Italian, French, Persian, and Serbian. He has been a weekly contributor for the cultural newsletter Dissident Voice since 2014. His most recent book, *Abstract Visions of Light*, was released in 2018 through Alien Buddha Press.

Of Sand and Sugar

delicate and deliberate

soft

these spells take time

the last granule
of sugar

its texture scratching
your tongue
my tongue

our tongues are melting

one more grain
of sand

its hour
passing
overturning

history is repeating

Of Smoke and Stone

weighty and eternal

diamond

these spells grow cold
an effervescent wisp
of smoke

its shape
rising
dispersing

our touch is dissolving

one last remnant
of stone

its summit
mounted
overcoming

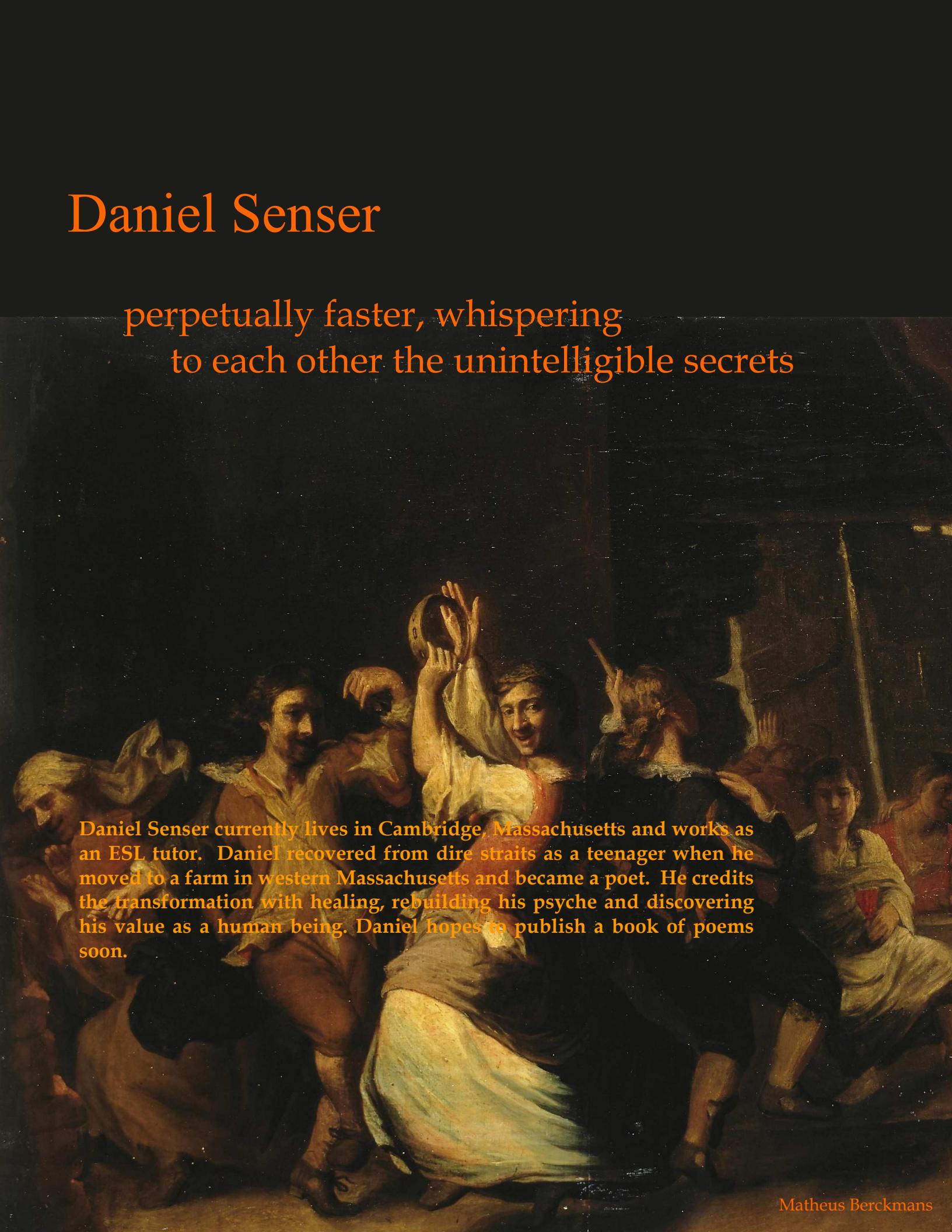
heaven has ascended

Abbreviated Spaces

I lived a thousand times
between that breath and this sigh,
between the first touch
and the final goodbye,
between childhood innocence
and the birth of a conscience,
between the opening salvo
and the last act of war,
between the fast and the feast,
between the wants and the needs,
between the victories and the not quite,
between the capture and the conquer,
between the blinding void of fear
and the blinking of awakened eyes,
between the blood-letting and the bandages,
between the time spent in fields of freedom
and the moments lost drifting through chaos,
between the rights and the wrongs,
between the tears and the songs,
between the hopes and the dreams,
between the space of each shifting scene.

Daniel Senser

perpetually faster, whispering
to each other the unintelligible secrets



Daniel Senser currently lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts and works as an ESL tutor. Daniel recovered from dire straits as a teenager when he moved to a farm in western Massachusetts and became a poet. He credits the transformation with healing, rebuilding his psyche and discovering his value as a human being. Daniel hopes to publish a book of poems soon.

Autumn Dance For My Parents

We dance to the discordance deep within us,
experience only the movement, while the stillness
prods and examines the minutest sensations
such that we cannot feel.

Our breath always pressed for the next
unrest renewed with every step
putting even our follicles to the test.
Dancing, twirling, creating the river
through which our lives run
perpetually faster, whispering
to each other the unintelligible secrets
of oblivion, which we interpret nonetheless
as our dreams, unfolding
taking us away from each other, seemingly
to be awakened by the crescendo
of our song, to which we dance
like a whirlwind of leaves
around and around and around.

The Color Blue

Twenty-three eagles paint the afternoon

The color blue

The color blue

Lavender shadows in a sunset swoon

The air, it cools

The air, it cools

Drop of chardonnay from a sickle moon

Venus swoons

Venus swoons

Rising heat drops its dew

Drops of blue

Drops of blue

Twenty-three eagles paint the afternoon

The color blue

The color blue

Changes

Seven restless devils wait
in the bed of our leader tonight.
Seven restless watchers wait
For a rumored promise
Made by a rumored God.
Sleep has overtaken the drunkards
Despite their best efforts to die.
The mad men huddle naked in the cold,
Their eyes like distant planets popping
From their skulls.
The thieves have stolen the key to the city.
The bureaucrats have cut out our tongues.
The priests are on hunger strike
In the tabernacle. The whores
Are locked away like precious gold.
Stories are told continuously
Without beginning and without end
By strangers at every trash can fire
On every corner of this land.
The virile have been castrated
And sing in concert halls.
The bones of missionaries lay scattered,
Chewed by mongrel dogs.
Superstition is the currency
With which we buy our bread.
Wait, don't let time deceive you.
These changes never end.

Basement Bar

We conversed in drunkenness
And my mind droned
As we drank greedy draughts of moonlight ale.
A life's worth of sin
In a night's worth of drinking
In this subterranean tavern — a granite hell.
Now edging toward oblivion, I can hear you murmuring
Trying to call me back
Like a vesper bell.
The cackled laughter of the patrons
Is full of death,
The last line of defense I have
Against vacant slumber.
Tomorrow may never happen is all I think,
And maybe it's just as well.
In this place that could be a mausoleum
Full of mad and raucous dead,
My mind fills with drunken shadows
And like a weeping angel, I hold my head.

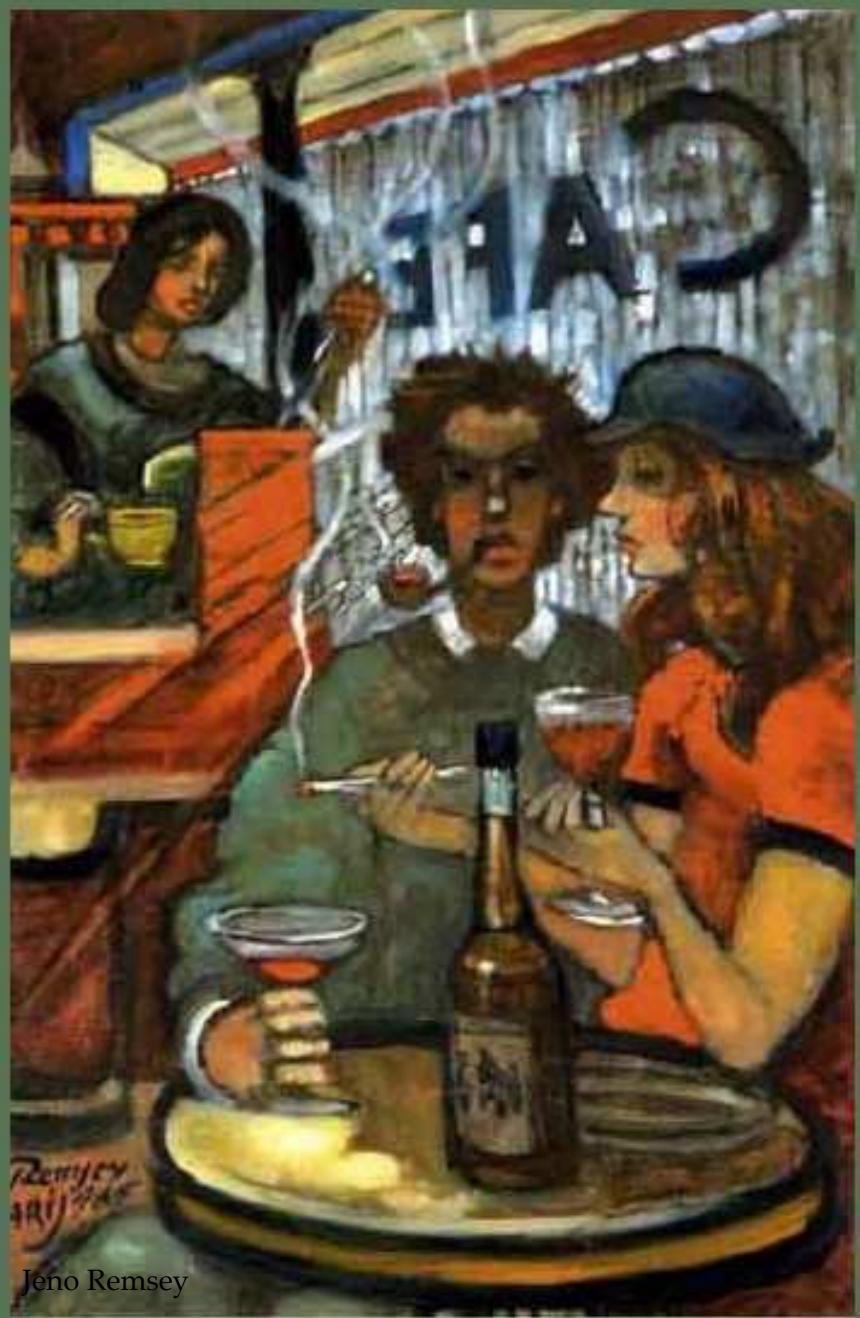
Meeting Tolstoy

One late afternoon in early autumn—
The sky was blue except for a few streaks
Of solid gray clouds near the eastern horizon—
I found myself walking on a country road
In western Russia.
To my right was a vast field, flat and green,
With a house well off in the distance.
A single dead oak, giant and formidable,
Loomed near the road.
On one of its gnarled branches were perched
Two happy blue birds, singing.
To my left was a field of grain.
My mood was pensive, and every golden blade
Seemed to hint at a greater mystery that
With every gush of wind was closer
To being unlocked.
Something was seeping slowly into my mind,
A memory from before my time,
Like a dream that beckons one to sleep,
Or ancient music soft and deep,
That carries the soul like a tide
Into an ocean of frenzied yearning.
And indeed, just then I heard such music.
It was coming from just up the road,
Where a man was mowing with an old scythe.
He was singing a song that was strange,
Yet familiar, in a voice that was deep
And wracked with a burden that was old
And unnamable.
As I approached, I studied his face.
It was unmistakable—the fierceness of his brow,
His eagle's eyes, his implacable grimace.
It was Leo Tolstoy, in the latter part of his many years.
He stopped his work and looked at me,
Sweat pouring down his brow.
He nodded his head. I bowed.
I stood like a fool, waiting for him to speak.
Modestly he looked at the ground,
Then back at me.
"You wonder why an old man like me
is out here working all alone.
I'll tell you: this grain is not my own.
It belongs to us all, especially the poor and the meek.
I work for them. This brings me peace.
So go, do your work. God gave you time and strength.
Use them well, and that will be its own reward."
I tried to reply, but a heavy wind blew in from the west.
The waves of grain gushed and the sound blocked my voice.
Because he seemed to understand,
I smiled and nodded, turned and walked away.

Andrew Scott

The coffee is finished and it is time to
leave a cafe that I will not see again

Andrew Scott is a native of Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. During his time as an active poet, Andrew Scott has taken the time to speak in front of a classroom, to judge poetry competitions and be published worldwide in such publications as *The Art of Being Human*, *Battered Shadows* and *The Broken Ones*. His books, *Snake With A Flower*, *The Phoenix Has Risen*, *The Path* and *The Storm Is Coming* are available now.



Scenes From A Downtown Street

Looking around this downtown street,
sipping a coffee, watching the people go by.
The hustle and bustle will never change
where other things down here have
blending with the scenery that stays the same.

At the end of the street, the construction is constant.
Same place every year for the past seven years.
It is always street work by the same crew.
At least they know where they are working.
Would not want to be them in this heat,
the boots and work clothes adding to their tired
but nothing seems to stop them
or the constant hum of drilling into the ground.
They have been here so long
I am not sure if they even know
what they are fixing anymore.

Lighting a cigarette, I cannot help
but look for a store that is no longer there,
Now it is an apartment building
with businesses on the main floor.
Years ago it was not that.
It was three, old brick buildings.
A cafe of eastern cuisine,
a travel agency to faraway places
and a beloved general store
that when we were kids, they sold cheap
penny candies, quarter cigarettes
before the laws changed about buying at a certain age.
Cannot help but wonder if our stealing
when their eyes were closed helped get it tore down.

Grinning I look over to the mass bus depot
that has not changed as long as I remember.
It still has a spooky, dirty feel to it.
The same aura that was there when I was a kid.
Looking back and forth I see some of
the same people that have been taking
the noisy vehicles for years.
It is a comfort to them and that does not change.

The coffee is finished and it is time to leave
a cafe that I will not see again.
It closes this weekend with little fanfare.
A reminder that though something's stay the same
in time places constantly change
on this busy downtown street.

Wednesday At A Cafe

For this stranger, the rusted sign
was a welcome stop for this traveller.
Wednesday afternoon and a place
was needed for a coffee and food stop.
Evan's Cafe was the perfect sign.

The scent of the coffee as soon as
you crossed the threshold
was as strong as the walls
holding this place together.
A cup was waiting for me
as I sat down at the counter full of crumbs.
Such a sweet taste.

My waitress handed me a paper menu,
one page with all their offerings
with a side order of free grease.
Reading and deciding on the prize
brought a grin as I overheard
the conversation between the two ladies
working about how the husbands
have not done the summer yard work yet.
One of them was going to hear about it tonight.

My coffee got replaced with a cold drink
and a meal from the kitchen
that I would not want to look into.

The buzzing conversations that were around me
with every bite that I took
gave an internal chuckle.
This stranger did not want
people to know I could hear their chatter.

The farms were producing
but the wood mills were running slow.
That is what I heard through the voices.
My thoughts were where theirs should be,
working on the rough roads into here.

As I paid the bill and said my thanks,
the two ladies said their goodbyes
like I was leaving family.
A beautiful, homey time
spent on a Wednesday at a cafe.

Eyes Fixed On Me

Playing notes for all to see
trying to bring magic effortlessly
As all eyes are fixed on me

Smiles on stranger's faces bring glee
it is for them, not me
Playing notes for all to see

Praying my fingers remain free
slips from the music would end brutally
As all eyes are fixed on me

Closing eyes, taking in the key
every stream coming to me calm and loudly
Playing notes for all to see

My fingers hide a frail pedigree
struggling, at times, to present lovely
As all eyes are fixed on me

the room may become we
want every feeling to come freely
Playing notes for all to see
As all eyes are fixed on me

Watching From A Star

I wonder as I sit here
and look at the dark, clear sky
are you watching from one of those stars?
Seeing all the turns and ups and downs.

Were you there when I gambled
with a life decision and lost everything
that had been built through the years.
The moments of struggle to get it all back,
where giving up would have been easy.
Strength was so hard to find then.

Wonder if you were watching a new life
where success and failure went hand in hand.
There were times the smile was taken
and thoughts of leaving to be a person
that I was many years ago seemed easier.

So many times through the years
I have spoken to you for strength
without a guiding word in return,
leaving me without direction.

Would you have stepped in
if it looked like I was going
to a place I should not have?

Those times of confusion
were not so long ago
however I am at peace now
with the turns taken,
new relationships built,
the love given.

I cannot help as I stare at the sky
but wonder if you would have been proud
at what you may have seen
if you were watching from the brightest star.

Betrayer's Sword

Should have trusted the feeling.
The one that gave the real truth
with only the changing air
as evidence of wrong doing.

Denial was in my mind.
No person with years of trust
would cut for the blood
of a person that was like a brother.
That is what my mind would say.
Was so completely wrong.

Question the reasons that made him change.
Was it envy, jealousy of fortune
that was earned through work?
Nothing is given in this jaded world.

I may never tell what I know
to the last blood brother.
Will have an open weary eye
and try a slow forgiveness
from feeling the strike of a Betrayer's Sword.

Steve Klepetar

I've never known such a road, bleeding toward
the horizon, taking the shape of many things



Luc Busquin

Steve Klepetar lives in Saint Cloud, Minnesota, where he taught literature and creative writing at Saint Cloud State University. Klepetar's work has appeared worldwide, in such journals as *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Deep Water*, *Expound*, *The Muse: India*, *Red River Review*, *Snakeskin*, *Voices Israel*, *Ygdrasil*, and many others. He has also done several collaborations with composer Richard Lavenda of Rice University in Houston, including a one-act opera, *Barricades*, for which he wrote the libretto. Klepetar is the author of eleven poetry collections and chapbooks, the most recent of which include *Family Reunion* (Big Table), *A Landscape in Hell* (Flutter Press), and *How Fascism Comes to America* (Locofo Chaps).

The Man who Died Before the Midterms

"Dennis Hof, the owner of several legal brothels in rural Nevada, died at his Love Ranch, in Crystal, on October 16th, just three weeks shy of Election Night in his campaign as a Republican, for the State Assembly in Nevada's Thirty-sixth District, a race that he is still favored to win."

Claire Vaye Watkins in The New Yorker Daily,
November 4, 2018

I voted for the man who died before the midterms.
After he passed into that dark, silent world, his name
rang in my ear, a rebel song in a backstreet pub,
a hurricane shrieking over a buried house.
The letters of his name grew, ornate and thick as brass.
They became a beautiful quote above the courthouse door.
I would have voted for him again and again,
hiding my face behind my tears.
I voted for him in the name of my fathers,
in the name of the dirt beneath my feet.
I voted for him despite his wild ways, his liquor
and his whores, the white Stetson pulled down
over his blue eyes. I voted for his money.

A Way In

All you need is a way in, a small opening between trees.
Then you can slip past, leaving the road to roaring cars.
There, in a new kind of darkness, begin to weave
your vision with awakened eyes. Weave in silence,
pulling threads from memory and song.
Remember the pain in your foot when you stumbled
in the field, hard dirt rubbed into your jeans.
Recall the sun in your eyes, and how you turned away,
hand shielding your brow. Remember your brother's voice,
how your uncle took you hiking in the rain.
Your parents were gone halfway around the world,
and all you could do was cry and limp in the mud.
Remember the hawks nesting near your yard,
how they perched on the fence, scanning the grass for prey.

How We Got Here

I've never known how to address this city,
its opulent buildings sweating in August heat.

I've never known such a road, bleeding
toward the horizon, taking the shape

of many things: a fountain, a prancing horse,
a man with an empty pack.

How the traffic howls!
If you were with me, you might stare

out your window, hoping for an owl,
something to call out into the night.

You might find a pill on your nightstand
or a glass of wine glittering in candlelight.

How we got here is a mystery, so many years
composed of days that slipped by

unnoticed as snow piled up by the mailbox.
So many drifts, such a long way off.

I've never known how to address time,
even as it dabs my hair white, leaving me speechless in the sand.

Under Her Breath

"There was always the murmur, you remember, about going home."

Lucie Brock-Broido

Under her breath, her held breath, the secret
she told over and over again.

This was never her country, she was going home.

This was never her country, with its vast plains,
its fields stretching green to the horizon.

When she drove north from the airport in a small,
clean city, she froze in terror at the woods all around,
a lost girl in a fairy tale hugging herself for warmth.

This music was never hers, all dissonance
and guitars, everyone so poorly dressed.

Everyone wearing the same blue pants,
the same blue shirt, and all that dirty hair.

This was never her country, with its noise
and traffic jams near the stadium,
sirens wailing at night, cars honking
because someone had won the World Series,
rain pelting down like diagonal spears.

She would never eat chicken with her fingers,
or cover her meat and cheese with bread.

She wouldn't taste peanut butter or chocolate milk.

She scoffed at maple syrup and ham.

This was not her country, where children spoke
without permission and the streets were lined with trash.
Under her breath she whispered, and the stones heard.

Oaks tossed in the wind, and mountains
said nothing, not even mouthing a bland farewell.

Curious

"And to the curious I say, Don't be naïve."
Lucie Brock-Broido

If you're curious, look under the bed,
even though something might be there
to pull you under, pull you down
beneath the waves. If you're curious,
look. In the closet, under the loose rock
in the yard, around the corner of the fence.

Mostly there is nothing but dust
or worms or old games someone
put away because the dice were gone.

Even then, odd smells return,
and you might find yourself on the shore
licking an ice cream, watching a plane
carve messages in the sky.

If you're curious, ring the bell.
What could happen worse than standing still
waiting for your mother's curse?

The rain around you is fiery now,
and somewhere, on the other side
of a distant road, a dog runs and leaps
at a man on a red bike whose fall is heard
only by children playing in a vacant lot,
their screams and giggles rising in velvet air.

TR Healy

Glove Doctor



T.R. Healy was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, and his stories have appeared in such publications as *Gravel*, *Hawaii Review*, *Steel Toe Review*, and *Welter*.

Leaning back from his workbench, Zane Gretler picked up his cell phone and snapped a picture of the honey-colored Spalding fielder's glove. Whenever a lace needed to be replaced, he took pictures to insure that he followed the same lacing order as closely as possible. Then, putting the phone aside, he took another puff on his cigar and set it back in the Mason jar lid he used as an ashtray. As he bent over the glove, an ice cream wagon crept past the garage, repeatedly playing a fragment of the "Maple Leaf Rag," and he smiled, remembering as a boy chasing after such vehicles after asking his mother for a dime.

With a pair of needle nose pliers, he pulled out the broken lace that attached the web of the baseball glove to the palm. It was so thin and frayed he was surprised it had not broken a long time ago but the owner, a sixteen-year-old shortstop, said it just came loose the other day. He promised the youngster he would fix it and have it ready to pick up before his next game.

Better than ever, he hoped, as he rubbed a new rawhide lace with a dollop of petroleum jelly. Smoke from his cigar drifted across his fingers and, closing his eyes, he savored the strong fragrance for a moment. Then he secured one end of the lace to a lacing needle and proceeded to thread it through the holes of the glove.

*

From the back of his panel truck Gretler pulled out a rickety dolly then set on it a large box of headlights and taillights and on top of it three smaller boxes of oil filters and fuses and fan belts. He drove a delivery truck for Reliable Auto Parts and his first delivery today was to Whitworth Automotive, a father and son repair shop in the southeast part of town. It was a fairly regular stop on his route. Occasionally, if the owners weren't too busy, they would invite him to have a mug of Ethiopian blend coffee with them, but both were bent over the engine of a classic Pontiac Firebird so he didn't expect any invitation this morning. Warren, the son, just nodded when he wheeled the dolly into the garage but his father stepped away from the car and walked over to him.

"How are you doing, Zane?" Earl asked, draping a greasy rag over his left shoulder.

"I can't complain but the day's just getting started."

"So it is."

Gretler thought then he might offer him some coffee but, instead, he went into his office after signing to accept the delivery of the boxes of auto parts. Disappointed, he started to walk back to his truck when Earl caught up with him with a well-worn baseball glove in his right hand.

"Yesterday I found this glove in the dumpster behind the garage and I thought maybe you'd like to have it."

Smiling, he looked at the wadded-up Rawlings glove which was so stained with sweat he could barely make out the signature of Brooks Robinson above the heel.

"Obviously someone didn't have use for it anymore and tossed it in the trash. I don't know how long it's been there but at least a few days because, as you

can see, it's soaked from all the rain we had the other night."

"What do you want for it?"

"Nothing," he said, handing him the glove. "I just figured if anyone would still want it, it would be you."

"Thank you, Earl."

"You're quite welcome."

*

Ever since he graduated from high school, Gretler had earned his living driving trucks, delivering everything from kitchen appliances to French pastries, but not quite seven years ago he started a side business in his garage repairing baseball and softball gloves. Though never much of a student at school, he was always pretty skillful with his hands, able to repair all sorts of things that needed attention. As a kid, he took very good care of his baseball glove, a Wilson "Ball Hawk," but his friends were not as considerate so they often sought his help in getting their gloves in shape which he was glad to do for a package of blackjack chewing gum or a roll of Life Savers.

He didn't begin to earn money for his services until his son, Corey, joined a Little League team, Yamoto's Kitchen. Soon he had a lot more customers who needed their gloves repaired so Saturday afternoons he set up a cardtable at the park where all the games in his district were played and on it placed a small cardboard sign that said "Doctor in the House" and below it listed his telephone number. He could not believe all the business he received, not only from kids but from their parents as well who played on slow pitch softball teams. If baseball were a year-round sport, he might have retired from driving a delivery truck and worked full-time repairing gloves but he seldom got much business once summer was over.

*

It took Gretler a couple of days to dry the rain-soaked glove Earl gave him earlier in the week. Then he applied some softener to the leather which he let dry for another day. After that, he got out the "walloper," a crude tool he had concocted with a baseball attached to the end of the handle of a claw hammer, and for a good ten minutes pounded the ball into the pocket of the glove. Next, he set another ball in the pocket and fastened the glove shut with some twine pulled as tightly as he could in order to maintain its proper shape.

The next time he made a delivery to Whitworth Automotive he intended to take along the glove and show it to Earl who, he suspected, would not believe it was the one he found in his dumpster. He wouldn't blame him, either, because it looked almost new, if he did say so himself.

*

Just a few weeks before Corey was set to try out for his high school team, he died in his sleep from what a physician later described as his heart beating out of control. He said it was usually an inherited condition in which the walls of the heart thicken and cause irregular heartbeats which sometimes can lead to cardiac arrest.

Gretler could not believe it when his son did not wake up that rainy

Wednesday morning, thought he was playing possum as he sometimes did when he was really tired, and shook him again and again until he realized he was never going to wake up. He then collapsed on the floor, screaming in agony. He had sole custody of his son since Corey was four when his mother left town with some salesman she met at the diner where she waited on tables. The boy was his best friend, his only friend really, the one person he could rely on to give him his honest opinion when he asked for it. Beside himself with grief, he slowly sank into a deep depression that made it a struggle to get up in the morning to go to work. So many mornings he was tempted to remain in bed but knew if he did he would lose his job.

He did stop repairing gloves, though, and did not set foot in the park the rest of that season. He just couldn't because he had enjoyed some of the best moments he had ever experienced with his son there and knew he could never experience them again. Occasionally past customers phoned to request his services but he politely declined, making it clear it was just too much of a burden. Then, last summer, the father of his son's closest friend throughout his years in Little League called to say that the web of Jamie's glove had come loose and needed to be mended. Again he declined but the man implored him to reconsider.

"You know how well the two boys got along," he reminded him. "They were practically brothers, and you know as well as I do that Corey would want you to help Jamie."

"Yes, they were very close."

"Please, Zane, I'd really appreciate it if you would help us."

So, reluctantly, he agreed to mend the glove, and as he did he realized how much satisfaction he derived from the work. And, to his surprise, being involved again in the game didn't make him sad as he expected but curiously happy as he remembered his son swinging a bat and fielding grounders. Those memories, though difficult at first, brought Corey back into his life, not as someone to mourn but to celebrate and admire. So he resumed bringing damaged gloves back to life, even set up his cardtable again, because that was what his son would have wanted him to do.

Mark Blickley Keith Goldstein

“HAN’S SOLO”

Mark Blickley is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild and PEN American Center as well as the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Scholarship Award for Drama. He is the author of *Sacred Misfits* (Red Hen Press), *Weathered Reports: Trump Surrogate Quotes from the Underground* (Moira Books) and the forthcoming text based art book, *Dream Streams* (Clare Songbirds Publishing). His video, *Widow's Peek: The Kiss of Death*, was selected to the 2018 International Experimental Film Festival in Bilbao, Spain. He is a 2018 Audie Award Finalist for his contribution to the original audio book, *Nevertheless We Persisted*.

Keith Goldstein is a freelance photographer and photo editor in New York City. Keith began exhibiting his photography since the 1980's. His work has appeared in many publications including *ABC News Australia*, *Now Public*, *Flak Magazine*, *JPEG Magazine*, *Time*. His work is included various private collections and in the *Erie Art Museum*, *Brooklyn Museum*, and the *S.K. Neuman Culture Center*, Brno, Czechoslovakia. www.keithgoldstein.me





I've had this recurring Bridge Dream for nearly fifteen years. It first appeared one night after being exhausted by cram studying for my Bar Mitzvah. In this initial fantasy I was a swaddled infant left on the very beginning of a long and twisting walkway through a vibrant yet desolate forest. I was crying and there was blood from my bris seeping through the fabric covering my groin. We don't need to dig Freud up from his grave to figure out I was about to undergo a ritual of manhood, so I must've been thinking about the genital mutilation that first signaled my acceptance into the tribe. What's quite disturbing about this recurring dream as it appears today is that after fourteen years of experiencing it, I've only move forward incrementally from the bloody infant that was first placed on this forest path, into a six year old boy that balks at moving forward. In the real world I'm about to turned twenty-eight.

My name's Han because my parents are both Star Wars freaks and the worship of this film series is the only real religion practiced in my household. They obviously were not the only disciples. When I was in Pre-K, there was another boy named Han as well as a girl named Leia.

What's strange about my abandoned boy at the bridge recurring dream is that it's always just a prologue to whatever else I'll be dreaming that night. This winding walkway always introduces whatever anxious or peaceful visions my brain has decided to focus on that night---nightmare, erotic ecstasy, exciting adventures, idyllic beauty.

These days in my dream I am a first-grader who is really hesitant about moving forward, but I also see it as my feet turning into the classic ballet 4th position. My mother taught ballet for years so perhaps my foot position on the bridge is a nod to her. Once again I don't need to disinter Freud to figure out this bridge snakes into a representation of my life's journey. By the way, did you know that babies double their birth size by age five months? Yet in my recurring dream I remained a crying, bleeding infant for years ---no physical growth, no emotional growth.

I'm a bit confused about relationships with women. My testosterone tells me to be more aggressive and not to feel so shy and unworthy. I'm always terrified of saying the wrong thing. In High School I didn't really have a girlfriend because I always hung out within this circle of

friends that were both males and females. Most activities were communal, not individual dates. Recently I joined a dating app called Bumble. On Bumble only women can initiate first contact which I like because it reduces the stress of rejection, yet I've been registered on this app for five months and have yet to receive a single hit.

I'm presently undergoing E.M.D.R. (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing) therapy, which also includes hand tapping and listening to ambient sounds, like ocean waves, via headphones that seesaw these sounds from ear to ear to promote a kind of aural hypnosis. One of the side effects of this treatment is that it can cause vivid, realistic dreams, but my recurring dream happened years before I entered therapy. My therapist insists I keep a journal between sessions in order to maintain the session's progress she insists is occurring.

My shrink Martha works for the V.A. but please don't think I'm some sort of Veteran war hero suffering from PTSD. I never even enlisted in the War Against Christmas, yet I've never known a world without suicide bombings, school shootings and acts of terrorism that take place in my backyard, not in some distant land. Martha is also an ordained Lutheran pastor but she never mentions God in any of our sessions.

I tell Martha I'm so sick of reading/hearing reasons why Millennials can't grow up. My shrink calls it a "First World" problem not unique to young men my age. I am depressed and anxious all the time but don't know why. I am always smiling and laughing at jokes I don't think are funny so people won't discover how unhappy I am. I feel like I'm faking everything. Being an adult to me means not doing things you enjoy doing, yet that's nuts because my parents still act like kids at Star Wars Conventions.

Why am I so miserable? I had everything I was supposed to need while growing up--- emotional and financial security, a good education and now I have a more than decent paying job. I do feel guilty that they are so many less fortunate than me and know it is unmanly to be so constantly sad. Every day there's somebody crying out what privileged assholes we Millennials are, so I always feel pressured to pretend I'm happy.

My shrink says I should spend less time always surrounding myself with people and more time being alone, even if it means being bored at first. But I can't relax by myself. I tried all different kinds of things, but I can't slow down my goddamn anxious thoughts. I've tried drugs, porn, video games and even different kinds of meditation—Zen Meditation with mindfulness on breathing and intentionally focusing on the moment. Then I did Metta meditation to focus on a loving kindness towards myself as well as empathy for other people. In my final workshop I studied Sufi mediation to try to achieve mystical union with a Supreme Being.

In every class and workshop I've taken, I seem to be the only one who can't obtain this metaphysical knowledge and peace. I would often comfort myself in class by thinking my fellow students are just bullshitting their enlightenment to try to make me feel like shit---but thoughts like that defeat the entire purpose of meditation, which is to get to know myself and pull away from the outside world to focus on my inner world, instead of blaming everyone else for my failure. Do you understand how fucked up a person I am? Hell, I even get sad deleting old tweets because it feels like I'm flushing away a big part of who I was and who I am.

Last month Martha suggested I try using a weighted blanket that applies deep pressure touch. She says it simulates the feeling of being comforted, like a swaddled baby, and is supposed to help my insomnia and anxiety. So instead of fighting my anxieties like a real man, I retreat into acting like a fucking baby again, all tucked inside my crib beneath a blanket with 30 pounds of pellets sewn into it. So far it hasn't worked.

When I ask Martha how she arrives at the concept of what exactly my emotional age is, she turns the question back on me and asks what do I believe is my emotional age? I tell her I don't know anything except first my dick is snipped at birth and then as I advance in life I have my balls constantly broken by social proclamations that I MUST BE SUCCESSFUL!

I worry I'll never live up to my own expectations. I grew up being told I could be anything I wanted to be, but I'm coming to the realization that I'm not as smart, talented or special as I

thought I was and that fuels an obsession with having to succeed. My friends and I seem to be growing up poorer than our parents. My Mom and Dad can afford to go to Star Wars conventions all over the world but my important travel plans are still handcuffed by student loans.

I get incredibly stressed over not being able to find a WiFi spot, forgetting passwords to online accounts, the buffering sign when I'm streaming online—it's like taunting me that my life is going in circles, like the areola of a maternal tit. I stress when unable to find my T.V. remote just as my favorite Netflix show is starting.

Why am I unable to advance past the age of six in my recurring dream? Is it because I'm a victim of helicopter parenting? During my childhood my Mom and Dad hovered over every experience and problem I had growing up. Cell phones are the longest umbilical cords in the world. I was taught to be afraid of strangers, playing sports, sexual contact. Is that why they claim we Millennials act more like children than adults?

This outburst of self-pity is very tiring, so I'm going to disappear under my state of the art weighted blanket and hope tonight is the night it crushes my recurring dream of being a child stranded on a spooky bridge inside a dying, primeval forest. And if my heavy blankie is unable to extinguish the dream, perhaps when I wake up I will have at least gained a year of emotional age so I will be a seven year old boy on that walkway, just three quarters away from achieving my true age of twenty-eight.

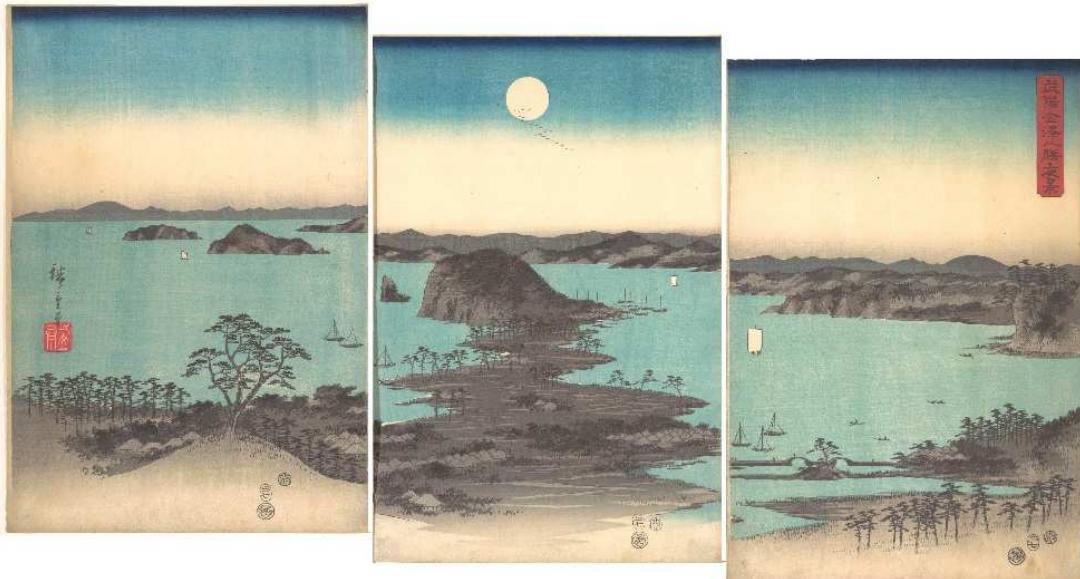
Matthew Dube

flash fiction

STUDYING UKRANIAN IN ALABAMA

COLD SNAP

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AND SHE DIDN'T NOTICE



TRIPTYCH : Panorama of the Eight Views of Kanazawa under a Full Moon, 1857
Ando Hiroshige (Japanese). Woodblock print.

Matthew Dube is an Assistant Professor at William Woods University in Fulton, Missouri where he teaches American Literature and Creative Writing. His research and writings include an exploration on what "the poetics of comic books and graphic novels [...] can offer into comic books .."

STUDYING UKRAINIAN IN ALABAMA

I owed it to everyone I left in L'viv. I sounded out the words in a photocopied textbook without knowing what they meant. Outside my door, the heat cooked my neighbor's voice to drawl when he asked where I went to Church. He was sure my Yankee accent could be washed clean by the blood of the Lord. Roll on, Crimson Tide, over Alabama.

After such a day of language, I'd quiet myself in the college bars. Once I brought home a girl born in Zagreb who'd immigrated to the States when she was three. Her first school years, her Slavic burr caught stares and sniping from her classmates who called her pinko even though the wall fell before they were born. Any freight she carried from the Soviet Union she learned to spread evenly between the syllables in her name. L.N, she said it, more like initials than phonemes. Back at my apartment, I turned my tongue to making her come. Hospitality means you make the effort.



COLD SNAP

Marla's parents only ever had her to be an arbiter of cool, so that, driving her to middle school, her mother could ask Marla's judgment of this song or that movie, until the day came when Marla, sharing a bench with three friends after school, froze when she saw her mother walking toward them in a dress that shaped her body like an ice cream cone, and Elsa asked, is that her boob? and Bree responded, it looks like a caterpillar, and Chelsea replied, I think it's a cactus, and Marla, blushing, confessed, she thinks it looks cool.



PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AND SHE DIDN'T NOTICE

She was his muse and I was her roommate. He showed her covers he drew for imaginary album covers but I don't think she even noticed. She gave me a kitchen haircut and he drew her into his notebook in ink: Pieta, Madonna, Moaning Lisa, Klimpt, kissed. She let him kiss her and then she told me his lips were like marble countertop. When he took her camping, I lay on her bed and read the comics he drew of her as the coolest girl in school. His stories about her grew more baroque, more stylized and primal at once, smeared pools of ink for hair that was bigger than anything, and she warned me that he'd flip when he realized her future didn't involve him. He and his haircut started a band to play songs about her, but she told me they didn't have anything original to say. She skipped his band's second show so he broke an ink bottle against her windshield. She told me that was like suicide to him, and after that I never saw him again, not face to face. Years later, he dedicated his first published comics to her, drawing her into every genius panel. She doesn't care about him anymore, but I helped to bankroll the first print run. I was too embarrassed to ask him to sign it.

John Tavares

Toronto Life



John Tavares was born and raised in Sioux Lookout, Ontario. He is the son of Portuguese immigrants from the Azores. He graduated from a 2-year associates program with a concentration in psychology, a 3-year program in journalism, and obtained a BA in English from York University. His fiction is widely published in journals, online and in print. As a journalist his articles and features were published in various local news outlets in Toronto. John is also a photographer. John has worked locally in his hometown of Sioux Lookout as a research assistant for the Sioux Lookout Public Library and as a research assistant in waste management for the public works department and regional recycle association. He also worked with the disabled for the Sioux Lookout Association for Community Living.

Clay's second cousin hiked the trail from the band office, where he had to deal with some kind of bureaucratic red tape and bull over his white girlfriend living on the reserve without band permission. He complained to the council administrator the girlfriend lived in town weekdays, when she wasn't flying to reservations north of Sioux Lookout, where she worked as a social worker with the First Nations social services agency. After he cursed Clay, he blamed him for letting his leg hold traps sit to rust in the shed, when he asked him to oil them. He showed Clay his broken leg was healing slowly from the snowmobile accident he had while ice fishing on Lac Seul. Then he said Clay inherited a condo in Toronto from his nephew. In disbelief and distraction, Clay returned to reading the Reader's Digest large print condensed book, *Gone with the Wind*, beside the dim light from the lantern.

Then, at the reservation gas station and convenience store, Clay thought he was starting to go completely deaf. Still, over the din and noise of the announcer shouting excitedly during the live telecast of the playoff hockey game, from the television on the refrigerator beside the microwave oven, the lawyer confirmed the bequest in a long distance telephone call. Clay still didn't believe his nephew had left him a condominium: the nature of the accommodation was ultramodern, exotic, to him; the location was foreign, faraway. Later, at the reservation band office, the chief explained a condo or condominium was a fancy city name for an apartment. His nephew, a lawyer, specializing in law for indigenous people, was killed in a fiery car crash on Highway 401. He might have fallen asleep at the wheel, while driving late at night from the Six Nations reserve to help negotiate settlements for residential school and Sixties Scoop claims.

His nephew's lawyer partner said Nodin had no other living relatives he held in high esteem, aside from his uncle Clay, who he remembered fondly. Nodin remembered the times Clay insisted on taking him on his snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle, and dog sled along the trails through the bush around Lac Seul. He patiently taught him hunting, fishing, and trapping skills on the bush and lake around Tobacco Lodge reserve and the surrounding waterways, which, after the construction of the hydroelectric dam at Ears Falls, one could argue, turned into a reservoir. His nephew especially loved the skills he learned snowshoeing through the bush, along the lakeshore, and across the lakes, and fur trapping, ice fishing for walleye and lake trout, commercial fishing whitefish, setting snares and leg hold traps on the trap line in the snowy bush for snowshoe hare, fox, lynx muskrat, beaver, mink, marten, fisher, and wolves.

Nodin also respected the fact Clay never smoked or drank, or took advantage of women, or friends, or, for that matter, judged him. The lawyer called him several more times long distance. Again, he had to snowmobile or snowshoe to the reservation convenience store to use the payphone or hike to the reservation band office to borrow their landline. Biting his tongue, pinching his face, he listened to the lawyer explain he should simply sell the condominium. The apartment was probably worth a million dollars. The lawyer, his nephew's partner, reassured him he would help him invest the funds, purchase an annuity, set up an investment portfolio of income earning stocks and bonds, or set up a trust fund, which would provide him with a pension

or monthly income.

The chief agreed with the Toronto lawyer he should sell the condo. The chief claimed he had gotten too used to, too acclimatized, to life on the reservation. The culture shock of Toronto might kill him. She said he'd hate life in the city, especially a big city like Toronto, since he better appreciated the traditional way of life on the reserve and the surrounding nature.

Clay, who never liked the chief much, felt mystified by her claim to speak for him. Who said he hated life in the city? He never said he didn't like life in the city, or preferred living in Sioux Lookout or Tobacco Lodge to the city of Toronto. He was seventy years old, and, in his mind, he usually felt fit and well, but he was afflicted with old age conditions like arthritis. He was suffering from gout and ankylosing spondylitis. Short of breath, he worried about the effects of heart disease. He didn't feel like he was in any physical or psychological condition to hunt and fish. He was actually tired of living on the reserve. At his age, seventy, he felt like he could no longer tolerate the cold to snowshoe the trap line, or even fish or guide tourist for walleye, musky, or northern pike on Lac Seul, or hunt for moose, whitetail deer or ruffed grouse. The chief was incredulous and so was his nephew's lawyer, both of whom continued to try to persuade him to sell the condo. Exasperated and frustrated, they raised their voices and gesticulated, as they tried to persuade him to sell the condominium, but he couldn't possibly think of what he could do with a million dollars.

"It's a million dollars before taxes, but after taxes and fees," the lawyer said, starting to sound officious, like an accountant, "the bequest will be far less."

Even after taxes, the chief said, how could he possibly spend a million dollars when he lived on a reservation like Tobacco Lodge, if he didn't smoke, or drink, or chase women. If he lived in the city of Toronto, though, Clay argued, he would be close to rheumatologists and cardiologists. The medical specialists would be able to help him with the aches and inflammation of his rheumatoid arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis and the shortness of breath and chest pains associated with angina pectoris. He didn't really have any close friends or relatives on the reserve, or even in the town of Sioux Lookout, nearby, anyway. He always enjoyed his visits to the city of Toronto and staying with his nephew. He liked visiting the gay bars and strip clubs. He especially loved the coffee in the exotic variety of cafes, full-bodied, strong flavoured, not water downed or diluted like in the local café, in Sioux Lookout. At the Roundhouse Café in Sioux Lookout, if you lingered a little too long, said the wrong thing, talked a little too loud, or didn't smell like eau de cologne, the owner, who hovered above customers like a stage mom, might kick you out and ban you.

Once again, the lawyer and the chief tried to persuade him not to live in the condo in Toronto, warning him about the high cost of living in Toronto, and the high cost of property taxes. When he compared the property taxes for the house he owned in Sioux Lookout with those in the city of Toronto, though, he noticed the property taxes weren't that much higher, even though the Sioux Lookout house was worth much less. You could buy several houses in Toronto for the price of that condominium

and then you would have a real property tax problem on your hands. So, he reassured them he had squirreled away sufficient savings, from the money he earned on the trapline, from his full-time job on the green chain and the planer and as a filer for the huge saw blades in the Northwestern Ontario Forest Products sawmill in Hudson, and from the summers he worked as a fishing guide on Lac Seul and the autumns he moonlighted as a hunting guide for Americans anxious to shoot a moose or black bear.

Likewise, he could sell the small house he owned in Sioux Lookout, where he lived for a decade while he worked as a night watchman at the Department of Indian Affairs Zone hospital for indigenous patients from the northern reserves. Besides, he didn't even own the cabin he lived in on the reserve in Tobacco Lodge. He didn't feel like fixing up and doing maintenance work on the cabin or even shoveling the snow on the walkway. He didn't want visitors and, if anyone was intent on dropping by, they could trudge through the snow.

Beginning to think a condo might suit him, after all, the lawyer reassured him condominium fees would cover maintenance and upkeep. The lawyer explained he was a close friend of his nephew. He'd do what he could to help him when he flew to Toronto.

"Fly to Toronto? I'm not flying to Toronto. I don't need to be hassled by metal detectors and security guards."

Clay preferred to take the passenger train, which, slow by modern standards, took over a day to travel across the Canadian Shield of Northern Ontario, before the journey even started turning south to Toronto. The Via Rail passenger train was often late, falling behind the right of way of freight trains, but the trip was otherwise hassle free. The dome car and large window seats allowed him to sight see the Canadian Shield landscape, the lakes, the forests, the rivers, creeks, muskeg, swamps, rock outcrops, and small towns and camps and outposts along the northern route.

Before Clay left Tobacco Lodge, the chief called him to the band office and his office for one last meeting. She said she just wanted to make certain that there was no hard feelings. She tried to reassure him she wasn't trying to tell him or order him what to do, especially with his own personal life. She was only thinking about his best interests and what she thought might make him happiest. She still didn't think he would be happy over the long term living in Toronto, especially compared to life on the reserve of Tobacco Lodge. That judgement, she said, was based on her own personal experience with fellow band members, particularly younger people. They moved to the city, urban centres like Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, or Toronto. Then they got caught up in the wrong crowd or became addicted to opioids, intravenous drugs, and pills. Or they resorted to the sex trade, found themselves victims of human trafficking, or trapped in a criminal lifestyle, drug trafficking, smuggling, robbery, because of poverty or addiction. Still, she understood he had a life and mind of his own. He was free to learn through experience how hard life could be in the city, particularly in Toronto. He would always be a member of the band. He wanted to tell her he thought she was overeducated and a bit too condescending and overbearing. He wouldn't allow her to

decide what was good for him. But he kept his opinions to himself and thanked her with a handshake.

When he arrived in Toronto, the lawyer friend of his nephew met him at Union Station. Nodin's friend hired a limousine to drive him the short distance downtown home. Josh helped Clay set up house in Aura, the condo high-rise at Gerard and Yonge Street. He told Clay the Aura Building, where his nephew owned a condominium, which he now owned, was stacked seventy-nine stories high, with more floors than any building in Canada, and was taller than any residential building in Canada.

Then the lawyer friend of his nephew said he was gay. The reason Nodin's father or none of his brothers or sisters inherited the condominium: Nodin was gay. No-one in Nodin's family accepted his sexual orientation or lifestyle. Born again Christians, Nodin's family had difficulty accepting their sibling's and son's homosexuality and disowned him.

His nephew said Clay never had an issue with his sexual orientation. Live and let live, Clay said. He didn't know what to add because he still thought the fact his nephew was gay wasn't his business, and he couldn't pass judgement. He was family and another person, no more, no less, except he was smart and talented and had special skills as a lawyer, all of which he admired. Then Josh told him that Nodin actually died from AIDS.

"AIDS? I thought you told me twice over the telephone he died from a car crash on the freeway."

"After he was diagnosed with an HIV infection, Nodin started drinking. He stopped taking his medications, which were also making him sick. Eventually, he contracted pneumonia caused by the HIV virus, and he died a painful death. But I couldn't say he died from pneumonia related to AIDS to the people on the reservation. Then the gossip and rumour mill would go crazy, and his brother might drive all the way down to Toronto to shoot me."

"I don't think they care."

"Possibly because they already know."

"They know he's gay, but Nodin doesn't exist for them anymore. Nodin was already dead to his closest family before he actually died. He's been dead to them since they discovered he was gay, when he was caught by an OPP officer with a teacher from Queen Elizabeth High School, in a car parked overnight in Ojibway Park. The teacher was fired, but Nodin was expelled from high school. He went to Pelican Falls Residential School when it reopened."

Still, Clay said, he knew he couldn't mention Nodin's name around his family, because immediately his mother flew into a fury or his father threatened to drive a thousand miles to Toronto to shoot him. Or his brothers joked about taking him to downtown Sioux Lookout to the Fifth Avenue Club or Fathead's sports bar and tying him to a tree or utility pole and allowing a loose woman from the rez or trailer park or living on the streets have her way with him. They even joked about driving to Dryden and the strip club and locking him up in a motel room with a stripper who would give

him more than a lap dance.

"You should have an easy time living in Toronto," Josh said.

Clay said he hoped he would. The first several months he busied himself with adapting to the city environment and setting up house. He kept the television and the computer his nephew had in the condo. But he barely used the fancy, shiny, expensive appliances, except to watch a few movies and videos online and fishing and hunting shows on the outdoor television channels. In fact, he found the living quarters so empty and bereft he spent as much time as he possibly could away from the high-rise apartment, with its spectacular view of the city, especially at night. Its amenities and luxuries, including the weight room, the swimming pool, and the gymnasium he ignored. He busied himself with medical appointments with the cardiologists and rheumatologists, and diagnostic tests at the hospital. Once he was placed on the suitable medication at the proper doses, though, he was stable and required little medical attention. As he settled into city life, he busied himself with visiting the library to read the newspapers from around the world or large print bestseller books. Then, in the evenings, he visited the restaurants and coffee shops and the odd time adult video shops and strip clubs sprawled across the city. What he found peculiar and more interesting were the buses, subways, and streetcar rides across the city to visit different establishments, including a few art galleries and museums. He felt, in fact, he had become what subway riders called a straphanger.

He enjoyed taking the buses, subway rides, on expeditions across the city. He enjoyed people watching, amazed at the wide variety of people who commuted and travelled across the vast city of Toronto. What amazed him even more, though, was the way the transit commission police followed him across the city.

The transit enforcement officers seemed forever interested in where Clay was travelling, what he was reading, usually the *Toronto Sun*, the *Toronto Star*, or the Toronto edition of the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, leftover by another commuter. They were usually interested in what or who he was looking at. When they stopped him and asked him where he was going, he was a bit embarrassed to say he wanted to go to a flea market sale. See if he could find videotapes and DVD's of Marlon Brandon movies on sale cheap at his favorite video store before it went out of business. He decided to tell them he was visiting The House of Lancaster on the Queensway and observed with bemusement how they reacted.

The officers tried to persuade him not to take the bus from the Keele subway station platform to the Queensway. They told him he was too old for a titty bar. Another time they called him a dirty old man and tried to order him to go home. Once they followed him because they thought he was a fare jumper and didn't believe that he could afford a transit pass. They even double and triple checked his identification and monthly transit pass. They said he looked too young to be a senior and worried he might be an illegal immigrant. Another pair of transit enforcement officers told him they thought he was suffering from dementia and prone to wandering aimlessly and dangerously. The transit officer, whose turban he admired, said, if Clay was from an

Indian reservation, maybe he should return to the north and live there again.

An officer said that there had been complaints and that he might be happier on the reserve. "Traditional and ancestral lands is where it's at, eh?"

He asked him to tell him about the complaints. The officer shrugged, shook his head, rolled his eyes, and crossed his beefy arms. "You don't understand women in the city," he said. "Don't you know it's rude to stare?"

Later, Clay even decided to buy a smartphone, from the electronic retailer in the Eaton's Centre. Even though he didn't completely learn how to use the phone, he liked to read books, newspapers, and magazines on the screen because he could enlarge the text to a size large enough to suit his blurred and failing vision. Once, he put down his smartphone and forgot to pick up the device. When he rose for his stop at College Station, a transit supervisor seized the cellphone. When Clay tried to take it back from him, the supervisor said it was lost or stolen. He said he was turning the smartphone to the fare collector, who would turn it into the lost and found, if no-one claimed it by the end of his shift. Since Clay didn't use the phone that often, and even then the calls to the reservation were costly and depressing, he decided why bother complaining and attempt to have the smartphone returned. Besides, his nephew left him e-book readers, full of books, many law treatises, which only needed to be recharged every second or third week, instead of everyday like the smartphone.

Then, one evening, when he returned from a visit to a Starbucks in the suburbs, he entered through the automatic gate. The burly pair of security guards insisted on seeing his identification and his transit pass. They insisted he was fare jumping. When he showed them his transit pass, they insisted it was stolen. When they asked to see his identification, to confirm the name on his transit pass matched my ID, he realized he forgot his wallet with his identification in the strip club. No worries, though, the doorman and security guards in the men's club knew him and would hold his wallet for him until his next visit. The big burly bald security guard insisted on seeing his identification, immediately, and put him in a headlock. The grip turned into a choke-hold, when he tried to pull and twist away. He decided to test the strength of his new dentures on the man's hands, biting the flabby fold of flesh between his thumb and fingers. He didn't see what choice he had since the man was choking him, suffocating him. He knew the man was a security guard and not a police officer, so he didn't see how the man was justified in using such force. After Clay bit him, the point was moot since the second security guard, initially anxious his buddy was using excessive force, pounded his head with a baton.

So it came to pass Clay was hospitalized with a head injury in the intensive care unit of Toronto Hospital. Then, in a coma, he was transferred to the neurology and the neurosurgery ward. The neurosurgeon operated, drilling holes in his skull, and removing a sawn segment of the cranium to relieve the intracranial pressure and stem the bleeding in his brain. After multiple surgeries, the doctors didn't expect him to recover: he was taken off the ventilator and feeding tubes.

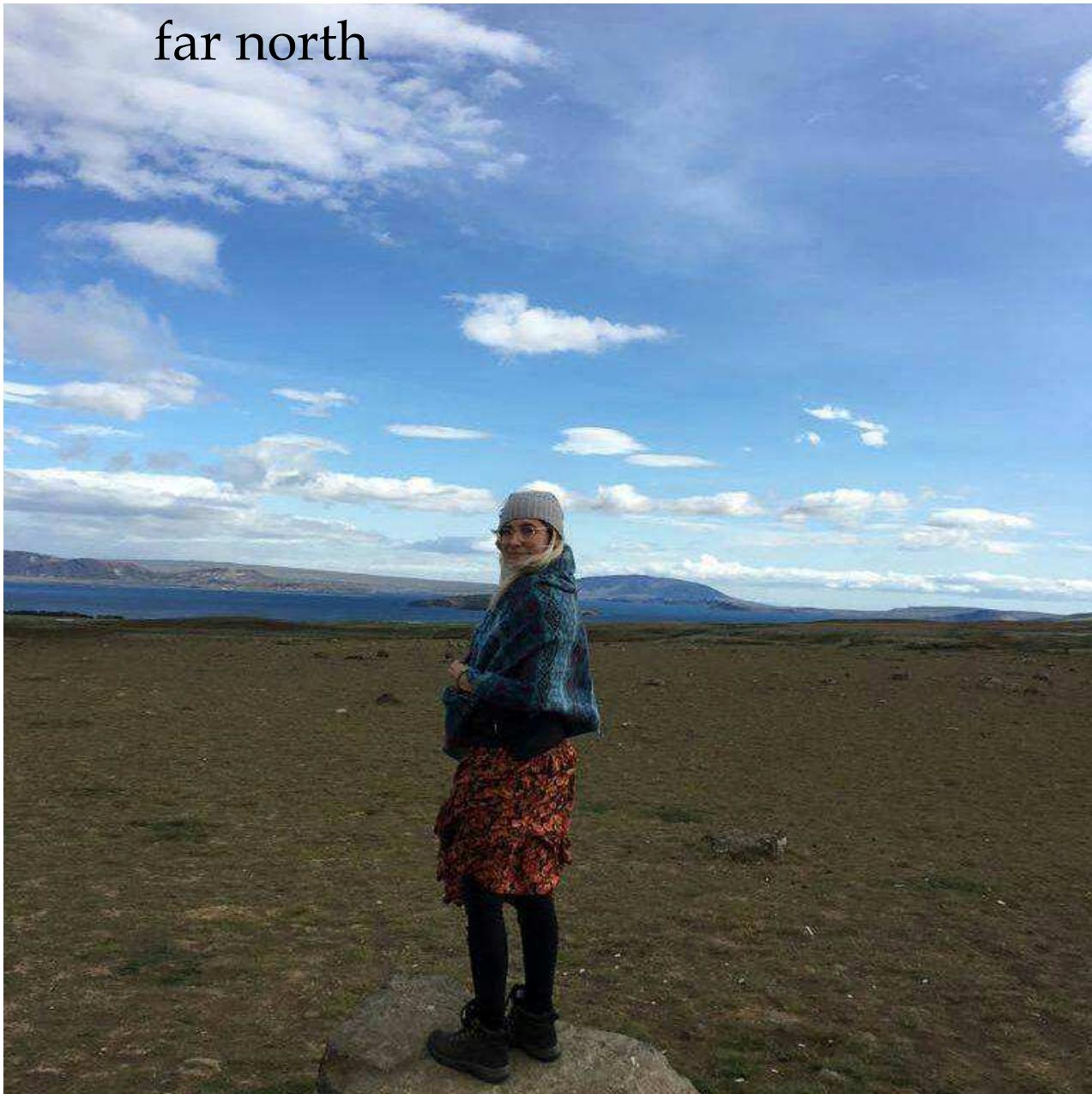
He was returned to Sioux Lookout in a hardwood casket in the cargo hold and

luggage compartment of the passenger train, which, delayed and forced into rail ridings by an early winter blizzard, arrived sixteen hours late. Their breath turning to clouds of smoke, the conductor and engineer cursed in the cold as they unloaded him from the baggage and luggage car, behind the locomotive, at the site of the abandoned train station in Hudson. Clay lay in the coffin alongside a piece of lost and misplaced luggage on the broken cement platform near the railroad crossing in Hudson, at the intersection with the road to the sawmill. Then the chief sent Clay's cousins to pick him up in the blowing snow and freezing cold. The chief reassured his cousins they needn't worry, his estate and the sale of the condo would provide more than enough money to compensate them and bury Clay in the reserve cemetery in Tobacco Lodge, if no one wanted him buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Hudson, or the cemetery in Sioux Lookout.

An empty brown beer bottle and a few stubbed cigarette butts on the freshly packed soil marked the plot on the snowy landscape in the chilly cemetery where he was buried. Within a few days, the late leafless autumn turned harsh, winter grew dark and frigid and froze the lakes and the Canadian Shield rocks, and the earth turned hard and the snow heaped high.

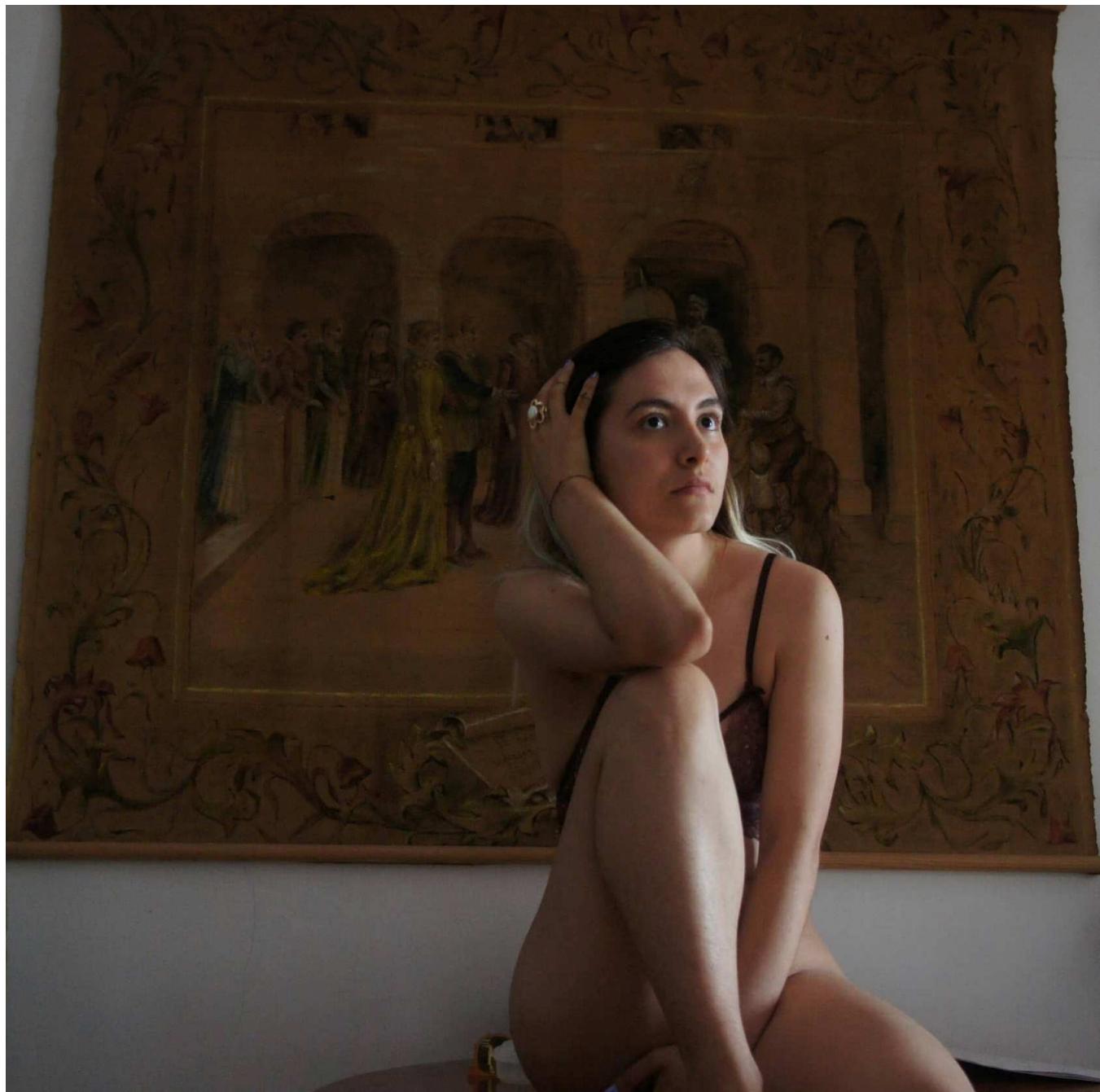
Hio Fae

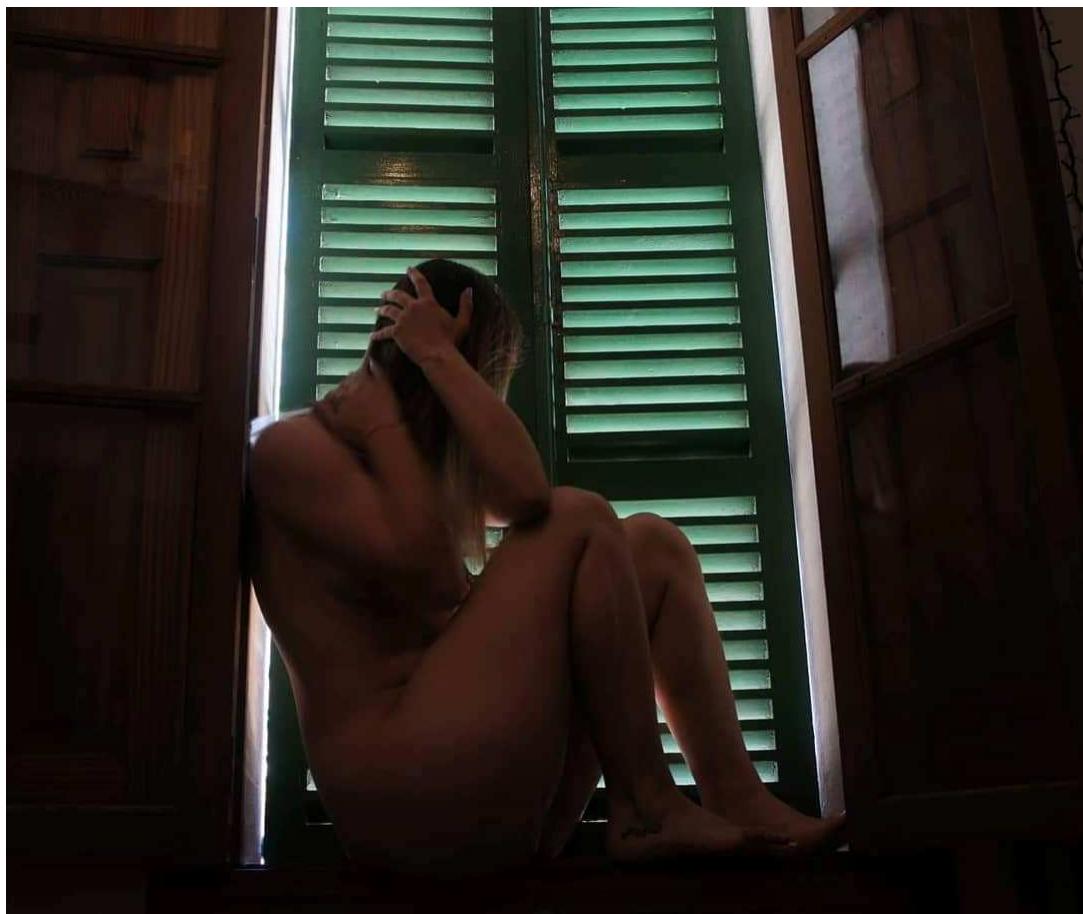
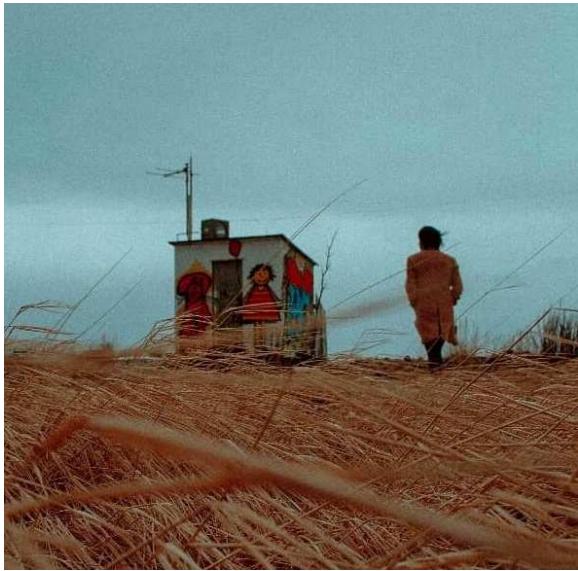
far north



Hio Fae is a photographer, model, translator, and writer from North America who is currently finishing a masters degree in Iceland. Hio has many interests. Surrealism, folklore, and perspectives drive pieces that Hio has delicately assembled to deliver an emotional message, garnished with science and history. Hio's poetry and a short story have appeared in Event Horizon. You can also find Hio on her website and on instagram at @hiofae.







Harry Clarke's Illustrations for Poe's Tales of Mystery and Imagination (1919)

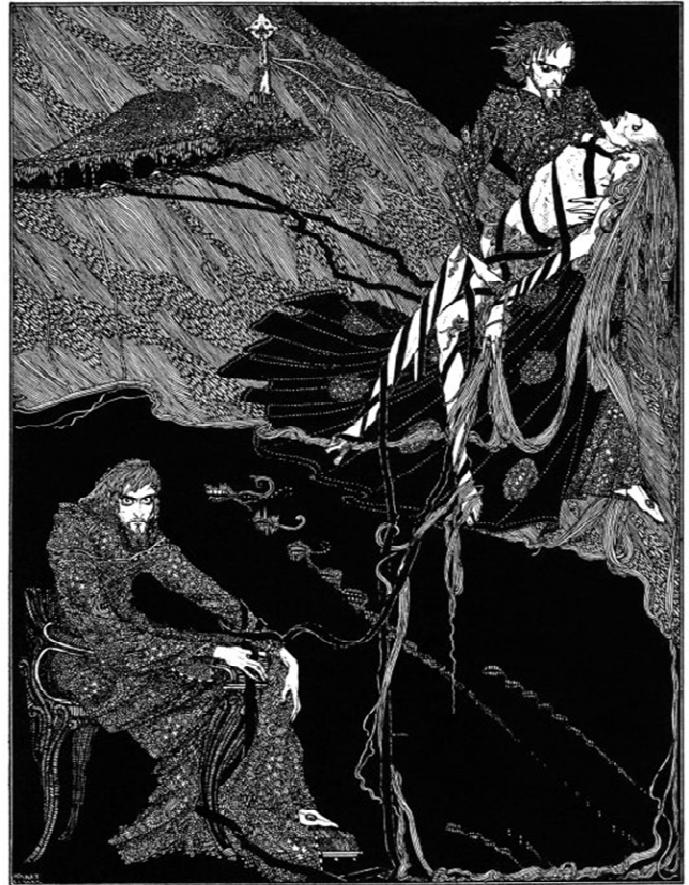


Harry Clarke (1889 – 1931) was an Irish stained-glass artist and book illustrator. Born in Dublin, he was a leading figure in the Irish Arts and Crafts Movement. This collection of illustrations was brought to light by **ThePublic Domain Review** (publicdomainreview.org):

*"Since Edgar Allan Poe's stories of suspense and horror were first compiled as *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* in 1902, many gifted artists have tried their hand at illustrating them, notably Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac and Gustave Dore. But perhaps it is the Irishman Harry Clarke who has come closest to evoking the delirious claustrophobia and frightening inventiveness of "Poe-land". For the 1919 edition of *Tales* Clarke created the twenty-four monochrome images featured below. Their nightmarish, hallucinatory quality makes you wonder if he was on something, until you remember the stories. A new iteration with eight colour plates was published in 1923."*



"Incomprehensible men! Wrapped up in meditations of a kind which I cannot divine, they pass me by unnoticed"
(Manuscript Found in a Bottle)

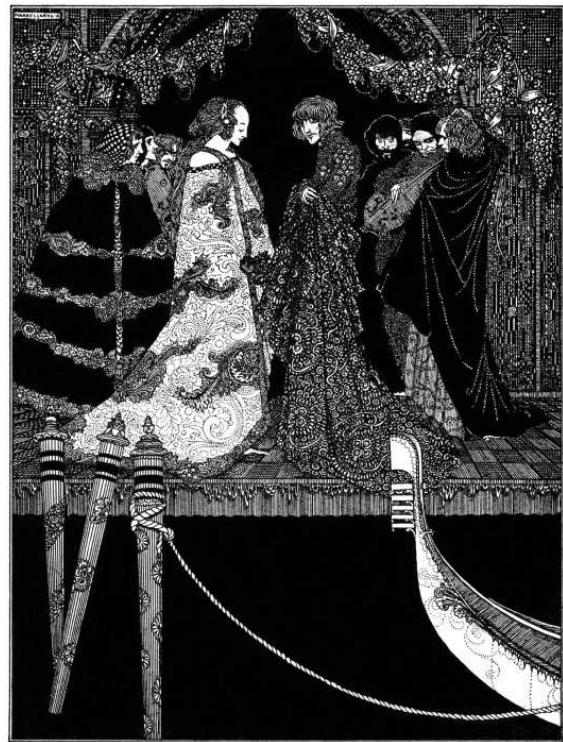
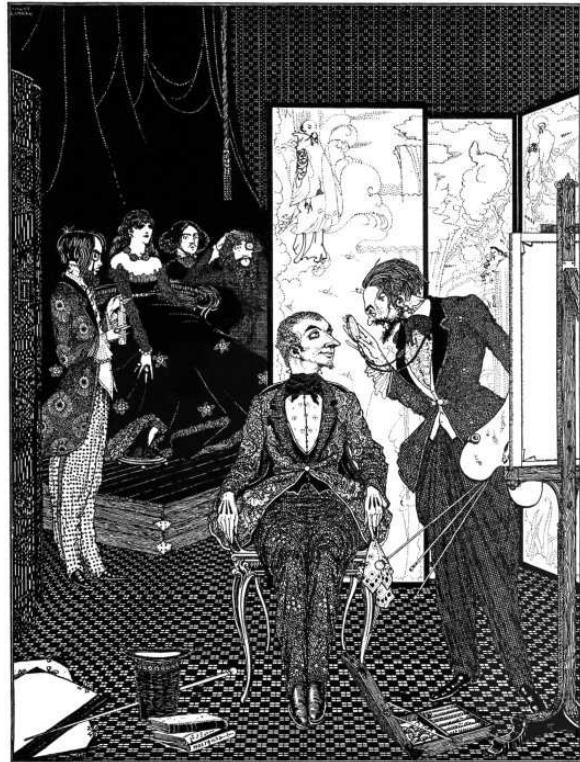


"It was a fearful page in the record of my existence" (Berenice)

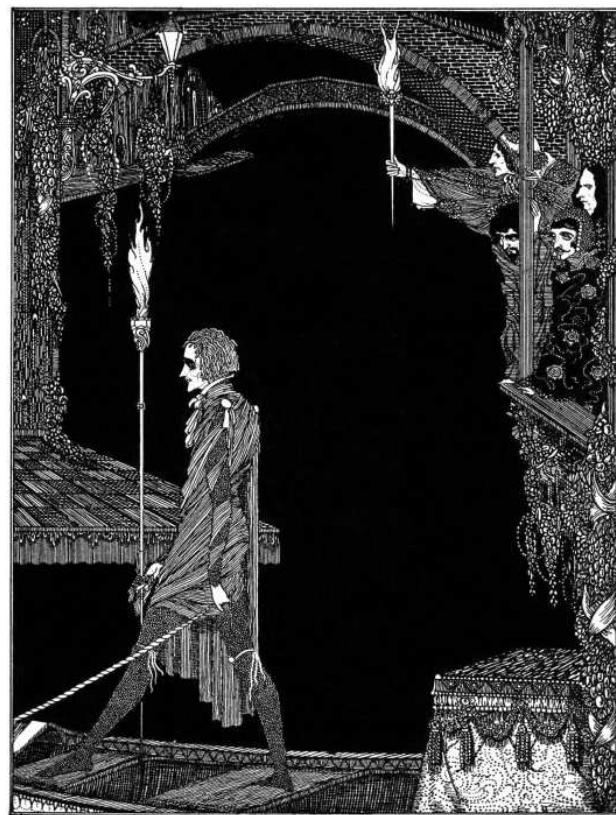


"The Earth grew dark, and its figures passed by me, like flitting shadows, and among them all I beheld only—Morella" (Morella)

"Has *no* copy been taken?" he demanded, surveying it through a microscope (Passages in the Life of a Lion)



It was the Marchesa Aphrodite—the adoration of all Venice (The Assumption of Venice)



"I had myself no power to move from the upright position I had assumed" (The Assumption of Venice)



"Avast there a bit, I say, and tell us who the devil ye all are!" (Bon-Bon)



But there was no voice throughout the vast, illimitable desert (Silence)



The boat appeared to be hanging, as if by magic, ... upon the interior surface of a funnel (A Descent into the Maelstrom)

"I would call aloud upon her name" (Ligeia)

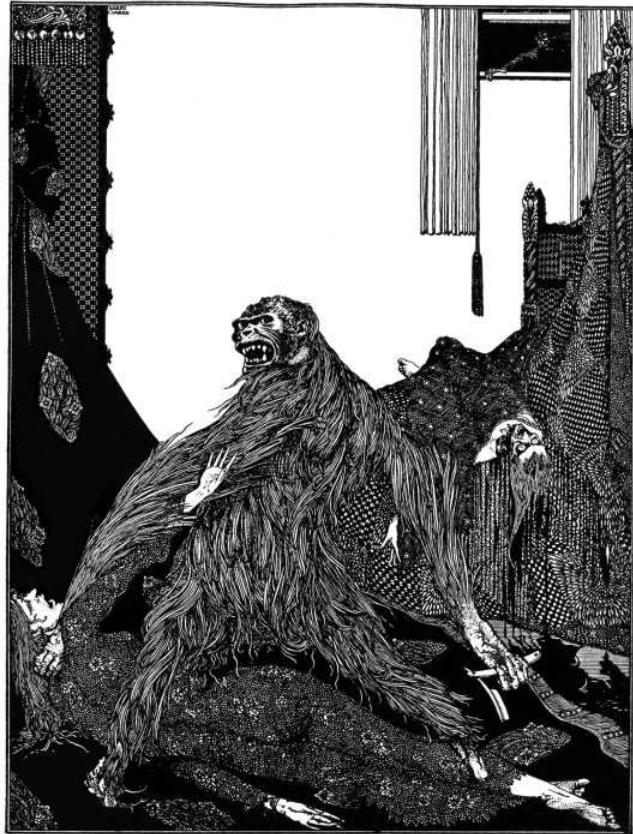


But then without those doors
there *did* stand the lofty and enshrouded
figure of the Lady Madeline of Usher (The
Fall of the House of Usher)

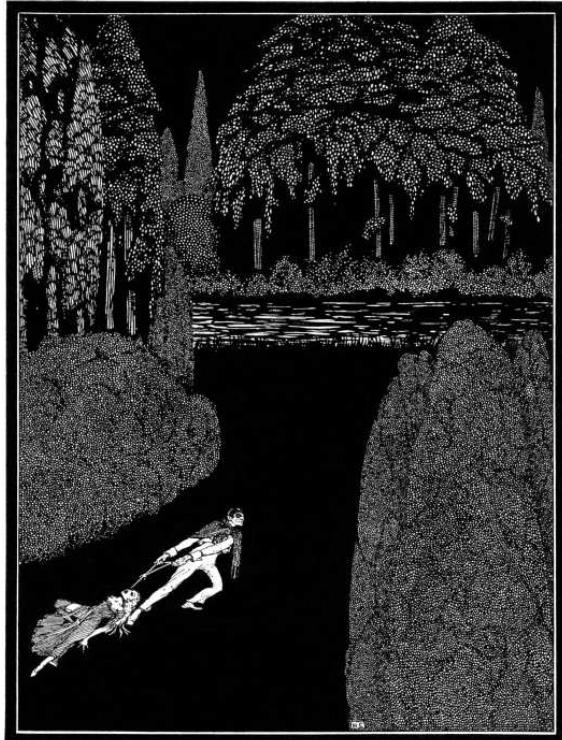
"In my death, see by this image, which is
thine own, how utterly thou has murdered
thyself" (William Wilson)



Gnashing its teeth, and
flashing fire from its eyes,
it flew upon the body of
the girl (The Murder in
the Rue Morgue)



The dagger dropped gleaming upon the
sable carpet (The Masque of the Red Death)



In his toilsome journey to the water his
fears redouble within him (The Mystery
of Marie Rogêt)





"I saw them fashion the syllables of my name" (The Pit and the Pendulum)

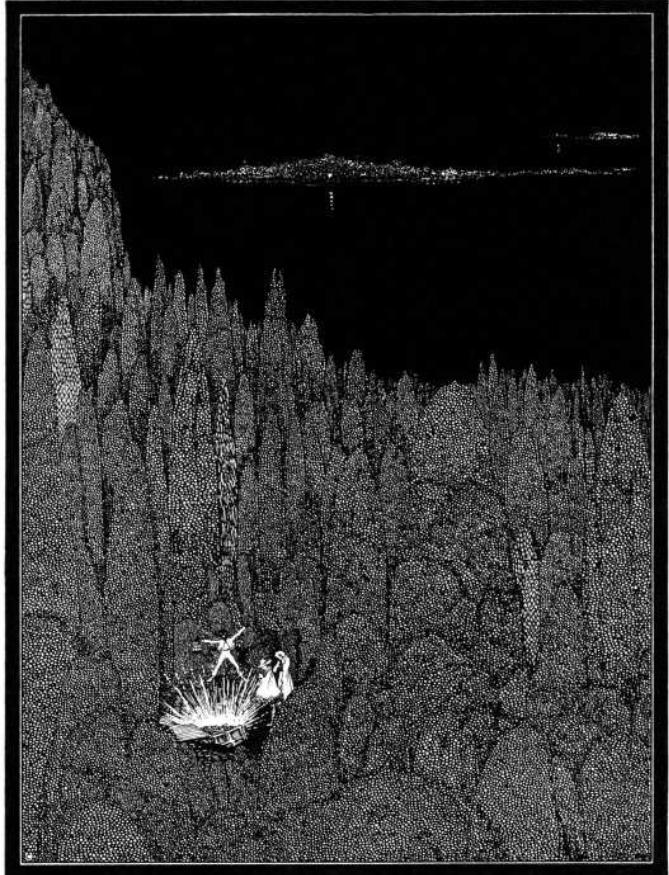


But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound (The Tell-Tale Heart)

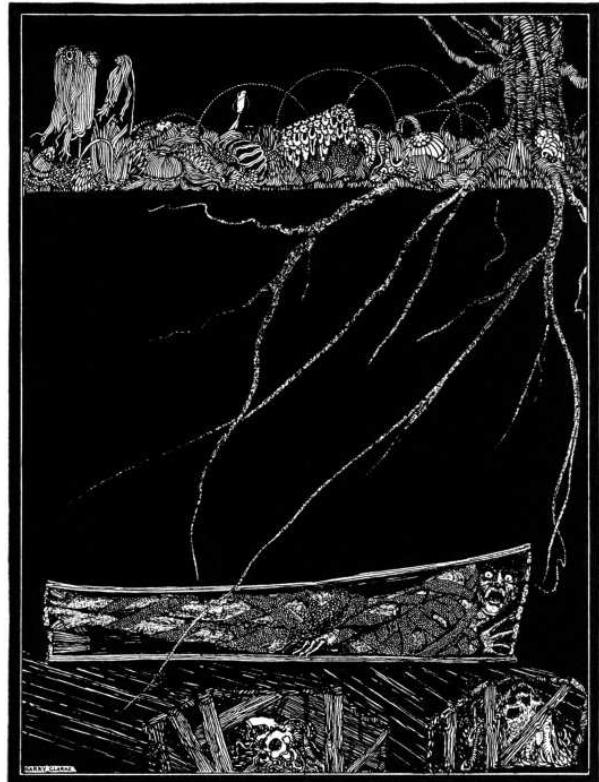


"They swarmed upon me in ever-accumulating heaps" (The Pit and the Pendulum)

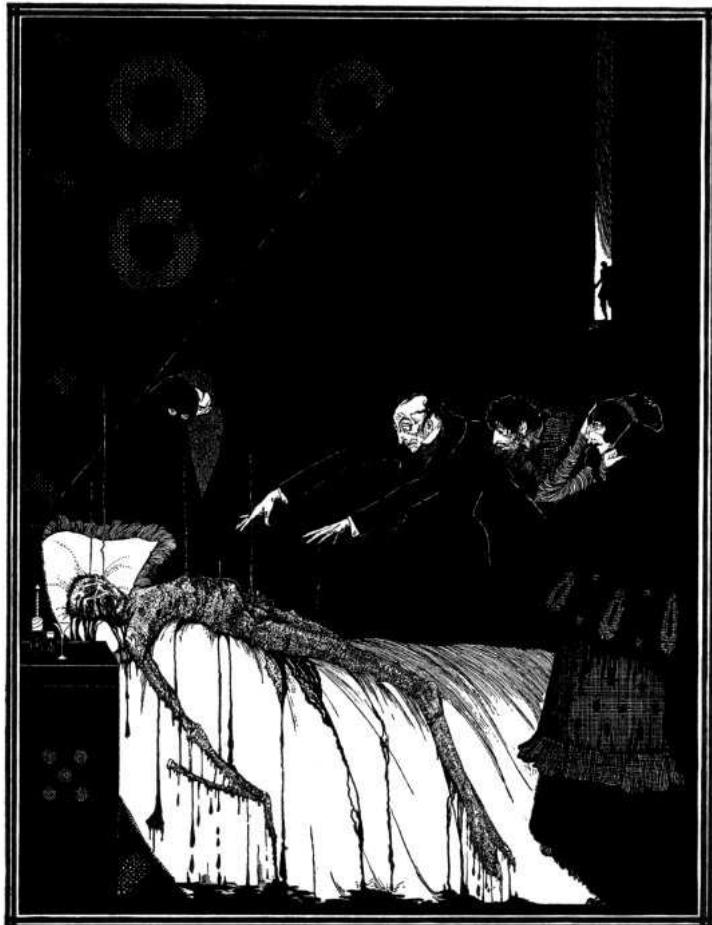
There flashed upward a glow
and a glare (The Gold Bug)



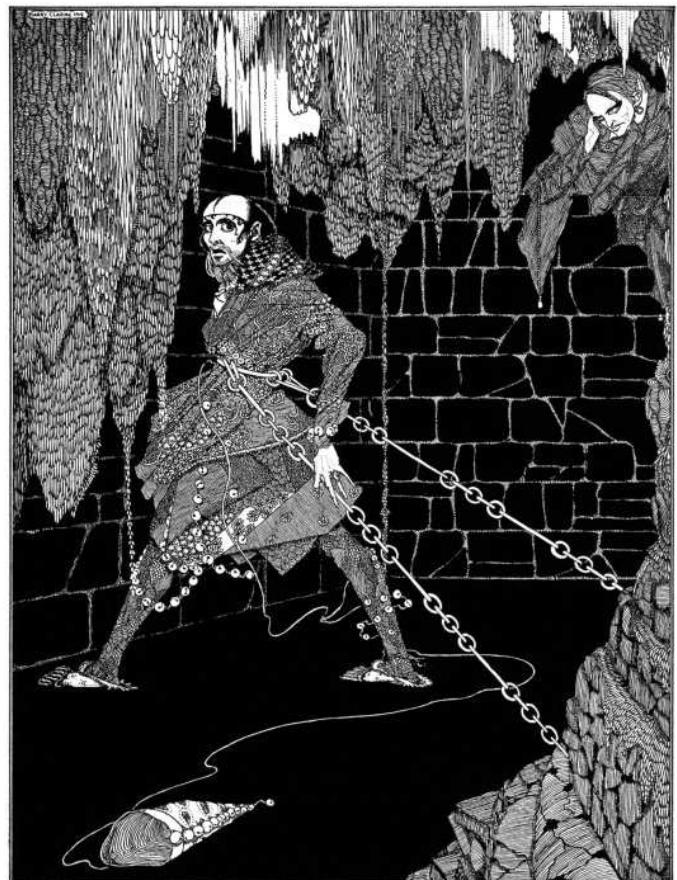
"I had walled the monster up
within the tomb!" (The Black Cat)



Deep, deep, and for ever, into some ordinary
and nameless *grave* (The Premature Burial)



Upon the bed there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome—of detestable putridity (The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar)



"For the love of God! Montresor!"
"Yes," I said, "For the love of God!" (The Cask of Amontillado)



Landor's Cottage (Landor's Cottage)

Jacob Duchaine

Diary of Alexandra



Jacob Duchaine is one of America's least known cartoonists. Dabbling in art since childhood, several years ago Jacob decided to develop art as a professional skill. Primarily self taught, he now writes and illustrates comics from his home in West Virginia. Jacob is the publisher of Green River Comics. facebook.com/GreenMirrorComics/

DIARY OF ALEXANDRA

BOOK 1



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DIARY OF ALEXANDRA

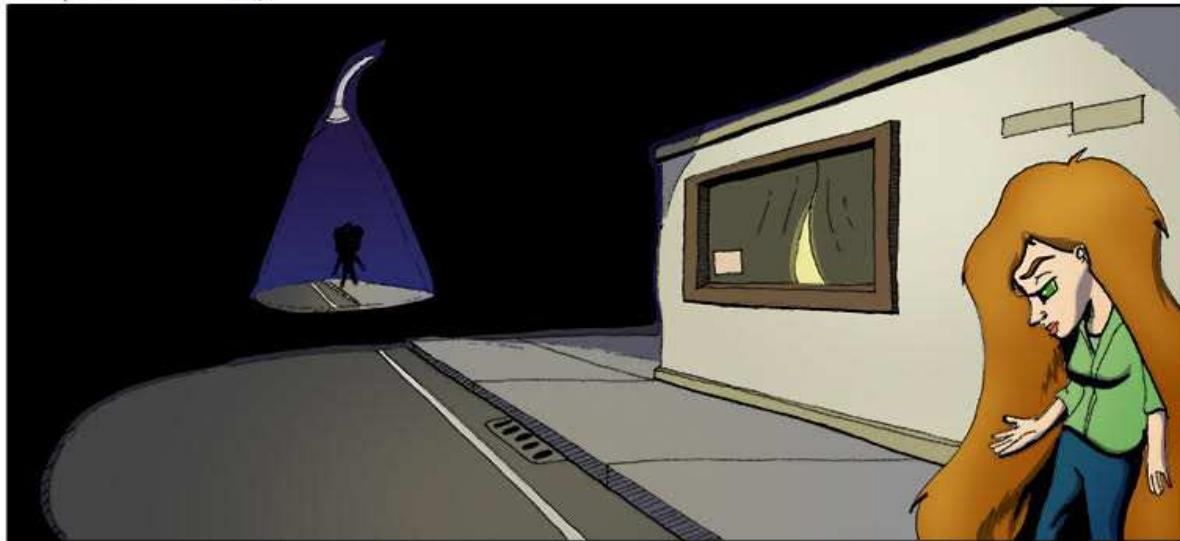
BOOK 1

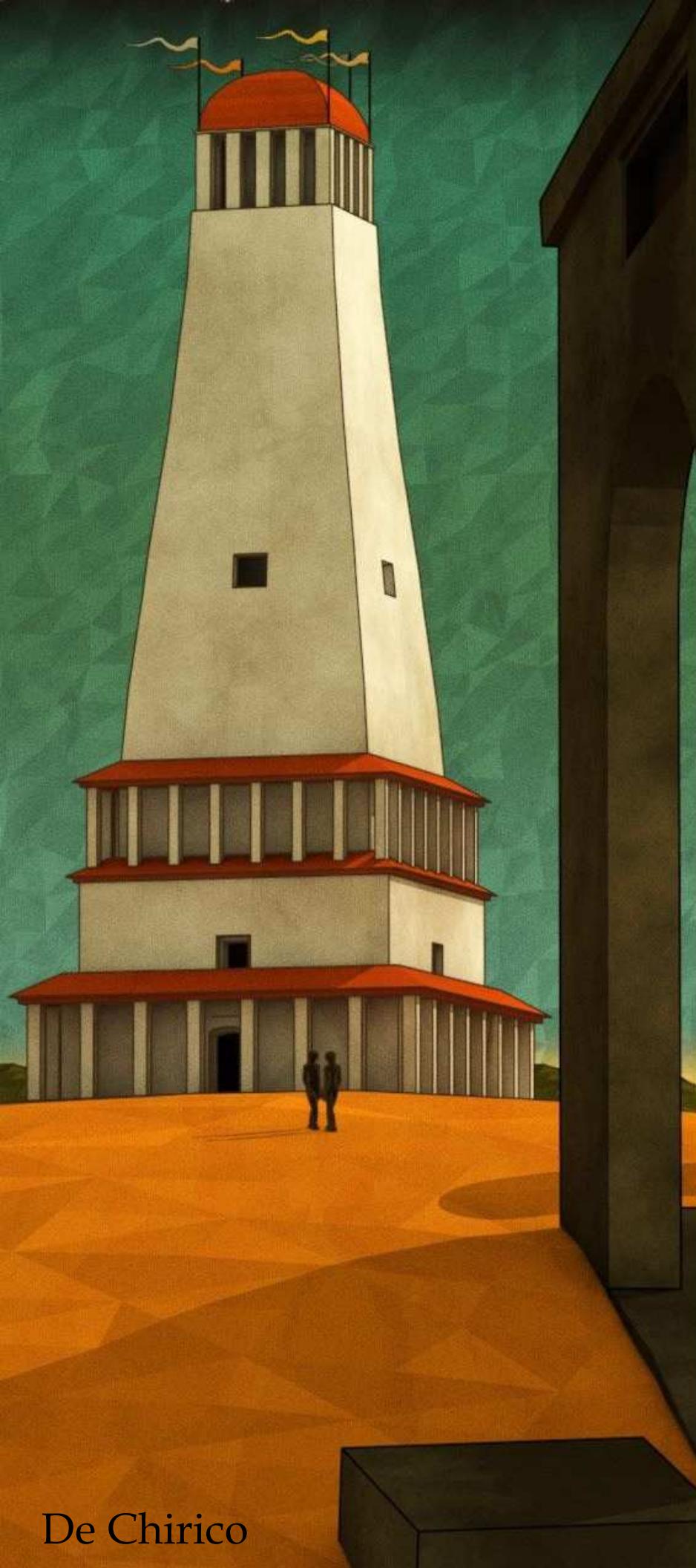


DIARY OF ALEXANDRA

BOOK 1







De Chirico

Kendall's Column

Kendall Evans

ANNIHILATION

Annihilation is a cinematic experience. And not only is it a cinematic experience, it's a science fiction movie. We've been blessed this year with several great fantasy or science fiction movies. This is a meaningful movie, and I don't mean that in any negative sense of the word. It's a movie you have to think about, well-worth viewing several times. For the most part it received relatively high rankings from critics, eighty-seven percent, but an inexplicable and inexcusable sixty-seven percent from audiences.

And don't listen to the critics, whether they be professional or mere audience viewers who like to express their opinions. This movie is an idiosyncratic experience because of its extreme originality. And not only is it science fiction, and original, it's an excellent motion picture.

It received relatively good scores from the critics on the Rotten Tomatoes website, eighty-seven percent; however, audiences gave it an incomprehensible and inexcusable sixty-seven percent. I'm baffled. I would suggest you don't listen to the critics who said it was slow, or monotonous or boring at times, or had too little characterization. Just not so. This is an action film, to begin with, for anyone who prefers action. And it is a meaningful film, for those who do not want to be fed predigested tripe.

It explores things like identity and transformation. Self-destruction and self-affirmation. It's about relationships and the way they change. And it's deep, but I mean that in a good way. It's not difficult to understand, as some critics complained; it merely presents an opportunity to go as deep as you wish; you can explore it on a basic level, or you can keep going down into the dreadful sub-cellars and explore it deeply, sub-level after sub-level, with no end in sight.

I viewed the movie within a few weeks of its release, and I wanted to write my review immediately, while it was fresh in my mind; unfortunately, the cosmos had other ideas, and other possibilities in store for me, so I had to adapt. My wife saw the movie with me. We have different opinions. She found the film to be good but flawed rather than excellent. She felt that the ideas explored did not fit well together and that the audience did not receive adequate information about what, exactly, was going on. On the other hand, I thought it all meshed together perfectly.

Annihilation is an uncompromising film, and tells the tale of an alien invasion that is totally unlike any other alien invasion ever imagined on the big screen – and it should be seen on the big screen.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

Coming soon, barring unfortunate or fortunate events or delays or dalliances, a column about my meeting with the math professor at Santa Barbara University – although the meeting actually took place at a McDonalds in Goleta. Also more about

clarity of thinking. Then maybe a new old story, written fifty years ago and many-times revised.

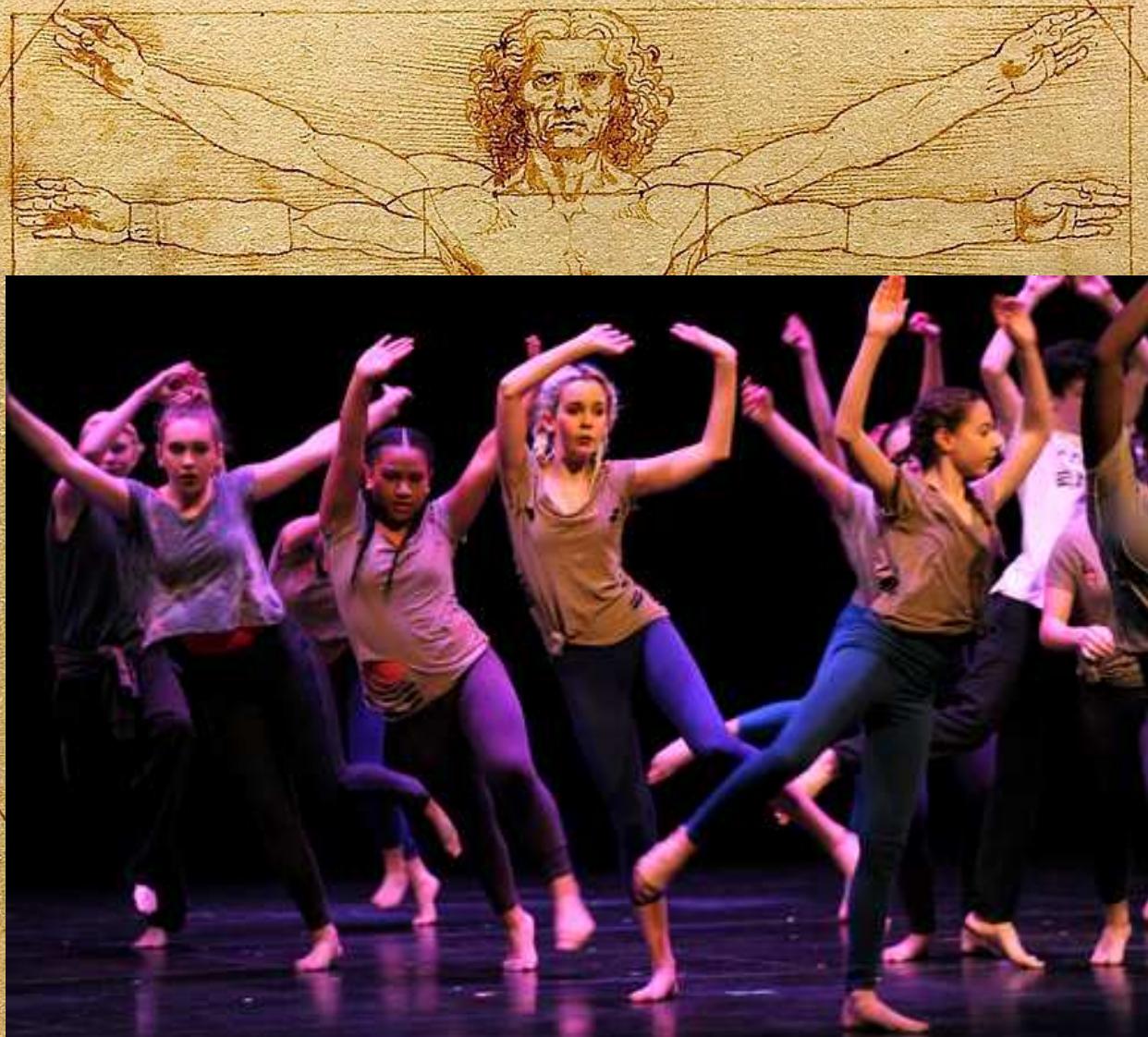
This column is a wonderful platform for me. I'd like it to be the same for you. Some guest columns, if I have anything to say about it. If you would like to contribute a column, I am here for you. I need movie reviews and interviews and outrageous opinions.

I want this to be an interactive column, so if I've written anything in this column that you want to comment on, or anything in any of the previous columns that you might have read, I would like to hear from you. Even if it's just to say hello. Even if it's just to tell me you think I'm a lousy writer. You can reach me at the following email address:

sfastronaut@hotmail.com



Support our public schools



Da Vinci Arts Middle School, also known as da Vinci Middle School, is a public middle school in the Kerns neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. Da Vinci is an arts magnet school. Their mission statement states that they "will seek innovative ways to integrate the arts throughout the curriculum, provide focused arts instruction, and create a rich, inquiry-based learning environment with high standards of academic excellence." To fulfill their mission, they offer students two electives of 2D Art, 3D Art, creative writing, dance, music, or drama. The school has many after school programs, such as the Destino dance team, a rock band known as Trogdor, a Black Student Union, a Queer-Straight Alliance, a ukulele choir, a jazz ensemble, and a chess club. The school has put on numerous plays, as well as three student-written rock operas. There is also a coding club.

Protect our public lands



Bever Beach State Park, Oregon



J. V. 1967