

TRINITY
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REVIEW

TRINITY UNIVERSITY REVIEW

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TRINITY REVIEW

EDITORS	Marlena Millikin Clara Rozee
TREASURER	James Floros
DESIGN EDITOR	Kimberly Kwan
EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS	Jenny Holobow Konstantinos Polyzois
BOARD	Katrina Broder Amanda Brown Jenny Holobow Kimberly Kwan Konstantinos Polyzois Daisy Qin Spencer Robinson Thomas Slabon Fan Wu

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Hold

you stop; to fondle in your pocket for something
you haven't lost.

KAREN ZHOU

Slope

Between the slanted foliage
and cast-off junk, supplies and treasure lay
for us. On sloping, loose soil
we found mystic solitude—we discarded time
shamelessly. The charging river at the grass's edge
and silhouettes hunkered near
never bothered us, for the great ravine was
our domain:
shrill, scolding voices could not stop us.
You climbed the stringy trees—too daring for me.
Once, you fell
just short of wooden planks
with vicious nails embedded, poised
for piercing. You claimed a miracle had saved you.
Being nine I had never much thought
of miracles, until then

ANNE RUCCHETTO

Bugchaser (Stepping on a Live Wire)

like feral gazelles, dancing, lusting for each other
I speak of tongues (forget-me-nots,

breathing down the prickled necks of medicos
midwives taken aback by the fear of all-for-all)

undulating tantrists, seen from a distance

and the ego's frenzied hands, its forehead

aware of that which persists through scarlet
tamed only by the tearing of sheets,

the turquoise gowns of a festive ball.

MICHAEL CHERNOFF GULA

Subsistence

the room looks the same when you
wake up at two as it did when you fell
asleep, sometime between looking at
old job postings to give your life some
semblance of meaning and
dreaming of the boy upstairs to the
left of this room, where the curtains are
still shut and the laundry still piled
on the floor and maybe you'll clean it
today, or maybe it's three and you
still ache with a pain you
won't share with all your friends
as you sit around talking, talking,
the same old words sounding forever
stale in your mouth, and thinking,
thinking that it's four and you need to
eat, to go to the bank, to be more than
this, to be worthwhile, to put away
the clothes, the sheets, to open the
curtains, to be more than this,
to forget, because it's two again
and again you lie awake in the
stillness of regret, and hear noises
at the door that don't exist, and
gather dust in your head, and you must
be more than this, you must

CARLY HASPEL

666 Spadina



KONSTANTINOS POLYZOIS

Feeding Ants

Take these plywood floor tiles, tilt and
Dissect them to pass the time, each rotation
Consumes another second as lost ants
Graze golden plains, checkerboard
Acres yawning between freedom—

“Are you eating your rice or planting it?”
The placemat sneers.

A sprawling Stonehenge of white grains where
Clean plates should stand, guilty grains,
Plucked from porcelain kingdoms,
Long for a warm,
Gastric home.

“You’ve no sense for good food,”
The chopsticks scoff.

Trace the stains on the table, they twist,
Carve paths in plastic paisley, sculpt
Rinds of yellow that trickle and spill
Slick swamps under arched walls, where
Spoils await scouting arthropods, whose—

“We should let you starve,”
The dish decrees,

“So you can learn gratitude!”

MAGGIE CHEUNG

memoir in mental illness

I am afraid of the emptiness that eats, shits, and makes a home for itself inside my body. *I have refused the mirror’s gaze for all my adult life, as I had once clumsily evaded the nakedness of boys’ change rooms as a child.* It has no name and grazes in the pasture between my stomach and my heart, between hunger and regret. *But the mirrors from adolescent hallways remember me, and they miss me dearly; they send their zealous regards in raindrops and washed cars.* I try to placate it with raw silence, an answer ungraspable amidst the spillage of my infinite need. *Lately, they have grown impatient: they bend the surfaces of pools to slant against my figure; they send me trapdoors to fun-houses, invitations to car shows.* Somewhere within me the unknowable body gropes for a reflection, dreams of a surface smooth enough to capture the soul in perfect focus. *My beloved cuts his wrists and face (tiny pieces of glass squeeze skin poppy-red) smashing the windows in our house, his love a thick ink against vain prisms.* But the flesh which encases the I refuses to turn itself inside-out: it knows every reflection contains within it a hint of its own imperfection. *He lies in my arms shaking, struggling against tears fatal to me, begging for a story that doesn’t end by embedding itself in glass, his voice smaller than rooms.* Instead we cast our gaze on the emptiness of our friends, whose illusory vitality, whose joie de vivre we understand although as distant strangers. *I am quickly losing my tenuous grip on this slipshod concrete world; if I should see my face reflected on a planar surface, I fear I will slip into myself fully and love nothing else again.* You whose void spills out of uneasy breastbone, servant eternal to your loveless peers: as solipsisms entwine, look back at who you are not, who you never could have been. *The mirror’s edge, the medicine cabinet, the rearview assassin in chorus: acquiesce.* Ego-death. It becomes you.

BETH FRASER

How They Met (Her)

It is Monday, so she needs coffee. She's running late again and the line is long and if she doesn't get her coffee right this second, she thinks she might have a heart attack. She's fumbling through her purse looking for change, because she only has a fifty and she would feel bad giving a fifty and making them break so much change, and she still wanted to have her fifty if she could manage it. The line is edging forward, taking her closer and closer to the till, and her hands are still reaching and scrambling hopefully at the satiny bottom of her purse. She only needs \$2.39 for her chai latte with skim milk, no foam—she knows she has \$2.39. A hand taps her shoulder and she turns abruptly.

The boy is tall and gangly, with a shock of dark brown hair that flops boyishly in his eyes. *His bangs are too long*, she thinks. Then, *Why is he touching me?* She asks what he wants.

“You looked worried.”

So? She thinks he's nosy but cute. If he asked for her number, she would probably—

“So here.”

He hands her a rumpled five pulled from the deepest corner of his too-big jacket, and smiles.

What does he expect? That smile is so smug, like he thinks he's...

Shit! She's at the front of the line now. She orders her chai latte with skim milk, no foam and hands him the change, dropping the coins into his palm. She asks why he bothered, forgetting please and thank you. He looks stunned for a second and she feels bad because he seems naïve and good-intentioned and he shouldn't have been nice to her in the first place.

“I... well... um...” he stammers, nervous fingers finding their way though his hair, pushing back bangs to reveal a crumpled forehead.

She likes him with his hair pushed back.

The line is surging now, a mob hungry for blood and biscotti, so they move to stand by the far counter, waiting for their drinks. She doesn't remember what he ordered, but she hopes that it's quick because she wants him to leave and she still needs to catch her bus.

A drink is set down by an apathetic barista. When they both

reach for it, their hands touch. It's not a movie moment with sparks and fireworks; it's just an awkward brush of hand on hand on cup. She grabs the drink before he can touch her again, thinking that maybe, if she runs, she can make the 7:20.

She leaves without another word, mind already moved on from the boy. The boy who moves like his bones might creak, and whose shoulders are heavy with the snow of her silence.

It's not until later that she realizes she wants to see him again, if only to tell him to cut his hair.

GILLIAN SCOTT

How They Met (Him)

It is Monday, so he's tired. He's just pulled another all-nighter in anticipation of another test, and he needs another coffee. His eyes are sore and his brain is sore and his bones are sore because despite all the coffee, he's still growing. The line is long when he joins it, feet shuffling, hands in pockets, looking at the knick-knacks on the wall with all the keen fascination of a patron in an art gallery. The girl in front doesn't notice when she bumps him, but he does, because it's The Girl. The Girl with the bright red hair, and the thin white arms and the frantic hands, and he feels bad because she looks worried.

He's seen her before. He knows about her—well, everything one can learn in a coffee shop, and he thinks that she's about to have a panic attack, so he taps her arm.

She whips around. "What do you want?"

He's a bit startled, so he blurts out that she looks worried, immediately regretting the insecurity of his voice.

"So?"

He pulls his last five from his secret pocket and hands it to her carefully, like a child feeding a wild animal.

"So here," he says. He feels proud and chivalrous, like a knight from a bygone era. A part of him expects her to swoon and fall into his soon-to-be manly arms. She reaches the front of the line, and he watches nobly as she orders and pays with his last five. He doesn't feel tired anymore, so it doesn't matter whether he gets coffee or not.

She turns, dropping a few meaningless coins into his hands. He thinks her hands look graceful when they're not buried in her purse. He wants to reach out for one and observe the foreign palm, lined and white, and keep it, like a flower, safe in his hands.

She turns, mouth hard and flinty. "What'd you do that for?" She shatters him completely, or at least the image he had of her, of them, like a picture frame knocked from the shelf.

He knows why he did it, but he's not brave or wise or stupid enough to say it out loud to this girl of stone. He pushes back his bangs, stammering uselessly.

She moves to wait for her drink and he follows robotically, unable to let her leave without one final glance.

A drink is set down and he knows it's hers but he reaches for it anyway, desperate for another memory of her hand. She moves like his touch burned her and he feels ashamed and young, a child reprimanded.

He watches until she leaves and a little longer still. Then he feels stupid and leaves.

He gets an A on the test. A girl asks him to a movie and he goes. When their hands meet in the popcorn, he imagines that they're white and cool and graceful.

GILLIAN SCOTT

The Bauman Sisters' Faces



ANGJELIN HILA

Will

Contracted to a quiver in a cage
(of bones)
A stifled cry in a stretched cavern.

Words are so empty
(like home)
A flight plies in a wrenched pattern.

SIMON GLEAVE

Miramolin

The last songs of oarsmen plying the Tigris
Gradually dissipated in the remote distance
Heralding the conclusion of responsibilities
For the gilded caliphate's fatigued sovereign

At last alone in Bagdad's curved enclosures
Gratefully relieved of all courtly ceremonies
His stiffened exterior thawed and slackened
Amid fragrant garden and spouting fountain

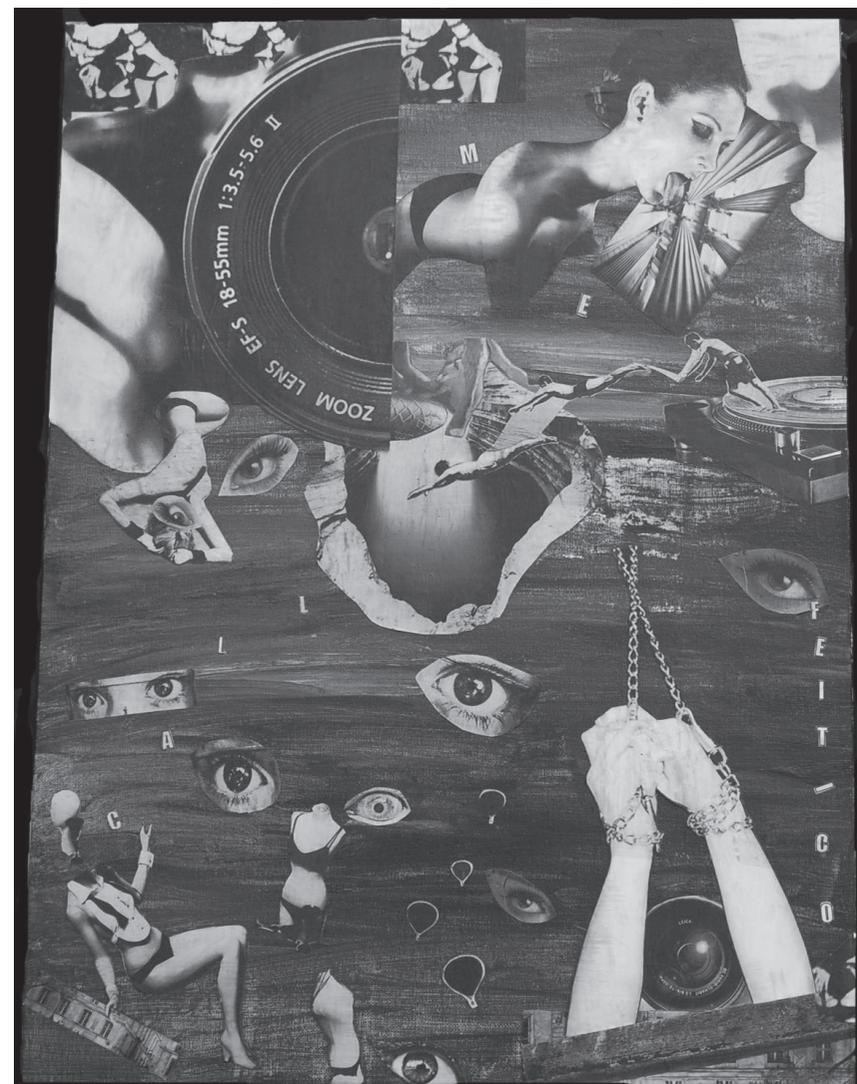
Disdaining the finesse of trained diplomats
And buttered words of finished politicians
The harried al-Rashid kowtowed gratitude
As twilight's precious respite eased tension

Expunging all remnants of diurnal palavering
Knowing night as the daytime of clever men
He effaced memories of bringing to the dust
Obsequious foreheads of subjects and slaves

He whom Allah had made supreme and lonely
Thus drained decanters with boon companions
As lithe ud players thrummed calming melodies
Bracing hearers to greet the fated salve of dawn

BRANDON MARLON

Call Me Feitiço (Call Me Fetish)



ELLY CHANG

A Makeshift Ant Farm and a Secret Bag

You are seven and you hide your most important belongings in a bag. The bag is buried underneath a favourite sweater. To your logic, this is prime real estate as it is hidden enough that you needn't worry about your mother finding it. This is necessary, for though there is nothing particularly questionable in the bag, it must, at all times, remain your secret. At age seven, when so much of who you are is shaped by the choices of others (just think of the school that you hate, and the cupboards you can never reach on your own), this bag is the only thing in the world that is yours. The novelty of this secret is just delightful, isn't it?

Yes, the bag is Yours, unspoiled by any other. This first sampling of control and agency set the stage for the tiny worlds you'd construct in your desk at school. Do you remember when Ms. Reid would teach arithmetic, wholly oblivious to the fact that in the back of the class, math problems gave way to God? You would make trees out of pencil shavings sloppily curled into conical forms. At recess, you'd collect ants and place them into the ziploc bags originally intended to house peanut-butter sandwiches your mom made for you. That the ants had lives of their own before you chanced upon their ant hill was of little consequence to you. After all, you were only saving them from the chaos of the playground. If, for instance, the other kids decided to play tag (though never with you), Billy's boot could easily crush the ants. No, it was better if you brought the ants to your desk; there they'd begin a safe, new life among pencil-shaving-trees and eraser-crumbs-grass.

Class. In class, Billy watches you concentrating on the desk, your head enticed by some mysterious interior. It was the same look he noticed his grandfather wore while watching the television for hours.

"Whatcha looking at?" he whispers.

"Nothing." You pause before adding, "there are ants living inside of my desk."

"Lemme see." Billy's eyes widen at the sight of dozens of scurrying ants.

When you notice Ms. Reid make her way to your desk, you know that the end is nigh. Throughout school, Ms. Reid is known as the

Confiscator of Nanopets and Destroyer of Pokemon cards. Your little ants didn't even have the chance to make it through day one.

"You." Her voice, though quiet, conveys enough anger to capture the attention of classmates who look upon you with equal parts awe and schadenfreude. "You will scrub that desk clean before you even think of leaving today. Are these the manners you learn at home?"

"Sorry ma'am."

"Throw out those ants. Now."

But back to the bag. The contents of the bag:

A cassette of your favourite songs. The lyrics are sung in a different language—that of your parents exiled from some place called "back home." You may not know what the song is about, but linguistics are no match for your capacity to love a good song. Whenever your parents put on the cassette, your heart would swell.

A holographic Charizard Pokemon card.

A picture of you, your mom, and your dad at the zoo. The photo was taken before your dad got really sad. You look at the picture to remember when your family was more like the families on TV.

A ten dollar bill you found on the ground when you were walking home from school last year. That you spent a year resisting the urge to squander the tenner on candy is your own personal miracle.

A picture of Thumbelina torn from the pages of fairy-tales you borrowed from the library.

You feel guilt over the damaged book, but it had to be done. No one understands little, pretty Thumbelina like you do.

No one but you will know about the bag. The lesson of the ants taught you that the best way to keep a secret is to let it live inside of your head. There is a lot of room in your head: the space where your jaw connects to your ear, the gap in your smile (your tooth fell out), the tiny scar on the bridge of your nose. All of these are fine places to house a secret or two.

Sinkhole



KATIKA MARCZELL

Bone

The bone of this night is buried
beneath the weight of wide, blank,
winding streets
streetcar tracks a gleam
the burden of black sky, like raked dirt
the impossible boulder of moon

The bone of this night is piled high
with urban flesh
patio furniture, brushed brick,
these Spanish-style steps
the knowing of mass packed bookstores
on every corner

There are those who step to the inside of silence
sifting through remedies like sand
While I operate on this street like a surgeon
under the fluorescent street light lamps
as on a hand—stripping out the
gleaming purple tendons, re-routing the passageways of nerves
unearthing the red shock of blood, startling and new
reading the fingerprints for traces of skin touched, lips hushed, smooth
cups picked up
and put down
trying to pull from its palm the flayed memories
or to discern from the fallen, buried leaves
the jutting veins of history

Ambulances amble past, the distant buzz of late night TV
As I stand over the cusp of past and future
like a midwife
forefingers reaching for a pulse
over blocks of flesh-lined streets,
bent against the night,
as some shadowed bridge, supporting life
and wrenching new life from its womb,
showing a new face to the old moon
carefully cutting cords
without breaking bone

NICOLE GRIMALDI

Julie Used a Step-Ladder

Julie sat on her bedroom floor with hemp strings safety-pinned to the thigh of her blue jeans. She hummed along with Bob Dylan while braiding the strings into a necklace. As she rustled through a ziploc bag for a brown wooden bead, the doorbell rang. After pausing for a moment, she did what any lazy fourteen-year-old girl would do:
“Motheeeeerrrrr! Someone’s at the dooooooor!”

She turned down the volume on her CD player and listened for footsteps. Ten seconds passed, then twenty. She huffed and sighed and hoisted herself onto her feet. Slipping her moccasins on as she walked, one flopping loosely under her heel, she meandered over to the stairs. She tumbled down to the foyer, tripping over the strings which still hung loose around her feet. She skipped the last two stairs and landed on the tiled floor with a *thump*. Mom had beaten her to the door after all. Annoying. She started slinking back up the stairs but stopped short when she saw who was visiting. Aunt Diane stood at the door with a packaged dinner. While Mom hugged and thanked her, Julie carried the frozen turkey, pre-made stuffing, and canned gravy into the kitchen. She moved cautiously and quietly because Dad slept soundly in the adjoining family room. She turned her back to him and pretended he simply snoozed on the La-z-boy like always. She closed her eyes and hoped that when they opened a hospital bed wouldn’t fill the space where his chair usually sat. Between the muted clicks of cupboards and the crinkle of Loblaws bags, her Aunt’s voice reached her ears:

“I know John always makes the stuffing, but considering the, um, circumstances, I figured you’d want a simpler option...”

“That’s very thoughtful of you, Diane, thank you.”

“I mean, he made all this effort to come home and you have enough to worry about without having to cook a Christmas dinner. We all know how much he loves big family meals.”

Mom decided not to tell her that Daddy hasn’t eaten solid food in weeks. Julie often wished she’d never seen the little silver disc on his chest that fed a milky liquid diet straight to his veins. At the hospital, the IV bag suspended on a pole blended into its surroundings; when it shadowed him around their house it took on a more sinister obviousness.

Mom said her goodbyes. Julie poked her head out of the kitchen and waved. The door closed softly. Mom's slippers slowly plodded down the hall. She exhaled all the air in her lungs when she saw the packaged food. Her eyes reflected the pain it caused her to be cooking from instructions on a box. Mom always spent the whole day basting, chopping, simmering, and boiling. Julie wanted to hug her, but she'd probably have fainted from shock. Her daughter hadn't initiated a hug or kiss in years. So Julie leaned on the counter and just watched her. Her fingers twitched; they knew she should touch her shoulder or something, or anything. Julie's voice trickled out in a whisper, barely audible over the murmur of the refrigerator and *tick, tick, tick* of the grandfather clock,

"Can I help you with anything?"

Mom twitched as if she forgot Julie was there.

"Oh, well, no Honey, I don't think so. It's much too early to set the table and, well, the food isn't going to be much of a chore, really. Maybe just wake up your father. I bet he'd like to watch those Seinfeld DVDs Mary-Anne sent over."

"Okay."

Julie slid her feet silently into the family room. She hovered for a moment with her hands clasping and unclasping. Despite months of illness he still looked comically big for the single bed. They had to dress it in her old Little Mermaid sheets because nothing else fit. The three of them laughed together when Mom first put them on. His long limbs and broad shoulders lay mingled with Ariel and Sebastian's cheery cartoon faces. With his eyes resting and his features relaxed in sleep, the deep lines and dark patches on Dad's face diminished.

"Daddy?" she touched two fingers to his forearm.

"Daddy, wake up. Let's start those Seinfeld seasons. Daddy!"

She pressed more firmly on his arm. He blinked twice and turned his face to her. He smiled. Julie didn't cry. She wanted to.

"Good morning, Angel. What was that you said?"

"It's three o'clock in the afternoon," she giggled. "Not morning at all. About time you got up. I'm tired of waiting to watch these DVDs!"

He crinkled his forehead and firmly set his jaw. With poorly concealed grunts and winces he pulled himself up into his elbows.

"Daddy what are you doing? Here, I'll just raise the back of the bed."

He succumbed to his daughter's nursing with a failed attempt at serenity. His hatred for that bed and its mechanisms leaked through the tight corners of his lips.

They agreed to start with the pilot episode. Julie sat on the couch with knees pulled into her chest and chin resting between them. After about ten minutes of silence Dad started mocking Jerry Seinfeld. He called him a "mugger" because of his ridiculous exaggerated facial expressions. His imitation launched Julie into peals of laughter. Dad had a voice that could fill an auditorium. She basked in the physically tangible joy of joining his deep belly laugh. Mom glided into the family room. She reached around her ribcage and untied her apron. She hung it on the back of a kitchen chair. Julie's eyes followed the graceful way she pulled back a corner of the Mermaid sheets and nestled in beside her husband. She tenderly rested her head on his shoulder. Lulled by the monotony of the show about nothing and the steady *beep* of Dad's machines they both fell asleep. Julie waited until the episode ended, then retreated to her room and signed onto MSN Messenger.

Two hours later Mom's voice floated up the stairs.

"Julie it's time to set the table please."

She rolled to the door on her desk chair and launched onto her feet. Delicious smells made the air in the house warm. Her stomach grumbled its desire. She tromped downstairs so quickly she almost stepped on Whisper, the family dog, who slumbered at the foot of the staircase. She jostled to her paws like an animate scatter rug and shot Julie a startled glare. She paused to tousle the dog's long soft fur. The dog licked Julie's arms and breathed her putrid dog food breath in her face. Julie kissed her pointy nose.

She laid three placemats and three sets of dishes on the table. She poured three glasses of eggnog. Mom couldn't resist steaming some fresh

beans. As she spooned everything into serving bowls, she whispered to Julie:

“Go into the cupboard in the left side of the wall unit and grab one of those rubber sheets for your father to sit on. Put it on the kitchen chair closest to his bed, okay?”

Julie hurried to the dining room and flung open the drawer and squatted down to grab a fresh sheet. She hopped to her feet and her breath got stuck in the back of her throat. The seven hundred coloured lights on their Christmas tree reflected in the bay windows and the hardwood floor. She stood staring at a million tiny rainbows – crisp in the window, blurred like Northern Lights in the floor. Before she could stop them, tears blurred her sight and the treetop angel drowned in a sea of fluorescent glow. Dad lifted her by the armpits so she could place the porcelain angel there every year since she could be trusted not to drop her. This year, Julie used a step-ladder.

She went to the washroom to dry her eyes and splash water on her face. She flushed the toilet to pretend. When she got back to the kitchen, Mom helped Daddy sit up. His swollen feet dangled over the side of the bed. His legs grew out of his pale blue gown like hairy tree trunks. Julie couldn't help staring at the dressings on his thighs. His skin grafts still leaked. She remembered to place the sheet on his chair. He leaned on Mom's shoulder and lumbered to the table. He beamed at Julie; he beamed at the food. While Mom and Julie ate he talked like a bubbling stream:

“My first night in my new room, I was woken up in the middle of the night by these bizarre guttural sounds. In my half-dream state I thought ‘Oh my God, they've thawed the missing link!’ I listened closely. The male voice, the one I thought was Cro-Magnon man, would grunt and a female voice answered as if she understood everything! I thought to myself, ‘You're dreaming!’ But I asked the nurse the next morning, and guess what! The man was deaf! They were communicating in sign language. Isn't that amazing, Buddy?”

Mom nodded in agreement.

“Anyways, it's a lot less ground-breaking for the world of science but it was just so beautiful to listen to them.”

Inspired by this wave of energy and possessed with the spirit of holidays, he decided to try a couple of beans. Mom advised him against it. She watched with her lips pressed so tightly they turned white around the edges. He ate two beans, then three. Almost instantly, the cancer punished him. His stomach sent gas ripping up his esophagus. He grabbed his belly and curled forward. Mom sprung to her feet and bolted to his side. Julie sat frozen to her seat. Her fingers went numb from grabbing the edge of the table.

“Julie! Help me please!”

She shook her head violently and stood up, smashed the corner of the table with her hip, and ran to help. The whole table jumped. Food flew. They each took one of Dad's arms and guided him to his bed. Julie went back for his IV pole. She rolled it along the tiles, staring at the wheels as they bumped along the mortared cracks. His fit of indigestion gradually died down. He fell into a deep sleep with his face bunched up in pain. Julie grabbed his fingers with both hands and brought them to her forehead. Tiny sporadic moans escaped her clenched teeth and her chest heaved. She felt Mom's delicate fingers on her shoulder. In one awkward motion, Julie stood up and threw her arms around Mom's neck.

WENDY BYRNES

Diptych



PAUL HILA

Rice Lake

Of giving birth her godmother says
I felt
like I had been ripped from stern to stern.

My friend's ashen hair dries on the dock,
made of a blonde wood that feeds
on the sun, drying like a content bone.

Her godmother is telling us the story
of my friend's journey at four days old
from the hospital and one weeping wet family

—*we are all exiles*, I thought—
to an anxious welcoming party
new parents neatly dressed for the baby,
a love present to this stale white cottage.
The little white house is cramped with four generations
of curiously carved furniture
and looks as though it could never weather winter,

the ice that crawls up to the shore and receding,
the neighbour says, takes everything with it.
Up to thirty days after an adoption takes place

the birth mother may decide to reclaim her
child. Silent, we imagined the hush
of trying hard to love and not love.

I felt like I had been ripped
from stern
to stern—yet it was not love

I felt for this little thing
only a fierce protectiveness.
The love, she reflects, grew.

TEA HADŽIRISTIĆ

A Rhapsody on Pablo Picasso's 'The Old Guitarist'

Shrouded in solitude and silence, the noise is deafening.
Legs crossed, one sinewy prominent limb over the other,
Bones shoving, stretching, straining against
Toes, ankles, knees.
Elongated limbs, criss-crossed by spider webs, feathery veins
Protruding
Ear exposed to the chill
Of barely sustained Life.
Shoulders slope into neck, deeply bent
In thought, concentration, contemplation:
Thinking. Listening. Hearing.
the Music.
the Language.
the Noise. the Silence.
Little white lies come charging, beating
From the instrument
Propped between his threadbare thighs.
Thin blue fingers pluck, push, press
the Strings,
Changing the syncopated sounds, so
Ethereal but false.
I hear – I listen – I think
Of little lies.
I see, but I can't understand
The Old Guitarist.

DAISY QIN

Bicycle



NATALIE SCHIABEL

To This Delicious Solitude

At four thirty in the afternoon, on a cold January day, you carelessly let your eyes roam over the shape of the city. The buildings simmer in a soft orange haze and you reflect on the synthetic nature of this space, crowded and diverse, beautiful and uncomfortable, too obviously created. The problem with humanity, you ponder, as you lazily try to decide what that taste in your mouth is (left over palate lingering with hints of creamy coffee and baguette) is that it's so damn overwhelming.

This city holds a love for you, or maybe you for the city, no matter, either way it embraces you like a warm sweet hug, until you feel its hot lover's breath against your cheek. Only just now, as you reflect on its vastness, the city seems to push looming in against you, suffocating you with its impenetrable façade. It is too grey, too busy, too complicated, this concrete beehive of constant business. Like an abstract painting, its beauty is confusing, unsettling. A small leafless tree stands haphazardly in a too tiny container at the corner of Bathurst and College. Tonight you need respite.

You close your eyes just for a second and walk away from the sinking sun, thoughtlessly reciting pieces of poetry to yourself, aware of the cold presence of a key in your pant pocket, and it quickly shifts to nighttime, or early evening. The vespers of a January sky lean in heavily, pressing down, mirroring the weight of the concrete world below with the weight of pregnant, foreboding clouds above. But as the night gets darker the city hums to life, shaking itself out of afternoon slumbers in a new rush of early evening diners, of rosy cheeked, scarf entwined masses pushing their way clumsily through swinging ringing doors in a vapour of twinkling breath, laughingly ordering jugs of mulled wine. "You have to be brave to go out in this weather," they say. "Minus seventeen with the wind chill," they shudder, shaking heads and dusting snow off jackets and caps. "Any wise soul would stay inside tonight," they claim, nodding serenely. But they don't; you watch them pile out in happy humming droves despite the wet starting to seep through their sneakers, and they fill the empty spaces in the web of places that line these streets.

The night starts gentle, warm and honest, with the smells of pork and wine and cloves rushing out of one opening door, and the hot spices of Thai cuisine pouring out another, and a warm rush of cumin and cinnamon from that place with the red door. Diners rush in, drinks are ordered, intense conversation ensues: "But I thought Jesus and Buddha *really* do have a lot in common" — "Well I, myself, personally, think it is stupid to be vegan, I mean why deprive yourself, it is entirely natural to eat meat anyways" — "Hemingway? No, I've never read him, is he good? But I read, myself, I've read *Portrait of the Artist* six times through, him and Joyce, I mean Hemingway and Joyce, they were friends weren't they?" And — "Yes, I think I'll have another, a dark beer this time, maybe bring two beers, or make it a pitcher, we'll need a couple a' cups."

A woman stands on the corner of Borden and College and weaves teeteringly back and forth, leaning heavily on her wire cart, wearing an old dirty fur coat and searching the street suspiciously. She mutters beneath her breath as you approach, eyeing you wearily. Your breath comes out in soft tiny clouds of crystals, making your presence obvious, a warm and moving being in a dark and chilling night. The woman leers at you as you walk closer and then shrieks, enough to make you jump a bit, but not enough to break your blasé stride and she falls past you as she hisses something about the rotten stinking government.

Where you are going tonight—where your feet take you—your mind jumps from thoughts of a postmodern Eden to images of *The Dream* by Rousseau to the pungent smell of damp earth—and you move with simple assurance. Distance is traced through breaths in, breaths out; eyes burning from the cold and one icy tear waters like a leaky hose from the corner of your eye down your raw cheek. A green door beckons reggae, with leering mysterious men standing in clumps out front, the night is later and their hands grip like claws on their cigarettes. A cloud of smoke wafts out from them moving in *thump thump thump* to that reggae beat, scents of skunk and dirty burning tar at once entice and disgust, hinting at the possibility of an easy inky oblivion. You pause to breath in that smell. You turn your cheek towards them, and you push past.

And now the night is closing in, those heavy clouds are leaning down like a large drunk woman leaning leakily on the back of the city. The clouds open a little. Small shards of snow cut your cheeks in the wind, but tonight you embrace the contact with anything real in this concrete city. Now the laughing diners are pushing their way out of doors, you see them gesticulating behind foggy restaurant windows, like one giant collective breath has filled the whole building. Jazz notes float funkily toward you, the Tequila Bookworm hosts a trio of artsy hipster souls, lovingly caressing a cello, a drum, a saxophone; listeners intermittently order tequila or espresso shots (hold the salt). You push faster, footsteps crunching over salt chunks and slapping across icy mirrors of neon lettering. You fly past a withered tiny shrub in a cement planter and your eye skims the frozen soil around its trunk. Its mulch is a layer of litter, coke can and the pages of a dirty magazine. January in concrete Toronto is enough to turn any green thing grey.

A rat dances out from an upturned garbage can and almost winks its beady eye at you (does it know where you are going?), at this you wonder, if you didn't come home at all, if someone would remember to feed the cat, I mean really (you reflect) he is a pushy bugger, he'll howl till he gets a bowl full. A curse flares up and fills the air, burning the ears of every bundled pedestrian in the vicinity as rubber bike tires skid out over street car tracks and a fast moving black car comes dangerously close to making meat out of both bike and biker. The biker's fist thumps down on the hood of the car in a fit of anger, but the car doesn't wait, just zips past, nearly dragging the prostrate bike along with it. The scene closes and every pedestrian looks away, pretending never to have noticed while the biker furiously kicks his tire straight before pedaling limpingly on. Your breath comes out in short, sparkling mists, boots crunch the salt. You make eye contact with a beautiful—(is she beautiful? Is she an illusion? Is she there at all?)—girl standing half in the shadow and she stares at you without lifting an eyebrow- you only catch a glimpse of her pout and long nails as a burning ember flares orange and red against her lips, and then she is shadow again.

Well this night is well on its way—you still have far to go—you shudder now—you have reached that stage that your limbs are freezing but your armpits are stickily sweating against your thick sweater—your head starts to itch—your toe rubs annoyingly against the end of your boot—you catch your reflection in an unlit (CLOSED) book shop and notice your hair is protruding in icicle spikes around your face—you look odd—strange—frozen—human—and now you are almost there.

You hesitate under a street lamp, in a corner with limited activity. This is a strange place to be, a strange kind of night, a cold lonely being under a sky pregnant with possibility, or pregnant with a million trillion icy white children waiting to bury the created world below, and remind the city that nature will always be stronger. You stand huddled and frozen, remembering the laughing diners, each feeding their hunger for conversation and service (and warmth too) but that's not you anyway, at least not tonight, because you are here, because you are removed from people tonight, to seek respite from a busy city and find reassurance that green things still do live and breathe. So you pull hesitatingly out of your pocket—and against your raw hands, the smooth lining of your coat feels like burlap—a little ripped piece of paper and stare down at the poem that's been running like a tick through your mind, the words that have inspired you to come tonight: "Fair Quiet, have I found thee here.... Society is all but rude... to this Delicious Solitude."

You read it out quietly, feeling for all the world like a fool, but no one much is around here anyway, the night hums with sirens racing by a couple of blocks off, and St. Andrew's Presbyterian holds a midnight vigil over the dark and empty park spread out before you. The words give you strength—to this delicious solitude—and this city holds a love for you, and you for it. You aren't afraid, then, to walk forwards into the dark of the park (creeping hobos and druggies and tattooed men will not be here tonight—the sinners have been banished, remember, but Eden still remains). The domed roof of the glass building gets closer and the snow gets fluffier underfoot as you step off the shoveled and slanted path—you

want to feel the earth beneath your feet tonight—and you climb three short steps feeling for all the world like a criminal until you stand beneath the dome and outside the door.

Now these glass walls are fogged too, but there are no diners within, just dark shapes pressed up against unlit, foggy windows. Your heart beats a wild tattoo, that thrill that lies in all of us, that pressing, urgent excitement of being about to do something you terribly want to do but that society frowns upon. But then you pull a little cold key out from your pocket. And you pull in a shaky breath. And you slot the cold metal key into the keyhole and hold your breath—and jiggle the handle slightly—look once over your shoulder—and the door swings open.

A warm, humid cloud floats out and envelops you. *Stepping into the hot sweet breath of a lover's kiss. Stepping into a living, humming womb. Stepping into the rainforest, buzzing with life.* And you are stepping into the heat of a tropical whirl of greenery, all alive and thriving under the dark purple sky of the biting January night. You step in and close the door, silently locking it and slipping the key back into your pocket.

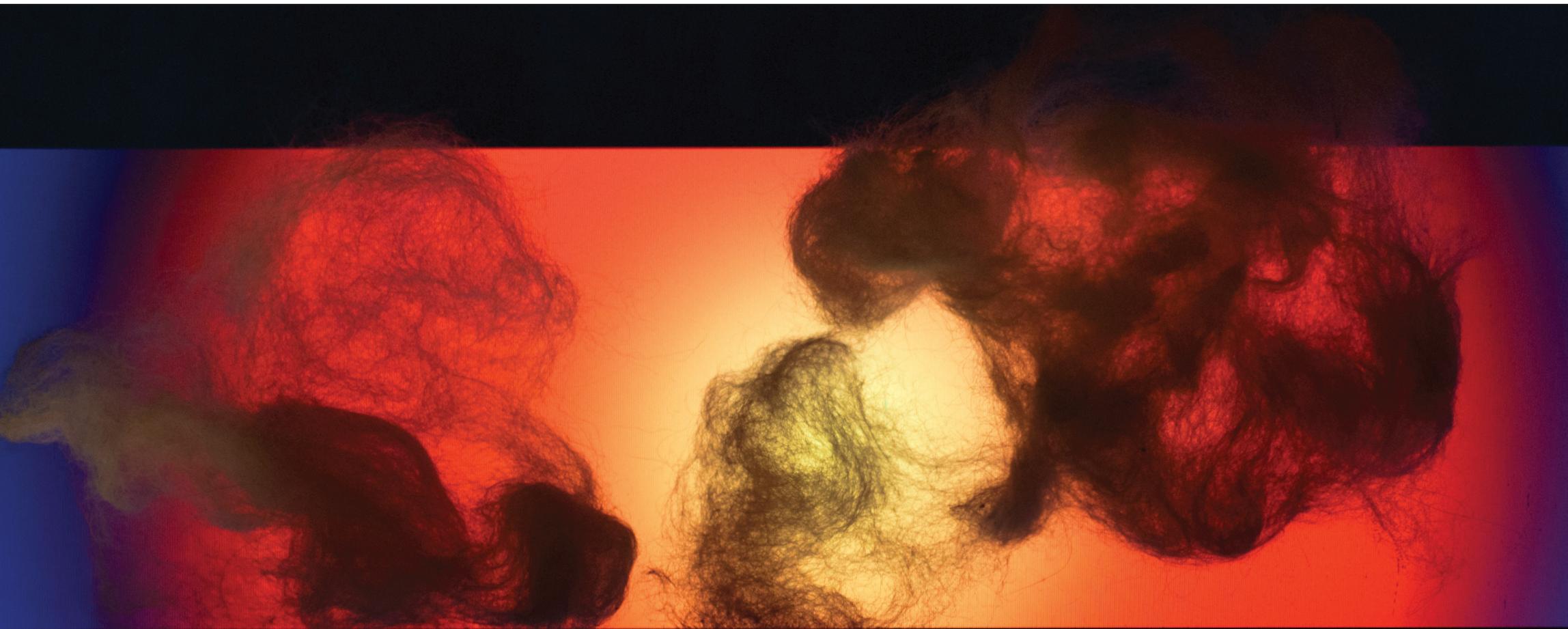
A streetlight from across the park throws just enough obscured light for you to recognize the bizarre shape of the screw pine, and in behind the wide leaves of the umbrella banana palm create a giant, round crown. You walk in and touch the damp, warm leaves with your fingers. You cannot see well in the dim lighting, but it does not matter, you know their names by heart. *Dracanea sanderian. Croton Californicus. Schlumbergera bridgesii.* Your pulse has stopped beating so furiously now, in the perfumed greenhouse air it has all but stilled and your fingers have de-thawed, your eyelids are half closed. This quasi-Eden keeps the grey façade—the people—the transit—the smells— and sounds—the litter—the laughter—the homeless and the rich—at bay. You move silently through the connected glass buildings, listening to the trickle of the fountain in the pond or the soft plop of humidity dripping off dark green fronds. After roaming through and breathing in the quiet splendor of this contained ecosphere, this tropical rainforest world, you find a comfortable corner of the stone floor, under the banana palm, and pull

from your knapsack a sleeping bag. Unzipped, you slide yourself into it and stare up at the wide, wet leaves of the banana palm. You sleepily recite a few more words of the poem, by rote: “To wander solitary there: two paradises ‘twere entwined in one... to live in Paradise alone.”

And then you lay your head down drowsily on the rock floor. To sleep in paradise alone—and tonight you will sleep like a child, beneath the humming security of life in these plants, wrapped in the embrace of life, becoming sweetly intoxicated in such potent amounts of warm fragrant oxygen. You check your alarm (four thirty, to be you up at and out and rushed groggily onto the early morning street car to chug back along College and home again and quietly up the stairs and into bed before anyone, *even the sun*, has risen, and then up again and pretend that all was as it should be, stirring up a cup of hot coffee and talking about rainforest dreams in January) and the alarm is set. Before you have time to contemplate whether this might be at all like Eden, or whether any other city soul has found solace in this gentle nighttime garden, you are already asleep.

RACHEL DYKEMAN

Composition with Hair



Abandonment

I sought her whom my soul loveth.
I was languishing, practically a dog.

I brought no painted bottle of Chianti.
I brought a dark, crimson wine, subtle as smoke.

I wanted our bed to turn buttery,
with honey spilled about.

But that woman,
Nature's sweetheart,
that wine-guzzling wench,
as white as froth,
and her hair all gold and her body all gorgeous,
whose fine mouth gives only sweetness—
that Nova Scotianess—
who sings hymns in church
but squeals like a whore in bed
(or squeals like a bride under her bridegroom)—
I can't embrace or fondle,
I don't fondle and embrace,
for she won't be wooed to wed.
(Brass jingles when she shakes the bed.)

Now, both rusty dusk and blood-red dawn,
I bear leaden sorrow as heavy as iron.
She won't be mine, no, not unless her church opens a brothel!
(She's a bad woman; will make a bad wife, a bad mother.)

Call me a proper harlequin, a dandy fool.

I'll tramp into New Brunswick;
I'll hike out of Nova Scotia—
dark Nova and dreary Scotia—
the sea's stronghold—
where the Atlantic cuts down sailors
and swallows their ships.

I'll forget the excellent sea chanteys of Nova Scotia!

Nothing here ain't wind-molested.
No trivial breeze rebuffs me.
This air has fangs.
(You see the sea?
Its brine is my undrunk wine.)

The wind howls denunciations.
Trees shriek back.

I must cross over to New Brunswick—
that province topped with stars—
to find a better, sweeter woman—
a dirty, little pigeon,
merry with her salacious favours....

GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE

Still Life with Orange



MAEVE DEVITT TREMBLAY

Thank You For the Dark and the Shoulders

Either moon or alley light
fingered the slotted blinds—
in it
your eyes appeared to me

two halves
of a scraped oyster.
Ear to your mouth, the lush
pearly sounds of the ocean
gurgled in the blackness.
You were already half-
drenched in leaving.
The year in its infancy
stretched across the bed
and it struck me that

despite everything
there still may be some distances
too far—our selves
two dissonant pins on rival maps.
Rustling beneath you
my fear of death
felt like a sudden
and hopeless vanity.

You woke the wildness in me
and my imperfections poured
into your beauty
as we slid into that slot
between desire and lack.
There is a sort of love
suited only for aubades,
a sad affection whose hands

erase their own work—
a fear of forgetting
followed simply
by forgetting.

TEA HADŽIRISTIĆ

Over My Shoulder

I smell them before I
hear you. Salty in the
501 Spadina, coated with that
notorious green powder,
the scent floating up
my nostrils.

My ear is prodded as you
fondle your prey, jiggle
their shells in your
hand, and commence
cracking and slurping in
highest definition.

I listen.
Humming and sucking,
murmuring and slipping
the chipped fragments through
your mouth, spitting them out
with a light plink onto the floor.
My shoulders curl.

Crunching and sliding from
your tongue across your teeth,
fragmenting the pistachios' armour
mercilessly, licking your lips.

Cracking.
Slurping.
Spitting.
Making me cringe.

ANNE RUCCHETTO

From the *My Little Red Riding Hood* Series



Epitaph

“Se i piè si stanno, non stea tuo sermone.”¹

— PURGATORIO XVII

Man! to be a dog! to bury
And forget! Why should we marry
Into a family of ghosts
Each time hands join in death? Are those
Not stars above his head, which seem
From this side of their leafy screen
To move when it does, wax, grow thin,
As if they were glass beads sewn in?
The sexton's diesel scorpion sits
In dead repose; beside it six
Feet of hollowed clay gapes dumbly.
More still than these, his head humbly
Lowered to the new grave's border,
Calm as Christ before His warder
And listening hard, a young man waits
In hopes of hearing death relate—
From that same mouth that makes a meal
Of all we love, keeps what it steals,
And even now yawns at our heels—
The secret to a life that lasts:
The waste, the shame, the heart attacks—
He had to know that there was more.
He knelt until his knees were sore.

ROBERT DiPARDO

¹ “Although our feet must stop, your words need not.”
(trans. Allen Mandelbaum)

Fragments Spoken with Nostalgia

from *Nostos Algia*:

‘the pain felt upon returning’
(etymology catches me again
in the crook of its arm)
and each successive desire sings to mnemosyne
recalling, even in their *idiosyncrasies*, each love prior

against my will.

*I meet two women who do not allow the smallness of their lives to get in the way
of their living. They hold the loom between granite legs
and offer me sweets and wines and pearls perfectly formed from labial tissue
and kingdoms stretching through the boundaries of horizons
but I tell them thank you, ma'ams,
I cannot stay...*

*I need to take a man who will rough me up with only his hands and kneads what
writes
out of my flesh and*

Upon returning to the womb: the woman,
an unbirth which undoes desire
and silences memory, collapses the history
of loves lived and loves lost, traces bilious
impossibilities across untouched skin. Pain, it

steals what crusts carnal around the rims of my hands.

repeats—
to write what *needs*
out of my flesh

BETH FRASER

A Lone Stranger Among the Forests



KIMBERLY KWAN

Untitled

I end.
Here I end and
I disclaim all things which are not myself.
If you are like myself first childhood self
who in sleep would draw arms, legs, and head to chest
so that at night, at least, all things could be closer to the heart
then, then come with me.

RAVEN KAUR

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