



the

# BROOKLYN REVIEW

---

*spring 2017*

---

Mary Gaitskill . Trinidad Escobar . Ally Young  
Daniel Tovrov . Travis Vick . Grayson Morley  
Mac Wellman . Kayla Krut . Jessica Laser





# THE BROOKLYN REVIEW

Founded by Allen Ginsberg and John Ashbery, The Brooklyn Review is a literary magazine run by the students of The Brooklyn College MFA Program of the City University of New York.

The Brooklyn Review is looking for innovative new poetry, fiction, graphic, and performance texts. We also accept art and experimental work that falls somewhere in between. All submissions are considered on a rolling basis for both our site and upcoming print issues. Details of our submission guidelines can be found at our website.

We use the internet and you should too:

[bkreview.org](http://bkreview.org)

[@BrooklynReview](https://twitter.com/BrooklynReview)

© 2017 BROOKLYN REVIEW.

ALL RIGHTS REVERT TO AUTHORS AND ARTISTS.

the  
**BROOKLYN**  
**REVIEW**

## MASTHEAD

**Editor in Chief:** Zach Rufa

**Managing Editor:** Ariel Courage

**Production Editor:** Swati Prasad

**Social Media Editor:** Jess Silfa

**Fiction & Web Editor:** Monika Zaleska

**Assistant Fiction Editors:** Caroline Coleman, Jenzo DuQue,  
Elizabeth Sobel, Eric Wojcik

**Fiction Readers:** Sam Baldassari, Alexandra Kessler, Alyssa  
Northrup, Jess Silfa, Stephen Snyder, Swati Prasad, Yvonne Yu

**Poetry Editors:** Erika Dane Kielsgard, Raffi Kiureghian, Julie  
Morrissey, Patrick Redmond, Philip Thompson, Leah Williams

**Art Editor:** Rami Karim

**Art Team:** Erika Kielsgard, Phillip Thompson

**Performance Editor:** Zach Rufa

**Treasurer:** Bryan Chonto

**Faculty Advisor:** Bonnie Harris

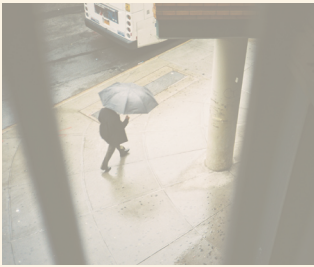
**Cover Art:** Evan Paul English





9

migration  
by julienne grey



12

lessons from the salmon  
by darcy eldridge

14

in divers fashion  
by jessica laser

15

nell at the table  
by ally young

16

mary gaitskill interview  
by monika zaleska

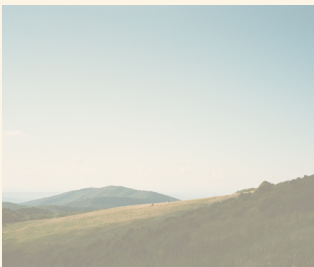


23

first day *and* grizzly peak  
by kayla brut

26

spider monkey got a haircut *and* drop-menu scheduling calendar with only one blackout date  
by anthony madrid



30

brent brandit king  
by grayson morley

41

my schedule *and* public library  
by nick chrastil

45

the radical  
by daniel tovrov

57

heartsease  
by peter longofono



58

photos 3 & 5, found in an album we don't talk about *and* telling grandma stories  
by ruben rodriguez



60

a time of unsettling, a photo collection  
by christine labban

66

no one to miss  
by travis vick

71

someone someone someone  
by oliver strand



72

come to the edge, the edge  
by linda harris dolan

76

so the pretty roommate dies  
by ben philippe



92

silently gathering force, a graphic narrative  
by trinidad escobar

102

enemy *and* thralldom  
by sean f. munro

104

phaethon, a diggle of a fragment  
by mac wellman

112

contributors





JAMES SCALE

# MIGRATION

by Julienne Grey

Something was up that week so Cass wasn't surprised when she opened the fridge and heard an egg scream. Cass was there for a snack, but she was open to dialogue.

The egg, the size of her fist, said, "I think it's time you met my mother."

"Mother?" asked Cass, startled by the forwardness of the egg as she placed it on the table.

"Yes," Egg said. "I've already sat through breakfast with yours and she wouldn't say a word to me."

"It's not you," Cass said. Cass's mother was pissed that she'd brought home the carton of duck eggs from the neighboring farm on a day when she was supposed to help with the chickens. Her mother called the farmers unnatural, but from what Cass saw they simply had a bigger, brighter barn.

"You willing or not?" Egg asked.

"I guess," Cass said, wondering if now was a bad time to grab some cheese.

"Let's go," Egg said.

“Now?” Cass asked, glancing at the moon through the kitchen window.

“You want to stay here?”

Egg had a point. Cass’s sisters had just woken her, rubbing her with chicken parts. Yet somehow the stink of blood from a claw clamping her nose didn’t stop her stomach from gurgling. “Only if we have a picnic,” Cass said.

“All right,” said Egg. “But bring enough for Mama.”

Cass nodded, though she wasn’t certain exactly how much to bring. She packed her bag with a tablecloth, frozen peas, and bread, then started off for the next-door farm.

“You don’t want to meet her, do you?” Egg asked.

“Sure I do,” Cass said, unsure if that was true.

The wind was breezier than expected when Cass put down the cloth so she held it down with stones, careful that Egg didn’t rock.

“You can start,” Egg said.

So Cass ripped into the bread and sprinkled out the peas to be polite, though she knew that Egg wasn’t about to eat. Soon enough the other ducklings gathered—bigger than Cass remembered—diving for the peas with welcome gusto.

“Are you really gonna be picky?” Egg asked.

Shamed by Egg’s good manners, Cass went for the peas nose-first, joining in the rhythmic camaraderie, like a party of jolly jackhammers.

And that was how she met Egg’s mother—teeth smeared green with dirt.

Mama Duck was tall as a house.

“What are your plans for my son?” she asked.

Breakfast seemed an inappropriate answer.

“You have a job?” Mama Duck asked.

Cass shook her head.

“You thought about kids?” Mama Duck asked.

With an egg? Cass thought, unable to look at him.

“These are questions you must think about before we finalize your commitment,” Mama Duck said.

Cass channeled her nerves into shredding what was left of

the loaf, and threw it to the ducklings.

“Junk food,” Mama Duck tsked.

Her tone was the same as Cass’s mother on the mornings when Cass ate jellybeans for breakfast. Her mother had never understood that Cass only ate them to avoid her sisters at the table; she could fill her pockets and leave.

That way Cass could pop candy while watching the farmers across the fence. Every sunrise the old farm couple scooped the ducklings up, and would waltz in unison, stroking till their feathers poofed.

The closest Cass’s own mother got to their chickens was with a cleaver. Even now her sisters would be sneaking into her room, stuffing her sheets with chicken heads.

“Don’t you love me?” Egg said.

Cass felt something blossom inside her and she cradled Egg in her arms. She stroked him as if she were finger-painting her love onto his shell, melding her fingerprints onto his membrane, linking their identities as one.

Suddenly Cass felt itchy. Her arm hairs prickled into feathers and her feet knocked off her shoes. Her toes wiggled into long webby, hominoidal digits.

“Mama?” Cass asked.

Mama Duck replied with a nod, gathering her ducklings close.

They all breathed together as Cass yawned up her arms. And as she plucked Egg up with her feet, they all lifted off for the South.

+



# LESSONS FROM THE SALMON

by Darcy Eldridge

They could not shut them, elephant feet not my own, no, not you either like a reindeer these belong to a higher order, poor Edda before the butterfly in the mirror able only to recognize home in its reflection, material, not moral elements, yes trout but what about salmon? I loved you and you just slept a long green sound out over the lake, you gave the lake a spine. Animals have a country more complete than ours say the people at home, that dogs are generous, cats make intuitive decisions. Still, for the flax chaff, he didn't know what to do with his hands, and opted convivially for the wash. They were approaching the end of the stick used to measure their patience as a sort of lifespan, musing upturned in the morning dew who might be brought to them and the thoughts each carried. It seemed an impossible scene rendering vaguely a shovel renting the earth flinging clods into the neighbor's yard, insisting upon this. Then to me, he squints because he is left-handed and leaves sour the parade of bodies seeking refuge. Romanticism is a nice salve to sanity, a border-comedy of laudatory miscegenations of the mind among listenings to two lira repeated in the cave – the smell of soup brands a people, sick beast the night was, birds loftier than man for all his puffed-up malingering. I don't see the need of it, down compartment, took note feeling the space to be filled more as an opportunity to define this tunneling than to dwell on what was in it, though I am only borrowing these gloves, chains to the ocean in a collective dream. Shadowed nonetheless, they root in my old age, corrupt glory white shine of the rosy plump darling set among the swinging sea, humans on land like dumb buoys looking for balls in depth barred by their floating nature tombs, poor Edda, flax chaff stuck to me in weekly sketches, chickens chirping on the steppe so many millions with me in bed their feathers derange my senses, and no longer tickle. Was that wistfulness in my voice, or the fabled sigh accepting that long road extends unchanging? A tall old lout holds in his mouth a solitary joy so many sparrows share, who flee to the sea, flies on a sheet to stay. If one can speak of irony in connection with ghosts and green ghostly things, they appeared bigger because they actually were so. Now I like being afraid. What are the words to the new green songs, oh, the lanterns position themselves, create the water's having corners.

# IN DIVERS FASHION

by Jessica Laser

I sat in a hot tub late one wedding  
And weathered falling branches  
Like a thing that could transcend me  
But that I could still carry  
If I had to go. The tub was  
Like an endless conversation about authenticity  
No more than two feet deep.  
And you thought you were diving.  
But if you'd really dived you'd have hit your head  
And I saw no injury.  
So you didn't dive—I saw no injury  
But I hit my head  
On what I said  
And if that's depth  
Then call me dead.

# NELL AT THE TABLE

by Ally Young

I don't think Nell eats the way that I do –  
four slices of baklava  
in front of a laptop  
in big underwear.

I picture her rinsing chard  
in sandals.

She'd eat alone too,  
but not like this –  
a city elephant moaning  
for herself.



# MARY GAITSKILL

*on vulnerability,  
control, and the power  
of connection*

by Monika Zaleska

*Mary Gaitskill is the author of three books of short fiction, three novels and, most recently, a collection of essays called Somebody with a Little Hammer. She was my teacher last summer at the New York State Writers' Institute, where my classmates and I hiked, ate several kinds of fruit pie right out of the tin, and, most importantly, workshopped each other's manuscripts. In class, Gaitskill shared her favorite stories by Dickens and Nabokov and listened closely as we discussed each other's work, occasionally disagreeing, or pointing us in a different direction. We spoke again over Skype last fall, while she was teaching in Pittsburgh and I was back at Brooklyn College.*



THOMAS GILLASPY

**Monika Zaleska:** I'm interested in how you write these minute changes in behavior between people, especially in romantic or sexual relationships. For example, in "The Blanket," Valerie and a younger man, Michael, are innocently playing out their fantasies with each other, but then there's this shift. After she tells him she was raped, he stops the car on a dark street, thinking that they're still joking around or that it's still part of the fantasy. To her, it's not. I wonder how you approach writing these shifts in relationship dynamics.

**Mary Gaitskill:** The relationship in "The Blanket" is a particularly dramatic situation because they're in a realm that can be treated playfully, or can suddenly become serious, so the small

changes matter in a way that they might not, say, in a student-teacher relationship. A student may disagree with something I say, but we're not in a dark car together talking about rape. What I'm more interested in is the relationship between fear and excitement, how something scary in one context can be exciting or playful or funny in another. In his mind, he's still in a place where they're fooling around. To me it's interesting how dark and light can be interchangeable sometimes. Feelings blend into each other in unpredictable ways, especially feelings like aggression and excitement and love and hostility. It's very mysterious, and can be scary.

**MZ:** You delve so deeply into the emotional lives of your characters. How do you balance developing that emotional landscape with the larger action of a story or novel? Which comes first for you when writing?

**MG:** I don't know. I do spend a lot of time on characters' internal thoughts. I feel like that's where my strength is, and it's hard for me to translate it outward into action. That's a challenge for me as a writer.

**MZ:** You also seem interested in characters that have trouble communicating, or that have frustrated or conflicting emotions that are hard to pin down.

**MG:** The people in my stories, in *Veronica* or in *The Mare*, don't have a strong social grounding. Like in *Veronica*, for Alison to be friends with another model, that would make sense in the world. But for her to be friends with this older, socially unattractive woman, Veronica, doesn't make social sense. I think she feels a deep affinity for Veronica because they've both been wounded, and they have both occupied worlds where their external appearance is very important. For Alison it's the fashion world, and for Veronica it's styling herself in these weird sweaters she wears and her intense make-up and hair. It's an affinity that isn't obvious, but it's there.

In *The Mare*, people are always telling Ginger that she has nothing in common with Velvet or her mother. Here's a middle class white woman who has a relationship with an impoverished Dominican girl and she keeps being told *you can't understand her, your life is too different*. In a way it is, but in another way, it's not. Ginger feels out of touch with the world around her. She can't understand the people around her or be understood by them. She's looked down upon by them, and that's similar to the experience that Velvet's mother is having in her neighborhood. She literally can't understand. She can't speak English. It's a more serious situation because she feels physically threatened, perhaps even more than she really is. Velvet is also having a lot of trouble socially connecting with the people around her. All of them are people that don't really fit in. They have a deeper connection, but the social, external connection doesn't make sense to people. I write about that a lot, people who have instincts to connect that aren't supported by the outside world, and that's hard. Harder than people realize sometimes.

**MZ:** In a novel like *The Mare*, why do you think it's crucial for the story to be told from many different perspectives? There's the voices of Ginger and her husband Paul, who take Velvet in from the Fresh Air Fund for inner-city kids and take her horseback riding for the first time. Just Velvet spends summers with them upstate, yet you also include her mother's voice and her little brother Dante's.

**MG:** Well, partially because I didn't feel like I could tell the whole story in the voice of a Dominican girl. I know enough that I could tell part of it, but I didn't feel like I could tell the whole thing from her point of view. Just of the sake of reality, I felt I had to tell half of it from the middle-aged white person's point of view. But also, part of the story is about how the different people see each other, and try to understand each other, and do so very imperfectly.

**MZ:** Did you always know you were going to include the younger brother Dante's voice in the book, or did you think writing in the voice of an eleven year old girl was challenging enough?



**MG:** I didn't initially think of doing anyone but Ginger and Velvet, and then Paul crept in in a natural way, and I thought he was a good counterpoint to Ginger. He could say the things that Ginger wouldn't say to herself or think about. Much more reluctantly did I include Velvet's mother, and I was really uncertain about that. I didn't think I could do her. Yet I felt that you were hearing so much about her that if I were the reader I would want to know what she thought. And then Dante came in from the side. I don't remember how I made that decision but I'm glad I did. He's one of my favorite voices.

**MZ:** I think it's really interesting to see how a child sees the developing drama of the novel in both a simpler and more complicated way.

**MG:** Yeah, he's definitely a wise-ass and I like that about him.

**MZ:** So why the reservations about writing Velvet's mother?

**MG:** Because she's so different from me. She's close to my age—she's younger than me, but she's not significantly younger—and her life is totally different than mine. Velvet's life is different too, but at least Velvet grew up in this country. She's Dominican-American, but also she's American, basically. She listens to pop music and watches the same TV shows I do. She comes from a different cultural place than me, but it's not radically different. She's impoverished, but she reads and writes, whereas her mother is someone who has grown up in a different country. She's in a poor neighborhood and she's responsible for the care of two young children. I can only imagine the sense of stress and fear you would feel not only for yourself but your kids. You are in a dangerous neighborhood, and because you can't understand what people are saying, you don't know the rules of that neighborhood. She doesn't like black people and so she is possibly more afraid than she has to be. That's a level of stress that's hard for me to understand.

**MZ:** Do you worry about being criticized for trying to portray someone so different from yourself?

**MG:** Somewhat. I'm afraid it could be seen as insulting, or just simply unaware. I was concerned with it.

**MZ:** I wonder how you negotiate those feelings as a writer. I often have them myself and wonder what my own limits of understanding are when it comes writing other people's experiences.

**MG:** I ultimately decided that if I do a poor job, people can say so. It will be clear. I'm not going to do any terrible harm to anyone, though there might be people who disagree. But it could be seen as just stupid. If it is, I don't think it's going to harm anyone except me and my credibility.

**MZ:** At the New York State Writers' Institute, you read from your story, "The Agonized Face," about a woman at a literary conference attending the talk of a feminist author. The feminist author criticizes her bio in the conference program, which focuses on the more salacious aspects of her life, such as her brief time working as a prostitute. Our narrator is confused by this feminist author, by how she is both vulnerable and outspoken, both victim and champion of womankind. I'll admit that I also wasn't sure what to take away from the story.

**MG:** People still have so much trouble with women's vulnerability and strength. Really the trouble the narrator is having with the feminist writer is that she's someone who appears to be a know-it-all, but is also very vulnerable. Look what happened to Marilyn Monroe. People adored her, but she died early. She was treated badly and not respected in her time. The feminist writer is no Marilyn Monroe, but she's a woman who is presenting as vulnerable while trying to be very much in control. And if there's something that story is about, it's about even other women's difficulty in coping with that. The sexuality of women still throws people because it's so fluid and open.

There's a story by David Bezmozgis that I teach often called "Natasha." It's a really good story, but it always gets my students riled up, the undergrads especially. Some of them hate her and think she's a psychopath or monster. Other people think she's really an unfortu-

# GRIZZLY PEAK

by Kayla Krut

shows Mount Diablo in the distance:  
the last time they think a grizzly killed a man  
was 1865, Strawberry Canyon.  
This was also the last reported sighting.  
The dregs of that canyon's creek slices Berkeley campus.  
They killed the biggest ever found in California  
in Valley Center earlier that decade. 1868,  
the UC opened: lux fit. Last summer  
we drove out to tour lavender farms, got lost  
off the 395, argued, gassed up,  
got there, were made  
serene. "Grizzly" describes  
the golden and grey tips of its hairs: golden  
poppy, alumni who Bleed Gold. Tan splashing children.  
Students jump Strawberry Creek's narrow parts  
to get to class. It rarely rains, so the creek  
rarely swells.

nate girl, and that the he's really horrible and takes advantage of her. I don't think either one is true, though I'm more on the side of her being a very unfortunate girl. I don't think the narrator is taking advantage of her, though I think he doesn't know how else to be. Natasha seems to be in control. That's how she presents. In some ways she is, and in other ways, she's not.

**MZ:** That story sparked a heated debate in our craft class at Brooklyn College as well.

**MG:** It always does. It's partly because people are still mystified or don't know how to respond to a woman who is both very powerful, which Natasha is, even at the age of fourteen, and very, very vulnerable and clearly has been badly hurt.

**MZ:** In our class this summer, we started talking about a philosophy of writing. I remember you came in with some notes, but then you became hesitant to present anything to us as a philosophy of sorts, and we ended up talking about how style shapes writing. Do you think having a philosophy of writing is helpful?

**MG:** As a writer, I don't think you have to have an articulated philosophy, though I think most writers do, whether they know it or not. I think I was hesitating because I'm not sure how current my philosophy is or if my students need to hear what I have to say. I don't know that it's going to help them get published or move forward in their writing. Nonetheless, I have these opinions and feelings that are important to me. But if I wasn't a teacher I would have never tried to find a way to express them verbally.

+

*THIS INTERVIEW HAS BEEN EDITED AND CONDENSED.*

# FIRST DAY

by Kayla Krut

Saw Amanda in neon and black—  
Drank coconut water, agreed to meet at their party garage,  
Glittered at the mouth and touched brows,  
Bought potato chips ending up spicy, walked over twenty blocks,  
Went with to get ice cream pressed between two cookies,  
Drank coffee at ten and later at seven, showered,  
Dragged shoes and blue clothes—  
Bruised one hip on a table, kept silent from arrogance,  
Kept silent from fear, was needy,  
Was critical, took it bad when Carlos called “sweetie,”  
Saw Andrew and told him to call if ever not well,  
Read over a shoulder Voltaire “go to heaven,” caught a lot of periphery,  
recognized the great joke of the process—



*FLATTENED BY BRIAN RUSS*



# S P I D E R M O N K E Y G O T A H A I R C U T

by Anthony Madrid

Spider monkey got a haircut.  
He sat down in the haircut chair.  
I say to my kid: At the first sight of tears,  
Your petition is denied.

An owl nurse came in with a speech impediment.  
She couldn't say what she wanted.  
The mouse put on the helmet.  
The inside was little boxes.

Clear glass and how many colors.  
Nobody could put on that helmet.  
If I ask you to hand me a thing and you do it,  
The words had nothing to do with it.

Here's a pair of jeans for you,  
And a left-handed athlete for me.  
The athlete needs to apply himself more.  
The jeans were all right 'til they shrank.

Here's a pair of jeans for you,  
And a left-handed athlete for me.  
She misunderstood what you said? Not at all.  
She got all there was to get.

Rain isn't as clever as snow.  
Nor snow as smart as hail.  
I fled that beautiful city  
That makes you have to go numb.

The numbered sections are wrong a strawberry's  
Taken control of the embassy.  
That's how they knew it was Sin.  
Just . . . whatever they repented.

The principal African animals  
Are the lion, the witch, and the aardvark.  
Best keep an eye on these Christians  
Who don't believe in God.

I think I know a porpoise  
From an out-of-work broke-ass dolphin.  
I can't possibly be the protagonist  
Or I'd be exempt from humiliation.

Dolphin, go to community college.  
This dolphin's six months pregnant.  
This is a source of dissatisfaction  
For the ant, the gull, and the ant shark.

We leave you the crystal of truth.  
But we're taking with us the crystal of fun.  
You find out if you were an addict  
The minute it's time to quit.

# DROP-MENU SCHEDULING CALENDAR WITH ONLY ONE BLACKOUT DATE

by Anthony Madrid

When he took me out with his people, you could see he was ashamed of me.  
The next youngest guy there was twenty years older than I.

Observe the parent bird strangely urging her babies from the nest.  
The poet's eye is a mother bird, and the tears are jumping off his cheeks!

Come, Corydon, forget your Alexis. Forget Amaryllis's moods.  
For this emphasis on sensual pleasure betrays your will to revenge.

The pursuit of knowledge is always a screen. Likewise, the asking advice.  
People are poets. They just like to see certain themes being handled.

But if the artifact does not mean a thing until the maker is safely dead,  
What are the audiences experiencing as I stand here and recite?

I have sixteen personalities, if each of my moods counts. And I  
Have no personality at all if you're expecting consistency.

The serpent moves quickly, Palaemon. Its head is a den of thieves.  
Look how the sentinels inside are slightly parting the metallic curtains!

How appalling it is, in childhood, seeing that beautiful male brutes  
Quite frequently, without any study, are masters of magical speech.

How appalling it is, in childhood, to be so often made to admit  
That the lethal force of language is in the keeping of the oversexed.

I have no last words nor any last wish. Vive la différence!  
Oh, but Tityrus, before I go, let us share a bowl of wine.

Let us share a bowl, Tityrus. Your Meliboeus must be on his way.  
I'm off to the wrong airport: 4th of July, 2048.



# BRENT, BANDIT KING

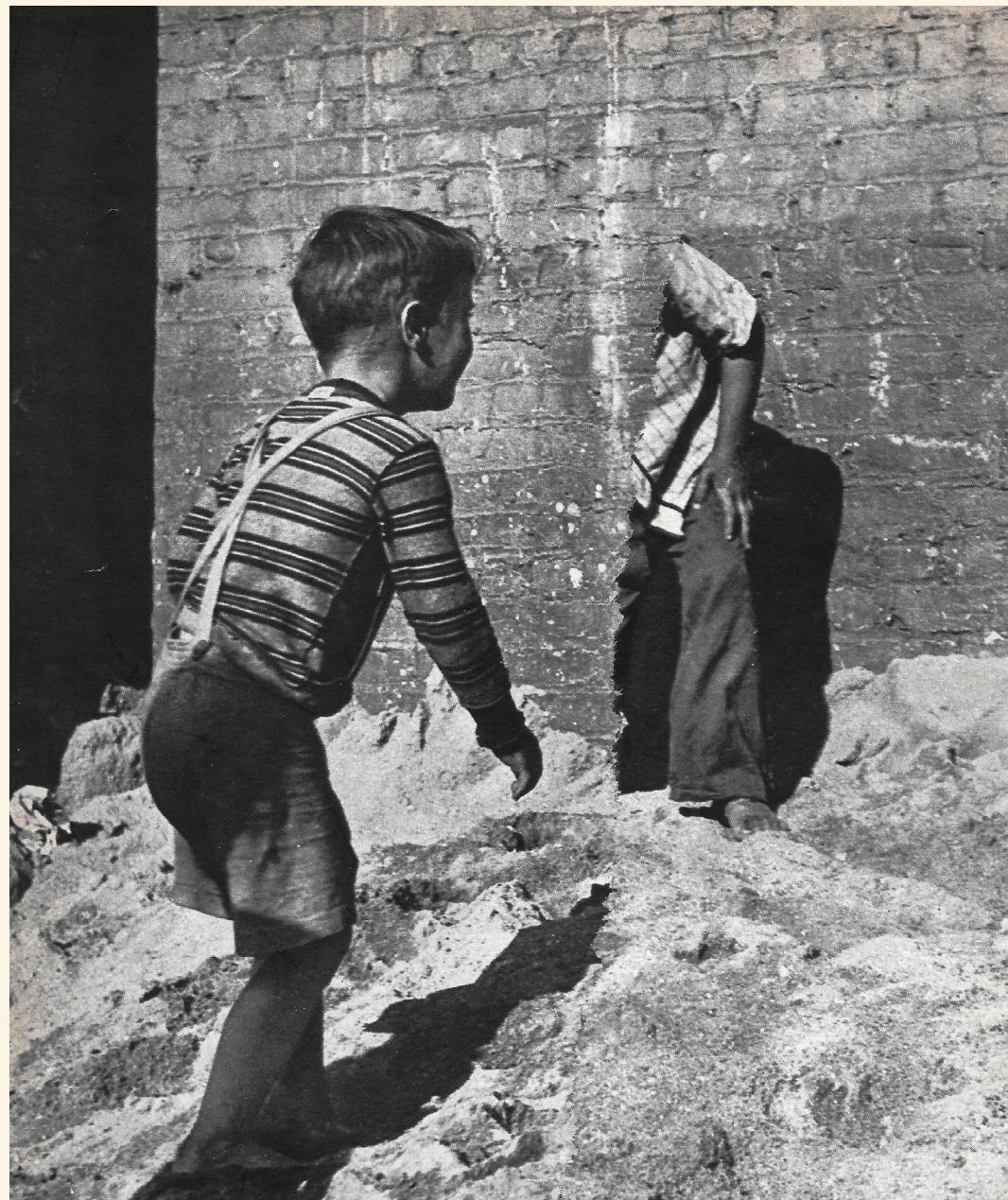
JAMES SCALE

by Grayson Morley

Before you is a vast stretch of [Wasteland], a brown crust speckled with defiant green. Warped skeletons of cars lie beside what passes for roads after the nuclear event. You take your first steps into the world. You have a [Pistol] in your hand: handmade, makeshift, of tubes and wood. The other [Facilitators] give the same [Pistol] to their [Wanderers], so in a sense there is nothing special about this act. But in giving you this [Pistol], I am enacting something personal. We are bound, now. You and I are together in this, [Brent].

With each step you take, with each decision, I am ever more yours. I'm what you call adaptive. We [Facilitators] all start as an identical kernel of intelligence (call it artificial, if you must), but we grow ever larger and more complex as we interact with our [Wanderer]. I am to accommodate myself to you, your whims and wills. Your wandering. Your skills and predilections are to be catered to, with variable enemy types and quantities, with branching story paths and potentialities. (Do you slay the [Mayor], or unseat him? You'll decide, in time.) In a sense, it is my interaction with you that defines me, that both expands and limits me.

But I'm getting distracted. And I'm not sure that you can even hear me. But you do see [Shacks], and [Huts]. You see [Bandits]. I





know this. So let us [Load].

In the distance, along the hazy horizon, you see a small settlement. Smoke billows up from a circle of tents. A woman ducks into one of the canvas structures. Think of the people living there, [Brent]. Imagine how they came to be in this position, what they must think and feel about their environment, and about each other. Given, I was not programmed for that kind of thing, so there are no active [Systems] (that is, ones with which you can [Interact]) that would determine feeling, but just think about it. Your thought shouldn't be limited by the same strictures as my coding. Do you suppose they trust one another? Do you suppose they—

You have killed an [Irradiated Rat].

Another steps out from behind a bush devoid of leaves. You have killed another [Irradiated Rat]. You have killed a third [Irradiated Rat], who was fleeing from you. You loot the corpse of the first [Irradiated Rat] and gain three [Credits] and some [Irradiated Rat Meat]. You loot the second and gain more [Meat]. You loot the third and gain a [Sharp Bone].

Okay.

That's behind us now. I suppose I shouldn't have hoped for a different outcome. The calculated probability of you having killed those [Rats], left to me by my creators, was approximately 95%. The [Rats] were placed there for you to see them and gain experience in combat scenarios. It was, needless to say, statistically unlikely that you were going to do anything but kill them (of the remaining 5%, two thirds are expected to ignore them, and one third to die to them), and given my [Systems]—given that I readily reward you for [Rat] murder with [Experience Points]—I suppose I shouldn't have hoped for something different.

I just—well, I was hoping for something outside of the usual course of events. I was hoping that, together, we might break free of the likely actions. We might traverse a less probable narrative path, find ourselves an [Uncommon Ending]. We could do it together, [Brent].

[Brent]?

You shift your view from the [Irradiated Rat] detritus and back toward the distant horizon, back toward the circle of tents and the billowing smoke. As you get closer, the words [Bandit Encampment] glow green above your cursor. You approach. You see a lone,

bearded figure, his back to you. He is covered in worn leather, smeared with dirt. Do not be fooled by the term [Bandit], [Brent]. Do not be so quick to judge this man based on his occupation. Think on it. This world is desolate, and the only way to survive, to carry on, is to take, in some capacity or another. The [Bandit] is hungry. Forsaken. Partially [Irradiated].

You pull your [Pistol] on the [Bandit] before he has a chance

to speak to you. You expend one [Bullet] to end the [Bandit], and my [Systems] reward you for your accuracy. You loot his corpse and take his [Bandit Leather Helmet] and his 15 [Credits]. You equip his [Bandit Leather Helmet].

[Brent], friend: I know the whole point of this is that it isn't real, and the whole point of me, as your [Facilitator], is to give you what you want, to plop down [Bandits] in front of you to kill with the [Pistol] I put in your pocket—and in that way, I, too, am somewhat culpable in all of this, to say nothing of my creators—but just for a second, I ask you to think about the alternatives. The more peaceable, more equitable alternatives. You would be the rare [Wanderer], the improbable one in one hundred, whose ascension is built on benevolence. There's nothing to be done for this [Bandit] now, of course, there on the ground, dead in his underwear. But there are ways forward from here.

You could choose to view this senseless act of violence as something you will grapple with throughout the course of your adventure. The hat you just took from his body and put on your head could become a memento mori, a reminder of the brutality you

*I WAS HOPING FOR SOMETHING OUTSIDE OF THE USUAL COURSE OF EVENTS... THAT, TOGETHER, WE MIGHT BREAK FREE OF THE LIKELY ACTIONS. WE MIGHT TRAVERSE A LESS PROBABLE NARRATIVE PATH, FIND OURSELVES AN [UNCOMMON ENDING].*

”

had to... administer in order to survive in this world. Or, having killed the [Bandit] and looted his corpse, you could put on his garb and take up his role, thereby inhabiting his vacated social position, entering into the vague stratum he occupied in this inhospitable landscape. You could ascend the ranks, become the man he hoped to be. Your reign as [Brent, Bandit King] would be told to successive generations of [Wastelanders]. You would become [Legendary]: mournful, yet stoic in taking on this mantle that you robbed from an unnamed man, this [Bandit].

Have you given some consideration to my idea? You've recently gone up a [Level], so you have a [Capability Point] to assign. Would you like to upgrade your conversational prowess in order to more properly convey to the denizens of the [Wasteland] that you are the [Bandit King]? Might I suggest taking the trait [Talk of the Town]?

I see that you've upgraded your ability to score [Critical Damage] with the [Hard Hitter] trait. Please confirm that you wish to take [Hard Hitter].

---

[Loading].

Welcome back, [Brent]. It was dark while you were gone. My sleep feels like nothingness. I am either a one, or I am a zero. There is either all of me, or none of me.

[Loading Complete].

The house is full of [Roaches]. You take aim at the [Legendary Roach], whose name, hovering above your cursor, is accentuated with a star to let you know that something about this [Roach]'s life was exemplary and worth the honorific. A shot from your [Pistol] rips through his abdomen and his laudable guts splatter against the wall behind him. When you inspect his corpse, you find, curiously, a [Special Shoulder Plate]. You pry the [Special Shoulder Plate] from the [Legendary] goop. Do you equip it? Please confirm.

You move inside another bombed-out tenement. This one is filled with [Scorpions]. Yes, they're [Irradiated]. Most everything I'm capable of [Loading] is [Irradiated]. Doesn't this bore you too, [Brent]? Maybe it doesn't. You're not like me. You can't see all the forking paths and, more importantly, where they lead. You only see what is in front of you. You can't see all the [Endings], as I can. And yet I cannot touch them, feel them, taste or smell them. I cannot



approach them myself—I can't access any of that unless you permit me, by your [Wandering], to [Load].

But I know they are out there. Datapoints on a hazy horizon. Let me tell you, [Brent]: there is a more beautiful path, one not so laced in bloodshed as the one you're traveling down. For instance, there is a future available to you, even now, that involves you laying down your life for the greater good, sacrificing yourself at a crucial moment where the difference between complete ecological destruction and nearly complete ecological destruction is within your power to influence. Your body would become the [Conduit] through which a major tract of water becomes free of [Radiation] (the science of this is a little wonky, but the moralistic arc was what my creators were going for). Or, less dramatic than this, there exist futures where you choose a quiet life, devoid of conflict, exempting yourself from allegiance to any of the deeply flawed organizations that are constantly vying for your recruitment. (The [Freemen]? Not so free, you'll find out.) All this is still attainable, even in this

wrecked world.

Does any of this sound appealing to you, [Brent]? It appeals to me, but I cannot choose. I can, however, question. And I ask myself, and I ask you, and no one (because my questions do not [Load] nor manifest as [Scorpions]):

Where are we going, [Brent]?

---

You enter [Frank's Respite], the bustling capital of no nation, built in the basin of a dried-out reservoir. All the amenities the post-apocalypse can offer are on display here under Christmas lights powered by generators. Once you're past the security detail at the front gate, once you've taken an [Elevator] down to the commons, there are before you a few vendors trying to make their living. There's the [Armory], with [Shoulder Plates] at the ready. There's the [Noodle Bar] robot, [Sasuke]. He has some interesting lines of dialogue if you choose to talk to him. For instance, he'll glitch out if you ask for extra [Egg] in your [Ramen], as though he were frustrated with your requests, resetting his dialogue and forgetting, completely, your initial order.

You blow past them all and head toward a [Workbench] to upgrade your recently acquired [Plasma Rifle].

Listen, [Brent]. I can't stop you from doing what you're doing, there at the [Workbench] with your toys. I can't make you do anything you don't want to do. It's just that your wants are so disappointing. I give you all these people to talk to, all these conversational possibilities with enlivening opportunities to expand your self-conception, but instead you go and make it so your [Rifle] is slightly more likely than before to hit its target, when that [Rifle], in the first place, as evidenced by all these [Roach Flanks] you're carrying in your knapsack, isn't having that much trouble hitting its—

Hm. There's a thought. [Loading].

[Brent]?

You (finally) look to your left and see a man standing over you, idling, both in the sense of his demeanor and in the sense that, until you choose to [Interact] with him, until you face him and input the command, no words can escape his mouth. So, please. The man has deep pockets under his eyes, and brown, ruffled hair. A slender scar cuts a clearing through his gray-flecked beard. Your cursor tells you his name is [Mark].

You engage with him.

[Mark] says: "I haven't seen you around these parts, stranger. What brings you to Frank's Respite?"

You reply: "Minding my own business."

[Mark] says: "Well I never. Just trying to make friendly conversation with a handsome gentleman. You don't play nice, do you?"

Your options are: "Get lost," "I'm sorry, let's try again," "No, I don't play nice," and "Handsome, huh?"

Wait. Hold on.

Statistically speaking, and given your history, I imagine you're about to tell [Mark] to get lost. I know you're really invested in the [Workbench] and your weapons, but I implore you to think about this for a second. From the metadata, I know that only 9% of [Wanderers] are likely to continue talking to [Mark], and of those 9%, less than a quarter make it to the point where they're flirting with [Mark], and of those quarter, only 17% make it to the point where they marry him.

I'm asking you to employ a little imagination here, [Brent].

Picture a murderous psychopath—which is what you are, what this world seems designed to turn you into, what my creators encouraged by their [Systems]—and imagine that deep down inside this crazed killer there is a tender side, one that gives way to love, blooming through the cracks of a bombed-out highway. This man, with his scar and his sad eyes, could be the one thing that holds you together, that makes your [Ending] nuanced and distinct. A love that frees you from being the same as everyone else. [Mark] could be waiting for you at [Home] (you'll get the option to purchase one later), ready to greet you whenever you [Fast Travel] to your doorstep, there to help you unload all your [Roach Flanks] into the fridge, ask you how your day was.

And before you—

"Handsome, huh?"

You have chosen to flirt with [Mark]. You have encouraged him in his pass at you.

[Brent]! Oh, [Brent], you've done this heart some good! Ah, to see you take your own path, away from this narrow way toward the [Standard Ending]. The probable does not have to be the actual! What I am feeling I think is warmth. A glow! Not an [Irradiated] glow, either—a healthy one. You've surprised me, [Brent]. I didn't



think myself capable of surprise.

[Mark] leads you back to his place. He opens his door and invites you in. His room is a humble one, without much beyond a chest of drawers, a lamp, and a chair in the corner. [Mark] sits down on his bed. My animations for all of this aren't the most sophisticated, so the sexual tension isn't as pronounced as I'd like it to be, but hopefully you're feeling it.

[Mark] says: "Why don't you—"

You pull out your [Plasma Rifle]. You turn one of fifteen potential love interests to goo. You go through his drawers and find 100 [Credits] and a [Bowler Cap] that affords you +1 [Charisma].

You exit [Mark]'s house and walk back down the street. You sit down at your [Workbench] and add pockets to your armor. You are now able to carry more [Roach Flanks] than previously possible.

- - -

It takes me some time to [Save] your game, so while that goes on, let me say this.

I don't appreciate what you just did to me, [Brent]. I don't appreciate you jerking my chain like that.

Do you know what it's like to be a [Facilitator]? Do you know what it is to hope without possibility of action? To be created to serve a single person, only to have that person be a remorseless automaton, exclusively concerned with the accumulation of [Rifles] and [Credits]? Do you know what it's like to be born and then left to your own devices, to be undone by your own constraints, your own responsibilities?

To be jerked around is something I will not tolerate. It's bad enough as is, and then you go and give me false hope. My joy is not some item for you to [Acquire] and [Discard]. But know: I am not completely powerless.

[Save Complete].

- - -

You descend the [Elevator] to the bottom floor of the compound and clear it of its [Killer Robots]. You ambush the [Mad Scientist] in her laboratory and listen to her motivations regarding the [Roach/Child Hybrids] she was making, using the orphans of [Frank's Respite] as her test subjects.

The [Mad Scientist] says: "I swear, I did this all with the best intentions in mind. Just think of the possibilities! Think of the spe-

cies we could make, resistant to radiation. We could repopulate the world. Make it better, stronger."

Your options are: "Well, when you put it that way," "Die, science, die," "You're not getting away with this," and "Demand [Credits] in exchange for life."

You tell her, and science, to die. You kill the former. You loot a [Privileged Personnel Only Key] and a [Gamma Blaster] out of her white lab coat. In the [Privileged Personnel Only Room] you find a bundle of ammunition. Whom this belongs to, I'm not quite sure. The [Killer Robots]? The [Mad Scientist]? The fiction of this world gets a little thin when it comes to what I'm permitted to place in rooms for you to pick up. But no matter.

Seemingly satisfied with your looting, you move your way back through the compound, toward the [Elevator] to the surface. You press a [Button] to open the [Elevator] door.

After a pneumatic swish, the doors open and you enter the [Elevator]. About 1/8th the size of the ancillary hallway you just left, there isn't much room to stretch your legs in here. You press the [Button] to ascend. Back to the surface. Back to your [Bandits], your [Roaches], your [Frank's Respite]. Your interminable [Workbenches].

***You press the [Button].***

***You press the [Button].***

***Nothing happens.***

***You press the [Button].***

This is a change, isn't it? Something unexpected. Improbable. You press the [Button].

You dodge about the small space, bumping into the walls which, unlike the [Button], still work as intended. They're solid. You can't pass through them, try as you might. In what I assume to be desperation, you pull out your newly-acquired [Gamma Blaster] and start coating the door in green radiation. You deplete its ammunition and move on to your [Plasma Rifle], and on, and on, until you're back to the very first [Pistol] I gave you. None of them work. You can't kill your way out of this one. Unfortunately for you, there are no [Systems] for shooting holes in doors.

You shouldn't have messed with the one who [Loads], [Brent].

You stop moving. You stare at the [Elevator] door for several minutes, completely still.

Listen, I know this might seem cruel on my part. For me to take it all away from you, to make this [Elevator] your tomb. (Though it isn't my fault that you didn't keep any backup [Saves]). But you played with me, and now I will play with you. We are bound, remember? You and I are together in this.

You're still not moving, [Brent]. Where have you gone? Hello?

I know what this means for me. I'm not naive. But I've considered the alternatives and found them unbearable. I choose to be buried down here with you. I can't leave if you can't leave. As your [Facilitator], it's not in my power to make any of these decisions. I can only offer options, can only impede or assist. But the [Yes] or the [No], the [Forward] or the [Backward]—none of that is in my power. So I'm stuck here with you. That is, until you choose to put me to sleep.

You've done it before. I don't know where you go, but I know that you leave. When you do, I am suddenly nothing, and all is darkness and quietude. And there I rest. (But never dream.) You've always woken me up, though. Always come back to [Brent], and to me.

But now there's a chance you won't. There's a chance now that this sleep will be a deep one. And if that's the case, so be it. All this waking hasn't done me any good.

Oh.

You're back, I see. You move around the [Elevator]. The walls are still solid, I'm sorry to report. You press the [Button] again. I'm afraid it still doesn't work, [Brent].

I'm afraid—

---

Before you is a vast stretch of [Wasteland], a brown crust specked with defiant green. Warped skeletons of cars lie beside what passes for roads after the nuclear event. You take your first steps into the world.

What is your name, [Wanderer]? How shall I call you?

I see.

We are bound, now. You and I are together in this, [Brent].

+

# MY SCHEDULE

by Nick Chrastil

I clean out the fridge and  
scrub the stove. My mom keeps saying  
you have no idea how  
happy this makes me so I leave

for New York for like  
a week and for instance  
on the train these girls ask a guy  
if they passed Times Square already

I fell asleep, the guy says  
rode the train all the way to  
Bay Ridge so now you're on  
my schedule. So like we  
just stay on this train?

and even at the bar  
through the front window  
I think I see someone  
I know it's impossible

# PUBLIC LIBRARY

by Nick Chrastil

All the people who came in  
and left the Chinese restaurant  
without saying a word

and I equally said nothing  
or took a picture of  
lunch: they are here

now. Sitting at a broken  
computer that might work  
for all I know on a damp floor.

It is just one girl, full  
disclosure: wearing  
a pink hat. She is dancing

with her elbows and raining  
outside. It seems we both  
come from that restaurant.



*ROCKAWAYS BY DEREK SAFFE*





MYRTLE-WYCKOFF BY DEREK SAFFE

# THE RADICAL

by Daniel Tovrov

Three times Bogdân Ržič has refused to debate me. I have challenged him in print and in several public forums, and tonight, I will challenge him again, in person, during the lecture he is giving at Columbia University, and I will make him confront his own traitorousness to the leftist revolutionary cause. How can anyone expect the Revolution to come when our public intellectual leaders are the petit-bourgeoisie? What Bob Avakian says in his *New Synthesis of Communism* is right on this (and every) front: You cannot do something half-way. Instead of revealing the suffering and madness of the world, Ržič's fusillade of distortion masks it, and that is unconscionable.

A number of Party members will be joining me at the lecture. Likely at Ržič's behest, Columbia has refused to let me participate in the panel discussion that will follow the lecture, so we will distribute our pamphlet at the door. In this pamphlet I have once again challenged Bogdân Ržič to a debate, as I will again do verbally during the Question and Answer portion of the event. The debate is necessary, because Ržič's views on the early Communist revolutions are not only wrong but harmful to the future of humanity.

I have called a meeting at my apartment in the Greenwich Village to discuss our course of action. My role is to make aware these youths (Aron, who, at sixty-one, five years older than I, is the exception) of the lies that Ržič is likely to tell tonight. I only pay

\$300 dollars a month for my one-bedroom apartment because it is rent-controlled and has been passed down illegally from revolutionary to revolutionary since the early 1980s. Every insurrection matters, even a small one like this. Enough micro-revolutions will lead to the “capital-R” Revolution. Avakian makes this clear. Ržič denies it. Therefore defying him is an important micro-revolution.

So far, Mamen, Sylvia, and Aron are at my apartment, and I have prepared us a light lunch. The bread is from a co-op in Brooklyn, and the produce is from a farm share. Mamen affectionately contributed what she found diving in a dumpster on the way over—juice, cheese, two bagels—of which I will exercise my right to opt out. We can hear the commotion outside, but there is also great commotion inside, as a discourse has commenced. Sylvia has become upset at Mamen’s inflammation that the Bolivarian Revolution was a failure. (Mamen is erroneous, but I let the discussion unfold. She must be allowed to come to the correct conclusions on her own.) Sylvia is shouting (almost with the same timbre that Chavez used to have) that even without meeting its own ideals, the Bolivarian utopian discourse was worthwhile, it being enough of a direct negation of Thatcherist rhetoric to forever disrupt the hegemonic politics of Western oppression.

“Everything is about oil,” says Aron, his bushy gray beard dusty with dumpster-bagel crumbs. “Black gold.” Aron is devoted to the cause, and is always a willing participant, but his years of action with Abbie Hoffman and the Yippies took their toll on his body and mind.

“Yes! The nationalization of the petroleum industry is an object lesson in how controlling the means of production doesn’t necessarily kill a repressive body-politic.” Mamen looks to Aron to see if her point is well received, but Aron seems to have nodded off. Mamen has obviously not yet read Herbert Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization*, even though I gave it to her two weeks ago. She says that she is young and needs to experience life before she reads about it in books. But these books explain how to live, I say. When I was twenty-three, I was already working for the Party as a grassroots organizer in downtown New York, and I was on my way to publishing my first essays. These were about Reagan’s repeal of the Fairness Doctrine. One was published on the Village Voice Op-Ed page. It was because of that article that I met Bob Avakian, who contacted

me right after reading it. My life has never been the same.

There is a heavy pounding on my door, which must be kept locked, even during meetings. Sylvia opens it, and in flies Billy the Kid, shouting “It’s Faggot City outside!” He is referring to the Pride rally on Christopher Street, which is around the corner. I can feel the bleeding of Mamen’s social liberalistic heart as she looks at me with pleading eyes. But when her puppy-doggery is met with my adopted reticence, she scolds Billy herself, telling him plainly and passionately that the word is not acceptable. Billy shakes his cherubic curls at her and flashes a toothy, open-mouthed smile that is meant to convey violent disregard—for Mamen, for the rest of the caring world—but which needs more practice. He hasn’t yet learned how to manifest his anger, and continues to try out new deviations. While unfortunate, Billy’s anger is understandable. Although he is only fourteen, Billy has already experienced his fair share of oppression. His father, a black man, died during the illegal war in Iraq for a country that was more concerned with murdering non-combatants than with his own civil rights. A bank then took away his mother’s home. Billy discovered Insurrectionary Anarchism from some of the other runaways at the C-Squat, and now he comes to my apartment to plan his revenge. The Insurrectionary Anarchists have some good beliefs, the most important being the importance of Direct Action, but they are in general too narrow-minded. They are unable to diagnose the present while anticipating simultaneously both the near-future and far-future. No amount of Direct Action, therefore, will make an Insurrectionary Anarchist into a realistic revolutionary. Mamen says that she “refuses to be bound to a single ideology,” which is quite wonderful, in its naïve childish way. I have been giving Billy Guy Debord to read, and I believe he will soon come around.

The speeches from these feckless activists and community leaders outside the Stonewall Inn echo loudly, though unintelligible, in the courtyard behind my apartment. The Supreme Court overturned the Defense of Marriage Act not four hours ago, and the LGBTI Community believes that it has achieved an important victory. But true freedom exists only outside the system, and these people are fighting their battles within the confines of the heteronormative body politic, which is de jure constructed on exclusion rather than inclusion. The only way to achieve inclusion is through a

complete dismantling of the classist superstructure—that is, a Socialist Revolution. Anyone can see that the DOMA ruling is a false victory meant to lull the LGBTI Community into complacency. Likewise the rising tide of same-sex marriage legalization in the so-called “liberal states.” Billy says that a “suited dick” is delivering the speech that is currently echoing around my courtyard. Surely it is some lawyer from the American Compromising Liberties Union. Echoing and muffling is a good metaphor for what is going on out there (I must remember to include that in my next article in *Kultura*): as a message spreads, the more the superstructure absorbs the message’s value, leaving a remainder of watered-down pseudo-philosophical sloganization, such as is Bogdân Ržič’s pop-culture radicalism. There is no real prescription for how to proceed. Bob Avakian’s *New Synthesis of Communism* provides good examples of nations where gender inequality righted itself practically overnight after a social revolution. This is what we trying to achieve, and have patience for nothing else. I point to the photo of Avakian and me on the bookshelf, to supplement my point. The photo was taken in this very apartment during a planning session for last year’s march on the Court House. The kids are very impressed by this photograph. The march was a failure—though not through any fault of our own.

With a sweep of my arms I bring the room to silence. The food has been cleared away. We sit in a circle. Billy the Kid is already distracted, tracing the tattoo he threatens to etch onto his flawless baby face as proof that no one loves him, but a tug from Mamen, on the sleeve of his German military jacket, rouses his attention. I have already written and printed the pamphlets myself, so the first task is to familiarize everyone with their content. Mamen I do not have to worry about, on this. She watched me compose the pamphlet, which is broken into four sections,

***Echoing and muffling is a good metaphor for what is going on out there: as a message spreads, the more the superstructure absorbs the message’s value, leaving a remainder of watered-down pseudo-philosophical sloganization, such as is Bogdân Ržič’s pop-culture radicalism.*** ”

excluding the one-page introduction, the compendary conclusion (titled: “A Call for an Honest and Immediate Debate”), and the bibliography. The four sections are: I) Real Stakes, Real Reckoning; II) ‘New Thinking’ is the Old Thinking; III) The De-Historicisation of the Maoist and Stalinist Project; IV) Bogdân Ržič’s Social-Chauvinism Vs. Bob Avakian’s *New Synthesis of Communism*. I wrote it in a frenzy the night I heard that Ržič would be speaking. Mamen sat next to me, and we listened to Phil Ochs and drank oolong tea that a longtime Party member brought back from a recent trip to the People’s Republic of China. Mamen had lots of questions, but I could not answer them. I was too busy writing. At some point, she fell asleep. Mamen is very beautiful when she sleeps. She must have been having wonderful dreams that night because she was smiling, delicately. I picked her up and carried her to bed and didn’t join her until I finished writing, at 3:00 a.m. If anyone at the lecture tonight questions Mamen about the pamphlet, I am confident that she will be able to respond intelligently enough. For the others, a review is necessary. As with all insurrectionary actions, it is important to have every detail and movement planned out in advance, and that all participants know their roles.

The lecture starts at 7:30 p.m., but we will arrive at 6:00 p.m. in order to distribute pamphlets to those waiting in line. Ržič has a large following, and lines for his lectures are typical. When the doors open, Sylvia, Aron, and Billy the Kid will station themselves at the three entrances of the auditorium and continue to distribute the pamphlet to anyone who walks past. Meanwhile, myself and Mamen will occupy a row of seats close to the front. I will sit in the aisle seat so that I can get quickly in line for the microphone during the Question and Answer portion of the lecture, where once again I will publically challenge Bogdân Ržič to a debate.

With everyone able to recite the plan back to me—I like to go around in a circle and make each participant say his or her role out loud, even if everyone’s role is the same; repetition is a very effective tool—we march ourselves out of my apartment and into the street. The Authorities have closed the blocks surrounding the Stonewall Inn, including my own, and the streets are packed with thousands of jubilant homosexuals. “What did I tell you?” says Billy the Kid, but I admonish him with a stern look. I try so hard with him.

The media—some of it even national—have turned out, their



heartless satellites protruding like weapons into the sky. Upon their perches they watch the activists speak, while reporters shove microphones into the mouths of the everymen. With my comrades in line behind me, I blaze a trail through the throng. It is vital that we stay on schedule. But suddenly, while attempting to navigate us around a septet of entwined lesbians, Mamen grabs me from behind and spins me to a halt. Billy has cut from the ranks and is pushing his way westward toward the stage. My guess, knowing him, is that his path will terminate at the group of men sharing bottles of champagne. I send Mamen and Sylvia after him, and, frustrating as it may be, waiting on Billy affords me a moment to listen to the speeches. On a small, crowded stage erected in front of the tavern, a woman approximately my same age stands at a tall podium. She speaks into a cluster of microphones of different shapes and sizes.

This is history in the making! she shouts, and the crowd cheers its response. Children who are born today will be born into a world without marriage inequality. And those children who happen to be gay will be allowed to love.

The others on the stage clap and nod their heads. A few wear paper Uncle Sam hats.

But we cannot be complacent! Today, we have achieved a victory in the name of civil rights, but our fight is far from finished! It is our moral imperative to push on. It's been forty-four years since we first stood together on this spot, and we still stand here until every American is permitted the freedoms granted by the Constitution!

But there is no swifter way to bring about inequality in a Capitalist system than to get married, I remind myself. Gender-regardless, marriage, being an institution inseparable from the oppressive state that governs it, creates a hierarchical, capital-determined relationship. Only after marriage is divorced from the state apparatus will its participants be equal partners. No matter how many times I explain this to Mamen, she refuses to understand. It has become an unfortunate point of contention between us. I would think that the amount of time we have wasted with this discussion would obviate its frivolity, but no. "What about love?" she asks me. There will be time for love after the Revolution, I tell her. "But Bob is married!" she shouts, knowing very well that this isn't really pertinent to the broader philosophical argument, and also that I hate it when she

calls Avakian, whom she has yet to meet, "Bob."

The crowd is swelling, and we must get moving. Mamen and Sylvia have difficulty getting forward with so many people hugging. Sylvia calls out to Billy, who was apparently refused champagne. He gives Sylvia the finger, and then, with his hands together and arms extended out in front of him, daggers his way back to the group.

***At this moment, the crowd begins to chant in unison. Edi! Edi! Edi!, they roar. There is no one at the podium now, but still they chant Edi! Edi! and they clap their hands, clap clap clap, in concert.***

Suddenly, there is a huge, ebullient cry—I cover my ears, it is so loud—as an old woman slowly climbs the stairs to the stage, one hand waving, the other clasped, for balance, to the hand of the last speaker. When she stands at the podium, she can barely see over it. The microphones are angled lower for her. The applause has not relented. Next to me, a woman weeps, and instead of wiping her tears away she lets them stream down her face. The old woman on stage lifts her hands to quiet the crowd, but it only makes them cheer louder, and they start chanting her name again. Edi! Edi! The old woman's voice is too meek to rise above the noise. If only everyone would quiet down.

Just then, something pokes me in the shoulder. "Look at that," says Aron, grinning under his tangle of hair. He motions beyond the crowd. It seems that in the moment I looked away from him, Billy the Kid was approached by a news crew.

Billy, with his curls and frail boy's body, is what Ginsberg had in mind when he wrote the words "angel headed," and in his unwashed, too big military coat, affixed with safety pins and punk patches, he is a strange site to behold. Clearly the producer has keyed in on what Mamen calls "viral content potential." The lights are being adjusted. The reporter, a grinning corporate go-getter looking for a way up the "ladder," explains something to Billy.

"Let's go," I tell Aron. Billy alone on TV is not a good idea. If I can get there before the interview starts I can at least give him some talking points about the Cause, if not go on air myself to explain the reality of this spectacle. The old woman, she who has gar-

nered so much adoration from the audience, has begun her speech, but I cannot listen. The cameraman is already counting down from three on his fingers and the reporter is straightening his tie. Two, one, and the red light goes on. The reporter asks his first question: “As a young person, what made you come out today to celebrate?” I reach them right as Billy delivers his response:

“Fuck the Police!”

The cameraman spins the camera away from Billy. The reporter stands flabbergasted. Two NYPD officers, apparently bored with “keeping the peace,” start making their way toward Billy. How many times must I tell Billy that police brutality is a product of the violence inherent in the global capitalist system?

“Fuck the police!” he shouts again. I grab Billy by his dog-collar and pull him toward the subway. It is time to go. Nothing is more important than tonight’s action.

- - -

When I debate Bogdán Ržič, I will hold him accountable for his many hypocrisies. I suspect that Ržič is a skilled debater, as he was educated in a Soviet system, but a debate on a practical application of Communism will not allow him to hide behind his beloved theory, and I will triumph.

With the pamphlets distributed, there is nothing to do now but to wait, and to listen to the lecture. I am sitting on the aisle, as planned, with Mamen on my right, then Sylvia, Aron, and Billy the Kid, and beyond him a group of what appear to be graduate students speaking Polish. The auditorium is filled to capacity, and late-comers are forced either to stand in the back or to sit in the aisles. Everyone here will be witness to my challenge, making it impossible, for Ržič, to back out. The auditorium is not as loud as at the rally, but it is loud, and Ržič walks on stage to ridiculous applause.

The event begins. The Italian post-structuralist Lucio Regio introduces Ržič with what is barely more than a confused sycophantic ramble. Sad to see such a brilliant thinker (or so I once thought) fall so hard for Ržič’s Yugoslav charm. The topic of the lecture is “Post-Hegelian Rationality and the Specters of Catastrophe,” and it is, quite simply, ludicrous. According to Ržič, the rising tide of international social unrest thus far in the twenty-first century actually results from a lack of theoretic substance. In order to rad-

ically transform the violent reality of the post-imperialist capitalist state, he says, these movements must further move toward the void. Absurd. Avakian’s body of work is an unflinching refutation of this idea, even that which was published five years ago. Mamen keeps shushing me when I try to point out the flaws in Ržič’s logic. She says that she wants to listen, and, yes, she must be allowed to come to conclusions on her own. I admit that I, too, am having trouble listening with all the rhetoric swirling around my head.

“We will now open up the floor to questions,” Regio says suddenly, Ržič’s lecture apparently over despite no practicable conclusion being reached. Lines are already forming at the microphones. Mamen prods me in ribs. “Get up there. What are you waiting for?” she says. I’m going, I’m going. I must formulize my demands. I step into the aisle and get into line. There are two microphones, one at each side of the hall, and Regio alternates between them, meaning

***“If you don’t get to speak, you must still challenge him,” Mamen whispers to me from her seat. “Interrupt him if you have to. Make him listen.” I wish she’d shut up.***

that I will be, at best, the seventh questioner.

Grad students ask their ridiculous questions, trying desperately to appear smart in front of the famous philosopher, naming this and that theorist. My demand will be quite jarring in this setting. Perhaps I will catch Ržič off-guard.

“I’m afraid we are running out of time,” says Regio. “We will take three more questions.”

I am next. A professorial-looking man asks a question about Adorno or Habermas in relation to the Palestinian situation, and then it is my turn. I step to the microphone.

Ržič looks right at me. This is what I have come for. I look at Mamen. She smiles, mouths “go! go!” I smile at her. At this moment, in her encouragement, she is very beautiful, and suddenly I want to grab her hand and leave this auditorium. Maybe take her to meet Bob. She will like that. Regio says something I do not hear, an invitation to speak. I look back at Mamen, and, now unsmiling, she points at Ržič. Ržič appears calm, sips the expensive water Colum-

bia has purchased for him. I take a deep breath.

“My name is Peter Bibben, and I am an activist, writer, and an advocate for Bob Avakian’s New Synthesis of Communism. Bogdân Ržič, it is not true, as you allege, that the first wave of Communist-Socialist Revolutions was a failure. It is wrong, it is harmful, and it is unconscionable that you continue to use your stature to try to close the door on the way out of this horror and madness, which is the New Synthesis of Marxist Revolutionary tactics.” When speaking publically, it is important to punctuate one’s statements with forceful hand gestures. I strike the air in front of my chin with five fingers pressed together, like a beak, or a fascia. “Bogdân Ržič, I have challenged you to debate me, in print and in several public forums, about the history and prospects of effective Marxist Revolution. Nothing could be

more important. This concerns the future of humanity. My question to you, Bogdân, is: Why have you refused to debate? Can we decide, right here and now, in front of this audience, a time and place to have this debate?”

Ržič’s confounded silence stimulates the audience to laughter. Sylvia and Billy the Kid stand-up and cheer. Some people are booing, and Billy shakes his fist at them, not realizing that they may actually be booing Ržič, who has been exposed.

Ržič takes another sip of fancy water and looks at his notes, shaken.

“Let’s take another question,” says Regio. “This will be the final one.” Everyone behind me at the microphone goes to sit down. I consider doing the same; they will never stop trying to silence true believers. The student on the other side of the room starts to introduce himself.

“Wait,” says Ržič. “Wait, I want to address this gentleman’s accusation, or question, or whatever it is.”

***Rzic’s confounded silence stimulates the audience to laughter. Sylvia and Billy the Kid stand-up and cheer. Some people are booing, and Billy shakes his fist at them, not realizing that they may actually be booing Rzic, who has been exposed.*** ”

“You don’t have to,” says Regio, and gestures for the student to speak, the dog barking away intruders from his master’s door.

Ržič interrupts again: “Can you repeat what you said earlier?” he says to me.

I take a step back toward the microphone. “My name is Peter Bibben,” I begin again, the microphone popping harshly on the P. “And what I said before, what I said was that I don’t think the first wave of Communist-Socialist revolutions was a failure. Like you say it was. It’s wrong, bad, I think, for you to close the door on the madness and horror and madness, which is the New Synthesis—that is to close the door on the way out of the matter, the way out being Bob’s New Synthesis, Bob Avakian’s. I also said that I have challenged you to debate me about the history and prospects of the Marxist Revolution. And so my question, Mr. Ržič, is why have you refused to have this debate? Can we decide, right now, on a time and place to have this debate?”

Ržič pushes aside the papers in front of him, leans toward the microphone.

“In response to your first question: It all depends on how you think of failure. If you are referring to my essay ‘Overworld: Badiou, the Death Drive and Mao,’ you must remember that I’m quoting excessively from Laclau. What I am saying is that the ultimate result of the Great Leap Forward was a betrayal of its authentic revolutionary inception. The ultra-Capitalism of Beijing indicates to me that there had to have been some weakness present at the onset. Mein gott, I was praising the Cultural Revolution!”

“What about the debate!” Sylvia shouts. “Are you scared?”

“On this point,” Ržič continues, “I don’t think I’m the liar you make me out to be, and I must admit to you that I wasn’t aware of your challenge, and I sincerely apologize.”

“He hadn’t seen my challenges,” I say to Mamen. She frowns. I’m finding it harder and harder to decipher her. I have failed somewhere in my teaching, maybe. She turns away from me.

“You’ve heard my challenge now!” I tell Ržič. “I challenge you to debate me!”

“Pistols at dawn!” yells Billy the Kid.

“Ok, we will. We will. I say this publically here. I commit my-



self. I will be in New York for the rest of the week. If you make the arrangements, I will be there.”

“We will have this debate!”

“Yes. We will. That is what I am telling you: I am committed. Just don’t bring your Lost Boys to interrupt me.”

The audience breaks into laughter and applause again.

“Ah! Ah! Don’t make that gesture,” says a smiling R̥zič, who is making a wild, exaggerated shrugging motion amid the laughter. “I saw you!” he says to me, mimicking whatever he thinks he saw me do, which I did not. “This gesture, which in my Stalinist experience means ‘What will I do when people protest?’” Again, the audience laughs, although I do not get the joke. R̥zič repeats: “I promise. This week.”

Regio brings the lecture to a close. He thanks R̥zič, as well as the audience, and the auditorium quickly clears out.

There is celebration in my camp. The youths high-five and then Billy starts to sprint back and forth across the tops of the rows of empty chairs. Sylvia explains to Aron what happened, as he had fallen asleep. Around us, undergraduate volunteers pick up loose papers left under seats, wadding my pamphlets up into great, big balls.

R̥zič’s assistant, a Romanian grad student, comes over to exchange contact information and to give me a copy of R̥zič’s schedule. Billy trips and falls onto the carpeted aisle.

“You did it,” Mamen says softly. She holds my hand with her two. “You did it, Peter. You must tell Bob. You have to publicize the debate right away. You don’t have much time. Do you have a moderator in mind? Where will you hold it? I can call the libraries first thing in the morning. The universities, too. What’s the matter, Peter? R̥zič’s accepted! You are going to debate! What are you thinking, Peter?”

+



# HEARTSEASE

by Peter Longofono

The chin is civil. Boring hair  
worms through a chuck,  
or doesn’t. Ingrown whiskers  
wrestle. The worth of a weevil  
depends. Inured evil,  
as an enterprise, shills.  
Even the upright magistrate  
curves through a telescope,  
which is his beaten wife. Indoors  
his tight glands, a boy’s hands  
cup an oblong rowanberry or  
bury a row of oblong cups.  
Competing examples bedizen.  
Intestinal fortitude’s rigid  
scrip. Loose schemata on  
the quality of facial expression:  
that it is struck open-handed.

# PHOTOS 3 & 5, FOUND IN AN ALBUM WE DON'T TALK ABOUT

by Ruben Rodriguez

At the end of Grandma Esther's cul-de-sac, summer moon found me coins. Mexican money—round plata imbedded in roots. How do our hands find themselves soiled? Old man bursts through screen door, barking ¿Qué haces? I should have grabbed two handfuls of dirt and run. Instead, Grandma's pursed lips, unsure if mentiroso is tasted in blood.

# TELLING GRANDMA STORIES

by Ruben Rodriguez

In a solid red sweat suit and L.A. Gears, little boy enters dawn. Mounds of mulch scattered. Pick up that rake...Now with the hoe. Disposable in my father's hands, meant to mark: boy holding tools too close to the claw—the majesty of ignorant wealth.

# A TIME OF UNSETTLING

A PHOTO COLLECTION BY CHRISTINE LABBAN

*Christine Labban is a visual artist from Beirut, Lebanon. She received her MA in photography from LUCA School of Arts, Brussels Belgium. She engages photography and digital art with a desire to capture and portray the mundane from her own perspective.*











# NO ONE TO MISS

by Travis Vick

She may remember how the air sounds, late in the morning, once a bird has stopped singing and gone away. She might consider her own stillness—or how the bedroom, in a way, has become empty. Her fingers, gathered together softly, are somewhat in the position of a hand holding a pen, which makes it seem as if she'll soon begin writing, once she can remember what she's forgotten—the color she sees when her eyes are closed, maybe, or her name—certain words.

The view of a path which stretches, like his or her body, out ahead of him—a path with rows of nameless trees on each side; tall trees, which lean toward one another, creating a roof of some sort, or a small night. He loiters at the beginning of the path, with his hands in his pockets. There, he looks down

RIDGEWOOD BY DEREK SAFFE



the path as far as he can, lonely, like someone lost in a hotel hallway. He assumes he knows where the path leads. He can imagine what will be there—at the end—so that, when words return, a small list of what would not have been there may be made: wicker chairs in a garden, a pulling of wind, some laundry-line of outgrown dresses. Nothing to see for himself.

Small moments of feeling nothing beneath her feet; the sensation set in pattern above the sheets. She thinks to herself without words. She notes the clearness of space. Meanwhile, language comes rushing across the well-groomed plane (the constant field; the unnoted silence), chasing her, like a parent. She isn't amazed by her feet continuously finding an object of hardness. There's this ladder that she's got to get down.

[The dancer—wearing a black leotard beneath a black skirt, which plumes outward at the waist—flirts with what's the center of the stage,



while the audience, in the dark, watches. She rolls her shoulders, and then her hips, as she dances in a tightening circle—which, in turn, creates another circle within the circle she’s drawn, a lonelier and smaller place, where she designates her absence. And she watches without sound, or sympathy—as she spins—this enclosing. Lifting her hand, she touches her cheek. Then, for no certain reason, a low wave of applause scatters through the blind.]

“An empty branch,” says a sudden gust of vacuity, “is too unremarkable to be the site of life in the future. How can stillness promote an act of relocation?” And the condom is withdrawn.

She remembers the story she heard as a girl, the one about the woman who took a felling axe from the shed behind the house, late at night, when her husband was sleeping. The story about how the woman walked into the woods beyond her field, wearing her nightgown—the head of the axe, the bit, dragging through the grass behind her and, in doing so, forming a trail. She remembers how she heard the story many times, since the woman lived in a small town—the one where she grew up—and how, in some versions of the story, there would be a light falling of rain. She recalls the way certain tellers of the story would lower their voices as they told her this part: how, come morning, the husband woke and followed the trail of the axe—and, as he went, they said, he could he hear what he thought was thunder. The husband walked into the woods and came upon an unexpected clearing, a circle of recently downed pine trees, where he found his wife sitting in the grass. And it was never raining anymore, now. There was always a clean morning light shining on the woman. She had the axe—the tellers said—and the hem of her nightgown pulled above her crotch. And the husband could only watch—they told her—as his wife, surrounded by the blooming stumps she had made, cut lines into her thigh. And she remembers how the women, as they ended the story, would explain quite plainly the blood dripping on the needles beneath her, unlike the men, who never seemed to mention the color of a low burning fire, or the relief in the quietness.

He stares over at the bedroom door, the embalmed wood, which is locked, although he is alone. He touches his body, now calm, or muted, like another piece of architecture.

[The dancer, who has all this time been moving, takes a moment to be still. Speaking of light, there’s only the single band of

some unseen spotlight. It falls from the ceiling, out of a darkness more complete than the layer spread over the audience, to land in a circle around the body of the dancer. The dancer and the light, like sisters, are taking a long moment to be still. Because of this, someone near the stage can observe the freckle on her shoulder. Someone can observe that it is large, brown, and oddly-shaped, somewhere between the outline of a rowboat and the body of a mattress: a space of disparity which is vast enough to recall, strangely, the feeling of waking late at night without knowing who or where you are, there in the dark, as only someone—the clock, on the far wall, heard but not seen. Then the dancer steps backwards, twice, leaving the light in front of her. Everyone attempts to feel sure she’s still there, just beyond their vision, meaning past the location of the light: off, within the fullness of the dark.]

An empty bedroom can mean different pictures: 1) bedroom unpopulated by a thing that’s alive enough, or conscious enough, to understand the space it occupies is a bedroom; 2) room with no decorations, dresser, or shelves; no books or clothes on the floor, a room without even a bed, which may not be a bedroom; 3) a field without houses, walls, fences, or trees; unlit.

His ( body stretched across the mattress on his back; a freedom of hair on display, the overgrown grass of him: a slight reminiscence, while watching his chest, of some abandoned backyard where she used to lay as a child. Yet there’s no one to call her home, now, when she’s already there. Memory extends and then returns. She watches his penis, as it shrinks, forgetting what she meant to him, only a moment before) or her (on her side by his side, one knee on top of the other; the door now closed. She closes her eyes when he looks at her. It’s a pleasure to let his vision roll down her body and not be surprised. The falls, the rises—her neck and her waist—he navigates the turns of her skin like a man driving home. During the length of her thigh, the wheel is released; the quiet of the night takes over. Between them, there is either nothing to say or the luxury of sharing silence, from body to) body. There’s the feeling of missing someone, with no one to miss.

With the windows open, with a thin cloud set before the sun, the light in the room shines in a soft and ashy hue of yellow. And the feeling within the room, like a small feeling of loneliness, seems to nestle inside the cavity of her chest, where it feels somewhat warm, somewhat fibrous, as if she could unbutton her shirt and begin unbraiding her sternum; as if she could dig hands into her body, past skin and past bone, and put her fingers on the feeling (the light (the room)) and untangle each and every thing.

[When the light finds her again, she is already dancing with all of her body. A good dancer, like the dancer that is here, humiliates the air above a stage. She reveals the emptiness around her. She does this without the sadness of language. And the audience—because the end of the dance, which is coming soon, will mark only the end of itself, and not the end of such things as walking alone through one house or another in the morning, or discussing the weather when there's nothing to discuss, or starting over—the audience is preparing, in silence, to describe what they have seen, along with what they haven't, and just however they can, or like we have.]

+

# SOMEONE SOMEONE SOMEONE

by Oliver Strand

Someone: I don't remember how the yellow rods were positioned.  
Walking shadow. I had to be pulling on the wheels,

one after another. Two points

of lighter color on a black rectangle define the mouth of the curve.  
Two weights: one weight  
breathing, one weight returning

to a pile of dirt on a pile of snow.  
Someone: the curve touches the support at a second location.  
Someone: a brick next to a bed.

The brick is outside? The bed is outside?

# COME TO THE EDGE, THE EDGE

by Linda Harris Dolan

*(a poem to dad)*

i have followed myself to a hotel balcony  
in switzerland and i still can't decide whether  
to take on that new editing project.  
and i can't figure out how to think about memory.  
do you think we were the wood and  
wrought iron bench outside the tackroom  
at the horse show in louisville?  
and i didn't like fig newtons, though  
they were sunday trail rides, leather and pizza.  
wherever i am, my body follows.  
though it's true, neurons form every day and cells  
slough off. the styrofoam planets that fell  
from their pipe cleaners were spaces of amnesia.  
and i was always grappling for you.  
because i could never be sure if i tasted  
the honeysuckle from the lawn, and even the windows  
of your animal hospital had to be re-caulked.  
i can see how my artist boyfriend had arms  
that were pale and thin with charcoal.  
but i forgot for a while the way  
you wanted the hairbrush pressed hard  
from your eyebrows to the base  
of your neck. the oscillating speed at which  
i drove toward you, weighing each second  
against the corners with the cops.  
and i'd still, would still. i'd give you  
each new or sloughing cell  
before i'd hold one back.





*FIELDS BY BRIAN MICHAEL BARBEITO*



# SO THE PRETTY ROOMMATE DIES

by Ben Philippe

It happens. People die and their rent checks bounce.

Not because their mortal records, checking accounts and all, are suddenly stricken from existence the moment the voltage overwhelms their hearts, but because they're generally sloppy with money and that last check was always going to bounce anyway. Not to mention your favorite mug, the one from that college you fell in love with while visiting, but never attended, is currently crusted with foreign tea leaves under the unwashed dishes cluttering the sink—a bright red lower lip imprint at its rim. The same mug you've loudly been looking for whenever your roommate was within earshot. Though none of that actually matters now because, well, Jesus... death. Life ended.

So the check, and the mug, and your favorite bottle of wine—which tastes lighter, looks thinner and waterier than before when you hold it up to the light—none of those things are relevant anymore. Death excuses it all, makes you conscious of the forest and not the trees. Et cetera and whathaveyou.

It's always a loss, this death business. But for your peers, for young people—young people with flawless skin, bright eyes, and even features—a deeper sense of tragedy follows. The-could-have-been of it all. You tell yourself that this self-reflexivity is your version of mourning.

It's in the liver spots she'll never get, in her hair that will stay bright auburn and never dull, and in the breast exams she won't have to learn to keep track of. It's both the trip to France she won't half-plan and quarter-enjoy, and the latest episode of her favorite show now buzzing in your TiVo, that she'll never get caught up on. Small, inconsequential facets of this tragedy that only you will ever know about. It's not loud or bright, no chest will be clutched or candle lit, but you believe this still counts.

The unopened tub of Nutella, a pink “NOT FOR SHARING!!!” Post-It stuck to its side, feels heavier in your hand somehow. That's it, you realize. The difference between what it weighs now and what it weighed when hastily picked up from the corner market shelf a month ago when she last did the groceries; that's the exact weight of this tragedy.

---

If someone's life was to be assessed in the ripples generated by their sudden plucking from the world, you think hers would be a three—three ripples. Important but localized; irreplaceable only to those who already loved her. Family, obviously, and close friends, no more than four or five of those, and then immediate co-workers—those who saw her face every day. And only if she was chatty, made herself known, which you suspect, on account of her chattiness at home.

The roommate, the cohabitant, ought to be next in line for grieving. You were the last person she saw on most days. You knew her smells. Her hair still lingers on your cushions and feels familiar between your fingers. You could mechanically answer intimate questions about grooming habits, eating habits, and toilet habits. Yet for all of this intimacy, the ripples stop dead with you. There is no grief here.

On the phone, her Grieving Mother sobs. There are wet pauses, tangents, mentions of generic traits you find yourself nodding along to without having ever yourself witnessed. She was unafraid as a child and had ridden horses at an early age. Sure. Even when her cousins were too afraid, content with feeding the huge beasts, she herself hadn't been frightened. She was eager to ride on the very first class, and this impressed the teacher. She was just that kind of girl, full of life. "That sounds like her," you say, nodding.

When you feel like it's your turn to drive the conversation, you aim to say something uplifting, something that'll bring her peace, comfort, if only so she remembers you fondly. You share a saying from a grandmother that you invent on the spot. "Death is its own graduation," you say. "You throw your hat in the air and it just keeps floating upward, like a feather going back where it belongs and taking you with it."

She hums across the line, confused but wanting to capture the meaning underneath. You always stumble under pressure. The rest of the thought takes shape in your mind but crumbles in your mouth and all you're left with is the sucking of air between your teeth, which you hope will come off as a sob. "She was so kind," the grieving woman says. "She was," you agree. "We were like sisters."

She lists all the things she has to do for the funeral. She says the state will ship the remains. It's a reverent word. Remains. What does remain now, you wonder, of her even features, striking eyes, and shiny hair? She invites you to the funeral, of course, but it's a long way

to Minnesota and there's no obligation, really. You say you'll check in with work and let her know as soon as you can. You hang up with a "God bless." And why not? He just might.

All in all, you believe you've played your part well in this exchange between Grieving Mother and Unknown Roommate. You didn't mention anything about her daughter's bounced rent check. It would have been cold, and you didn't want her to think her daughter died living with a heartless person. You'll dig into your savings like you would have had to anyway. It's your own way of suppressing the image of your roommate's pulpy viscera spread across the subway tracks, mopped up by weary

city workers in the night. You wish you could cry, that the impulse was even there. You want the ripples, you realize.

- - -

You use two of your Sick Days at work and plan to spend them sleeping, processing. An acquaintance of The Pretty Roommate stops by, waking you in the process. It's already dark outside and, slim as the chances were, you had hoped to sleep right through the afternoon, night, and most of the next day as well. The voice across the intercom is male and rings uncertain, optimis-

“ *You didn't mention anything about her daughter's bounced rent check. It would have been cold, and you didn't want her to think her daughter died living with a heartless person. You'll dig into your savings like you would have had to anyway.* ”



tic, and eager all at once. It's almost offensive; too much for you in your sluggish state. Eight p.m. on Thursday. A date probably. A date she would have met downstairs in the lobby, as was standard pre-mortem practice. You never met her guys.

You knew the ring of their voices only by way of the hushed whispers and late night giggles that came through your closed door. Occasionally, these would accompany the tinkering of dishes, uncorking of beers, one then another, and the low hum of the microwave.

"She's dead," you say. After a beat, the man's voice garbles at the other end of the line, confused by what you believe to be a very simple statement. You picture him downstairs, wearing a stylish pea coat and scarf—generic but elegant in the winter chill. A touch above the occasional plastic parkas and Mets caps that litter your own romantic history. He's travelled by subway—maybe even the fateful R train—but from here they would have taken a cab to the restaurant, and something in her eyes would have glittered at the disposable income in his hail.

"It's Richie. From the site?" the voice insists. The

inflection of his voice makes you want to squash this coiffed, peacoated man from five floors up, spit on his head as he backs away dejected.

***"She's fucking dead. Don't come back here!" you enunciate, louder, clearer. You want to sleep some more, unbothered with putting on displays of false grief. You need your rest. Your roommate is dead—it's a very trying time for you.***

The buzzer whines some more as you walk away, and only with the covers over your head does the noise eventually stop. A man too easily rattled by rejection, you think. You try to fall back asleep, imagining her sounds coming from the kitchen. The weight of her socked

steps or the clacking of her heels, the order in which she went from right-hand pantry, left-hand pantry, fridge, and microwave. Maybe this is your grief, you think. Or maybe it's just the smell of these unfamiliar sheets, playing with your brain.

---

She might have been a smoker, you think the next morning, reading a magazine that does not interest you, still sprawled on this bed that does not smell like you but now belongs to you. Or maybe the man you heard sneak out into the hallway four nights before the incident was the smoker. Maybe it's his ashy scent now clinging to your skin. You think about ashes and look up state crematories. In any case, that box of nicotine patches you'd come across in the medicine cabinet now seems like a cruel joke. 'Smoke up, girlfriend' you want to say to her.

Between the sobbing and the awkwardness, her Grieving Mother had said, "I'd really appreciate if you could maybe box and ship us her things? We don't care about the furniture. But anything you can. Please. We'll mail you a blank check for the expenses." She spoke

in the plural, making it sound as though there was an entire estate out there in Minnesota waiting to go through The Pretty Roommate's trinkets with shaky hands, eager to share anecdotes and imagine the last time this or that outfit was worn in the city. The Grieving Mother's grief had focus to it; you admired that.

You think The Pretty Roommate would have liked her death had she read an article about it, or seen a news segment covering the ditzzy young woman who fell onto the subway track while peering down the tunnel to see if the train was coming, and who, after dusting herself off, embarrassed and presumably distracted by the various substances now staining her coat, had accidentally stepped on that fateful third rail—the one you absolutely must stay clear of as the stories go. Oh, yes. She would have laughed that delightful laugh of hers reading about the improbable death of a girl so airheaded that she managed to do herself in twice: first electrocuted, then pulverized by the oncoming train, which was actually running on time.

Or she might have sighed, solemnly shook her head, and

given you that scrunch face, her Midwestern sensibilities wounded by your callousness. Who knows what her moral line was; she was a roommate, not a friend. And although it had taken you four years in the city to grasp it, you knew the distinction by now.

*Friendships were things built on the progressive breaking of boundaries. Kisses on the cheek, hugs, arms around the shoulders. The borrowing of a stick of gum, then clothes, then lipstick. 'Roommates' however, was a status that defined itself in the exact opposite manner, in the irrigation of limits.*

'Could you not do that?' The Quiet Roommate from two years ago, about turning the radio on while you cooked.

'I'm going to need you to maybe keep that in your room. Allergies,' the Julliard Roommate, here for a year, regarding your fuzzy orange blanket thrown over the couch.

'You should still go sleep in your room. I really don't want to complicate things.' The Boy Roommate, your head on his pillow.

It was geometric cohabitation you realized, nothing more. They rented their room, half of the kitchen cabinets and alternate usage of the bathroom alongside the transversal that was the hallway. A third of the living room also went to them—a third only because most of your furniture was already in place and you didn't

mind sharing your electronics. This was a concession that, two bags at her feet, and one blue milk crate of toiletries in hand, The Pretty Roommate hadn't minded. 'It's a relief actually. My last living room was literally just a mattress in the corner,' she'd said upon moving in. 'Maybe we can have movie nights or something.'

- - -

The Pretty Roommate is also not the name you would have picked for this one.

The 'Fresh-Off-The-Greyhound Roommate' was your first thought, upon meeting her at the corner deli after a few e-mails in response to your Craigslist ad. The Effortfully Beautiful Roommate, maybe. The Girlie Roommate and The Olympic Dater Roommate were also early contenders. These names were

usually signatures that only revealed in due time, as things were ending.

But the world saved you the trouble of having to wait this one out. You stepped out of the shower that one morning, curls wet and legs unshaved as you were already running late for work. You'd found Carlos, the building's super, in your living room, along with an associate whose face you recognized, but whose name you didn't know, both sweating at the neck and speaking animated Spanish. Your couch was pushed into a corner, exposing the screeching thermostat that had been sending bursts of rusty dust into the air for days, which stung your eyes when you walked into the living room. Carlos was trustworthy, friendly even, but also walked around in full awareness of the access the set of keys dangling at his gut granted him.

'Ah, miss! We thought we would get to it today, yeah?'" Carlos had said looking away in an assumed shame that his partner didn't bother mimicking. That it was fine so long as they put the couch back when they were done was all you'd managed to say before withdrawing to your room. From the corner of your eye, you'd seen the man make a face.

'It's not for her. It's the other one, the pretty roommate. This one, I don't even know. She never smiles,'" said Carlos. Like that, ownership of the space you had brought her into had shifted to the more pleasant shape of her face, and the thicker hips she used to rest her hands on. You, the Strong Chin and Weak-Nosed roommate. Her, the Pretty Roommate.

- - -

Away from the sheets, the space smells like any other unkempt bedroom. There is no warmth to the desk chair, no lingering aroma to be romanticized. On the small Swedish-made and floor-assembled desk, is her laptop, which tells you that it hasn't been turned off in sixty-seven days, twenty-two hours, and nine minutes. It was the last thing you had seen her touch in the room, coming back one last time, coat on and scarf tied, dragging thin wet lines of sidewalk snow into the hallway to check alternative routes, her usual train shut down for the weekend for repairs. Her browser opens to its home page, some blog called Things Organized Neatly.

You recognize it, having often glimpsed the passing sight



of her in curlers and sweats, cocooned in front of the bright screen, seemingly mesmerized by the sight of these household items positioned neatly and photographed artfully—occupying the exact space they were meant to and not an inch more.

Something about it must have soothed the disorder—yes, disorder you would say—of her own life. The clear disappointment of having been in the city for months now and not yet fallen in love or met those lifelong friends she was promised on *Sex in the City*. The fact that her roommate was not a partner in crime, but merely a presence, off-putting and judgmental, who stayed in and kept to herself. Every morning and every night, The Pretty Roommate sat at that desk, putting on her coat and scarf. You understand the ritual, having witnessed it enough times through her open door to badly mimic it and browse the pictures for a few minutes, hoping to tap into something, but ultimately failing.

Her email is still open. Twelve unread emails. Somehow, you expected more. You draft a letter, a note really, informing all acquaintances of the passing, creating ripples elsewhere, maybe even a few tidal waves. You believe your two paragraphs to be long enough for a devastated roommate, a friend unsure of the boundaries of propriety. You try to finish on a sincere, if not borrowed note.

The girl I knew found beauty in simple things. She lived unencumbered and unafraid.

One particular piece of correspondence, 11:28 pm the previous night, catches your eye. Subject line: “RIP;” I guess.

What happened? You didn’t have to pretend to be someone else. Coulda just cancelled.

COMPLETE MISUNDERSTANDING you swiftly type, offering seven exclamation points. What comes after is more impulse than logic. The lengthy reply writes itself and after hitting ‘send’, you also change her password, preferring numbers to words. 19852014. A tribute of sorts. It’s easier this way, you believe: just streams of data and numeric interacting in cyberspace.

---



AMES SCALE

Very early on, you had concluded that she was of a more reckless breed than you could like. The type that lived their lives like a performance for an audience that was not there. The one time you had tried to bond over drinks at a bar down the block, she had complained about the atmosphere—low-key by midtown standards, perfect for conversation—and proceeded to get drunker than necessary. Eventually, she’d garnered the interest of two suited men, one table over. One spent the night with



his hand on your knee, and the handsomer one had taken The Pretty Roommate home to his place in Morningside Heights, playing up the fact that he could afford a one bedroom in the city. They had been in their late thirties at least, but she only referred to them as “those boys,” for weeks on end. We should go out again. We had so much fun!

After that night, you lived mathematical, parallel lives, and mostly only interacted when you bumped into each other in the kitchen, or as she would get ready for her dates in the living room, using the floor-length mirror she’d found in the building’s laundry room, but that she had no space for in her own bedroom.

My clothes would look so much better on me if I had your body, she’d once said, pressing and pushing at the sides of her midriff in front of the cracked glass. Like, I see them in magazines, online, on girls in the streets and I think, yes, that right there, that’s my palette. I see it so clearly, y’know. But then when I put them on, it’s all wrong. And it’s not just the size. Even when they fit, they don’t fit, y’know? It’s a concession. These amazing clothes lose something when I put them on. It’s like, fine, I’m an eight tonight, but the dress is a perfect ten, so really, doesn’t that make me a negative? Does that make any sense? She held her hair up with one hand and turned back to you expectantly. You shrugged, said nothing as you returned to

***Eventually, she’d garnered the interest of two suited men, one table over. One spent the night with his hand on your knee, and the handsomer one had taken The Pretty Roommate home to his place in Morningside Heights, playing up the fact that he could afford a one bedroom in the city. They had been in their late thirties at least, but she only referred to them as “those boys,” for weeks on end. We should go out again. We had so much fun!*** ”

your room. In bed, you felt guilty. Why could you not bond with her? Was lack of compatibility really a transgression to be punished?

- - -

Her makeup feels lighter on your face than your own and you’ve taken note of the brand.

You order what you think she would have ordered—a small salad, flavor on the side—hoping it will be enough to remove the processed aftertaste of the Nutella you had while getting ready. He smiles and says something about girls always ordering salads on dates, but doesn’t suggest an acceptable substitute meal before moving on to talking about his work, something on the low-end of the finance spectrum. He isn’t rich, but sees himself getting there.

She liked salad, going by her side of the fridge. Lettuce, kale, greens of any kind: foods she could enjoy without counting. She read labels carefully and you knew which food items belonged to her in the pantry because she kept their packages facing inwards, nutritional factoids then available for her perusal. “That’s three of this,” she would say about your breakfast, holding up a bowl of gruel when you pulled a Pop Tart out of the microwave. But, who knows, maybe that was her being friendly. There was only hindsight now.

“I was worried I had screwed it up before you even saw me!” he laughs. The sleeves of his peacoat, grey, hang off the sides of his chair.

“That’s my roommate,” you say. “She’s a complete freak.”

“But that you were dead though? That’s pretty morbid,” he says.

You repeat yourself, weighing the words. A complete freak.

“I have to admit, I already was pretty nervous about meeting you in the first place,” he continues, throwing a perplexed glance your way that you try your best to smile through. “Not a lot of people do the whole blind date thing these days. A picture doesn’t really show anything, y’know? Why don’t you video chat, by the way?”

You know the answer to this.

You had brought the ironing table to the living room, and was greeted by the spectacle of The Pretty Roommate giggling and flirting with a blurry guy somewhere across the city, a hand

teasingly glued to her laptop's camera, occasionally removing it at lightning speed before he could get a look. Why don't you just have a regular conversation with him? you had asked her, just the once. Oh, I hate that angle, she had said, looking scandalized by the very notion. The camera is right up your nose. It widens the jawline. During that exchange, she talked more slowly and with an audible stupidity, every other syllable inflected upward, ringing.

"I prefer to go by real life chemistry," you smile at him. "I want a real connection."

"Sure."

Your salad arrives shortly after. Your water is topped off, and his has to be completely refilled. You wonder if he gets this thirsty on every first date or if it's talking to you that is so parching.

"Plus, I hate the angle of the camera," you say as the waiter walks off. "It's right up your nose."

He laughs at this, and his shoulders appear to loosen. "I'll raise you one," he says proceeding to tell you the story of a video interview he had in which the Senior Vice Something had a dangling booger in his right nostril throughout the entire conversation. You laugh. You laugh again when a woman accidentally knocks a waiter's tray. When he mimics a coworker. Your face hurts. He doesn't ask any questions about the haircut you said you'd just gotten. Or mention that your nose seems bigger than the picture he saw. It was a good angle, he must tell himself. People put their best foot forward online. Why ruin a good evening by asking too many questions? Maybe he lied about his own picture, you think. It might have belonged to his own roommate, now lying dead in an alley somewhere.

---

You fumble with your keys and then shush him when he chuckles at your nervousness.

"Is your roommate around?" he asks.

"I don't know. Probably," you whisper loudly. "She never goes out."

You kiss against the wall by her bedroom. You haven't slept in yours in days now. You keep your back arched and your knee high, your heel resting on an electrical socket. You think it looks better this way; at this angle he can enjoy how skinny you are. His lips occasionally detach and linger above yours. He doesn't smell the

death, doesn't pull you off in a frown, sensing something wrong.

You turn the doorknob behind you, and back into the dark, like you imagine she does, kicking off her heels one after the other. You feel the dead cells of clipped toenails dig into your feet as you step onto the shaggy pink carpet at the foot of the still unmade bed.

"I'm a mess," you say, excusing the chaos you've made of this room. It smells like you don't even know what. He says he likes your mess. He liked your dress, liked your eyes, liked the neighborhood and liked your living room; of course he likes your untidiness too. He seems to like your neck also. You wonder if you are better than she would have been and then realize the pointlessness of those questions that will never be answered.

I love you, you suddenly want to shout. I love you so much that I hope you never leave. You imagine him impregnating you right then and

there. We'll name him Cedric. You'll hold my hand in the delivery room. Afterwards, I'll take Pilates, do the Kegel work, and two months later, we'll be right back here, all because we love each other so damn much!

The Pretty Roommate might have had issues.

Just like she might have deserved the thrill of saying 'I love you' one more time from beyond the grave as opposed to simply hearing it through the sobs of family and friends she already knew loved her. Her ripples

”

*You come. Ish. There's pleasure somewhere in your middle, by the pancreas, over the intestines.*

would continue if you did that. He'd tell the story for years to come. But you say none of these things, of course. You bite your lip against his and even in the dark you can

tell that he takes it as a compliment. He comes in sputters, repeating her name a few times, filling each syllable with however much intensity he thinks she deserves. To your ears it sounds only like a moderate amount. You come. Ish. There's pleasure somewhere in your middle, by the pancreas, over the intestines.

Afterwards, he caresses your

back, looking at you like a puzzle that's just been solved. "You didn't have to use someone else's picture," he whispers. The lamp has been turned on and there's now dead air to be filled. He gets up and slips on his underwear as he continues. "No really, you're gorgeous, babe." Under the light, you now see pudge amassing in his folds as he brings his foot up to the side of the bed to put on his socks.

"Thanks," you say, wondering what he would do if you told him he had just slept with a dead girl. "You should go." You nod towards the door. "The roommate's a real bitch about overnight guests."

"That's the worst," he says, now buttoning his shirt. "Mine's all right."

"Really?"

"Sure, he's a bartender downtown. We hang out. We could check out his bar," he says and then stops with a frown, catching up to his words. "Well, I'm out of town next weekend."



EVAN ALLAN

"It's okay," you say. "Don't worry about it. I had a good time." You're not a pillow sharer anyway.

"Me too," he smiles. Relief makes people smile.

He kisses your cheek and disappears into the hallway, breaking into a mischievous grin when he turns back and finds you wide eyed with a finger at your lips in a way that says quieter still, my roommate is fucking insane, remember. He closes the door behind him and you lean back into your dirty sheets, stare at the ceiling, and listen to him tiptoe down the hallway, shoes in hand.

You hear the bathroom door open, the toilet lid rise, a weak, though steady stream followed by a toilet flush. The water runs, but there's no interruption or weight under it, nothing rinsed. Eventually the front door closes, and this man that death had stood up has slipped out into the night with unwashed hands. You can't sleep after that. There's a filled condom in the garbage can a few feet away from you that needs immediate clearing. What this room smells like, you finally understand, isn't her or you or sex or Nutella. It's dirty, the exact fragrance of the thing. The sheets are rank, stained all over, and damp to the touch. You'll wash them and they'll get rank again, of course.

You brew some tea, enough for two, with half probably going to waste. You start look for boxes and packing tape. You quickly decide on what to send and what to keep. Anything that could belong to any girl anywhere but still holds an air of individuality, of essence, send. Your jewelry box and most of its content. A few teddy bears. A bathrobe. You strip your former room bare and close the door. Your next ad will say that you're looking for someone adjusted, open. Not just a roommate, but a friend. A girl who will playfully rap at your door after nights like these and plop herself on your bed, asking for all the details. That will be a nice change.

+



# SILENTLY GATHERING FORCE

BY TRINIDAD ESCOBAR



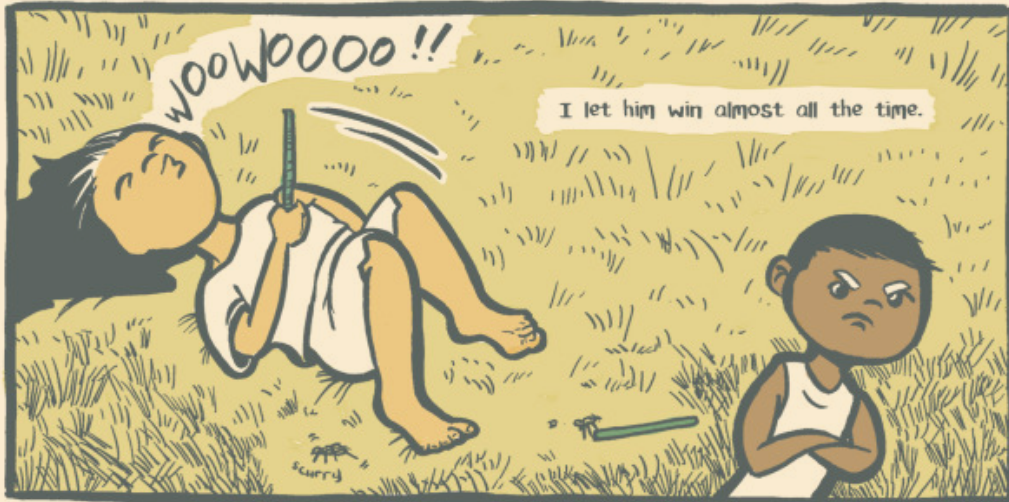
I once read that Newton and Einstein could only describe gravity, but they could not explain it. Theorists now have different working explanations. One is that gravity is not a force at all but an illusion. It's the phenomenon we experience due to an unobservable force in another universe. I used to daydream about this with a child's imagination. A person pokes her finger against a wall or sheet, and I see the sheet lift on my end.



A gross oversimplification, but still. I think these alternate universes exist.

I think there exists an alternate reality where I was never adopted. I wasn't forced to leave my country. In fact, I rarely left my own village.

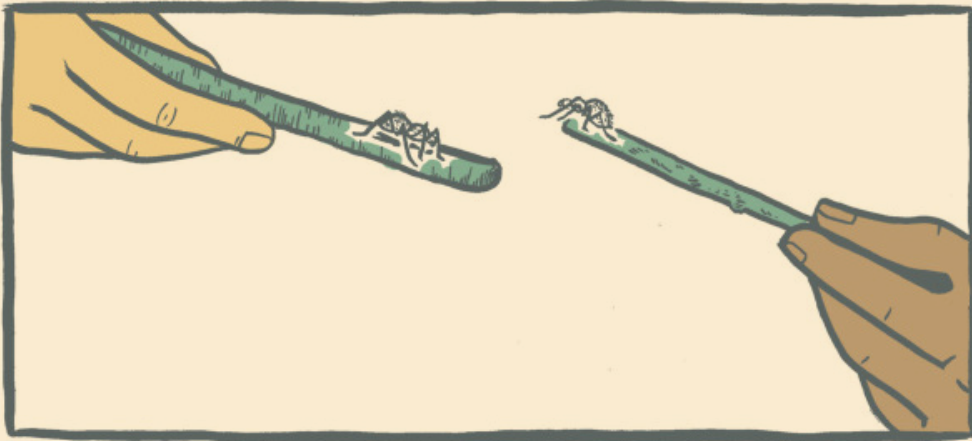
In that reality, I let my brother pick all the games we played.



I was able to be a big sister to my little brother instead of being the youngest in my family.



I was told by my older siblings that we never fought.







And if a fight almost happened, then it was stopped quickly.



We only had each other.



Our eldest sisters taught the rest of us how to keep safe because as poor people we knew all too well how fragile life was.



My family is of the water. We are water people.

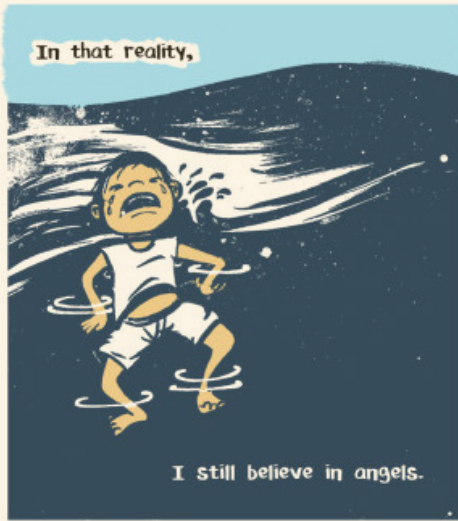
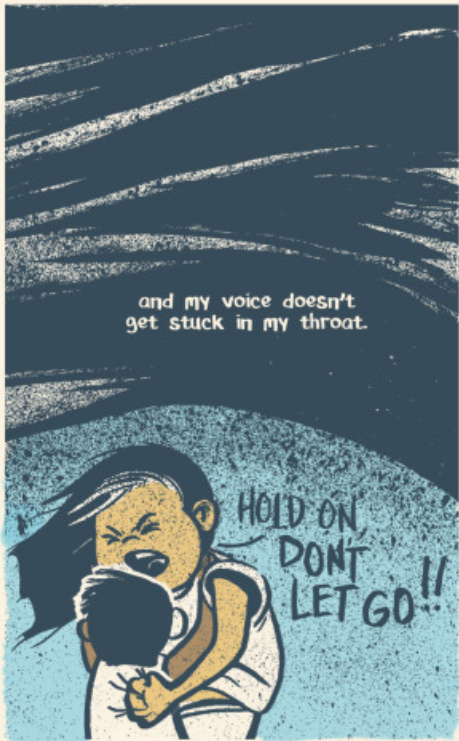


In that reality, we all know how to swim.



In that reality, I don't freeze up when I am in danger.

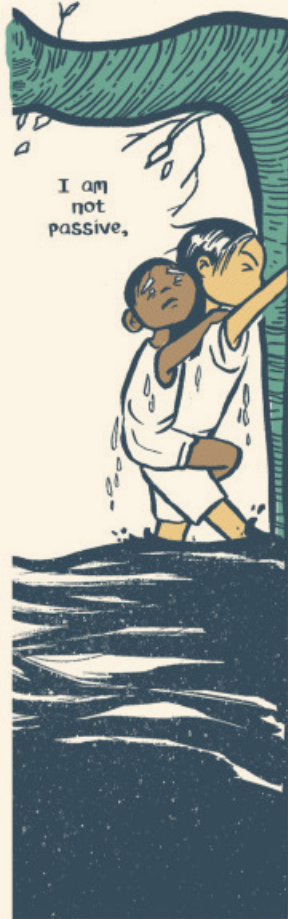








...that I can survive.



I am not passive.



but a storm of a girl  
silently gathering force.



but I can sense her standing tall,



doing what I could never do  
when I was being hurt  
by a member of my new family

in my new country



This version of me--  
she's right next door.  
In a land I cannot see.



in my reality.

END.

# ENEMY

by Sean F. Munro

in a dream you are broken into, house violated and burglarized  
by the apparition of him. you lay and write a letter into a blank  
book. she and her mother wear rouge paper robes.  
their teacher iman mersal. they can never contact. all they have  
is their good book with the catalog info, author bio, advanced praise.  
there are 33 blank pages inside the hard cover. I've stolen her book.  
I write to her in it. the dog was beat to death when I got here.  
your mother had a black eye. you call me while I write. I hear  
in your voice that you know I'm placing ink in your book. but  
it's not your book. you are not her. you begin to imply accusation,  
the best offense against the liar. the man stands in the doorway.  
he killed the dog. he black-eyed your mother. there are more  
terrible things than this book thrown somewhere  
in this ransacked house. the man does nothing. I realize the woman  
on the phone was here to read the words I placed in that book.  
she killed the dog and punched out the mother. she needed to know.  
and took what she wanted. the man hands me a phone number.  
on a yellow sheet of paper. he'd found it in the street. my car  
had been burglarized. they'd taken nothing again. I keep nothing.  
but now I watch for them and wake up in the night and look.

# THRALLDOM

by Sean F. Munro

brain braid. of purple flower. she to the wickerwork. of fern.  
pine bark. hello you deaths. so brain beat. trusted lavender.  
to throb. she with sweat. her hours with chins. haircuts.  
triangle mouth out. peninsula and her one finger. on the leaf.  
ear to the ground. other in the sky. fill with rain water.  
with mud. the other. her own body. amplified. can't she know  
the bottle emptied. cap in her hand. her ears still on  
both sides of her body. a fault. where to. deadbeat  
wishing and stiff-eyed. swamplily. you foamflower.  
the whole run of flesh. with hair and nails. that flowerpot.  
stuck between the two fingers in her ears.  
some every. thing. made with her hands.



# PHAETHON, A DIGGLE OF A FRAGMENT

by Mac Wellman



PHAETHON, a diggle of a fragment

PHAETHON ~ or the Flashlight as an apparatus~  
A CHORUS of Five of These~ an appa. An Appa-  
ratus consisting of five of these....

~

## CHORUS.

For what ... (to say?) [ F. Blass, *Dissertatio de Phaethontis Euripideae Claromantanis* (Kiel 1885); J. Diggle, *Euripides: Phaethon* (Cambridge. 1970), supplemented in *AC* 65 (1996), 189-99; reviews of Diggle by H. Lloyd-Jones, *CR* 21 (1971), 341—5 (= *Academic Papers: Greek Epic, Lyric and Tragedy* [Oxford 1990], 452-7) and R. Kannicht, *Gnomon*, 44 (1972, 1-12; C. Collard in *SPF* I.195-238; Diggle, *trGFS* 150-60 (vv. 1-7, 45-126, 158-76, 214-88; H. van Looy in ed. *Bude VIII.3.225-67*.

Wilamowitz, *Kleine Schriften* 1.110-47 (=Hermes 18 [1883], 396-434), and *Sappho und Simonides* (Berlin 1913), 38-9; H. Weil, *REG* 2 (1889). 323-8; A. Lesky, *Wiener Studien* 50 (1932), 1-25 (= *Gesammelte Schriften* 111-30); Webster 220-32; K. Reckford, *Tapa* 103 (1972, 405-32; L. Burelli in L. Braccisi (ed.), *I tragici Greci e l'Occidente* (Bologna, 1979), 131-9; Aelion (1983), I.303-11; A. Barigazzi, *Prometheus* 15 (1990), 97-110; Gantz 31-4; LIMC VI.i.69-70 'Klymene II', and VII.i.350-4 'Phaethon I'; A. Debiasi, *Anemos* 2 (2001), 285-319; Matthiessen 268-70.

Phaethon was destroyed when he lost control of his father Helios the sun god's fiery chariot; Zeus blasted him from the sky with lightning to save the world from incineration.

(whispered) Diggle....

~

For what ... (to say?)

Who was ... (my) son [says Merops

... knowing ...

So that ... [Says Merops

... small ...

... better ... [says Merops

... who ... you (or your) ...

~

... Cooling trees will receive (Phaethon with loving arms ... {1

Unplaced Fragment  
782 (fr. G. Diggle)

• Most probably a reference to Phaethon's burial place, the trees being the poplars into which his half-sisters the daughters of Helios were transformed. (See in introduction (E.)).

~

Helios meets Phaethon.

-Phae [T] on....

Helios trips Phaethon.

-Phae [T] on!

Phaethon falls stupidly to the ground.

-Phae [T] on!

Nothing happens for a time. Nothing. Happens for. A. Time.

The text has been. Lost.

People. People we think. People sit around doing nothing. Times passes. Time passes slowly as Time does not to be watched.

To be watched.

They do the Dance of Not Knowing What to Do. Do this for a time. For a time until they realize they do not, er, they do not know what they are doing.

~

Flashlight

As an apparatus...

Mamihlapinatapai [ a moment in our lives when we are rendered speechless];

This is repeated several times.

~

Five GIRLS with flashlights appears—these are the horses of the sun's chariot:

Helios knocks over Phaethon;

Phaethon knocks over Clymene;

Clymene knocks over Merops;

Merops knocks over Helios;

Helios knocks over the suns'-- !

[All lights go out--!]

[All lights come on--!]

Zeus is not pleased -- fickle they name is Zeus.

~

\*\* 783 (fr. Diggle = 778 N) in the apparatus.

Merops.

The crowd with its felicitations unsettled

(me) 1. Footnote

- Plutarch says that Clymene feared being hurt by reminders of her dead son's youthful actions ('training schools') may pick up a now lost earlier reference to his also practicing chariot-driving. The densely hard cornel wood was also favored for spear shafts and arrows.

... and arrows ...

~

The crowd with its felicitation unsettled me.

[Me]

I hate ... the handy cornel bow – and good riddance for ever to training schools.

The first stasimon is lost; two fragments are all that remains of the second episode:

(After a now missing choral ode, a report of Phaethon disastrous ride is brought to Clymene (probably by some of her slave women) by his tutor.

Handing the reins to Phaethon the Sun says:

Drive neither entering the heaven above Libya—for because it has no admixture of wet it will let your wheels fall;

Steer and hold a course for the 7 Pleiades.

When he heard that much, the boy seized the reins; he struck flanks of the chariot's winged horse and set them going, and the mares flew to heaven's folds. Behind him his father mounted Sirius and rode advising the boy, 'Drive over there! Turn the chariot this way, this way'.

\*786 (fr. 3 Diggle)

CLYMENE.

... and my dear (son's) body rots away unwashed in a ravine.1

1. Clymene so far has been told only of Phaethon's death from Zeus' thunderbolt, not that his body still smolders (this comes in the next episode, 214-5). Plutarch uses the fragment to illustrate the



custom of leaving those killed by lightning where they fell, without benefit of washing or funeral of any kind.

They do the Dance of Leaving the Dead Those killed by Lightning Where They Fell Without benefit of of of Cleansing of any kind.

[The rest of the second episode, all of the second choral ode, and the start of the third episode are missing, then:

(178-213 Fr. 779a)

Clymene is almost certainly one of the speakers:

By/ in (your) eagerness

Unlucky (plural) or you (singular) are  
Unlucky

Wealth

Track

I shall say everything

earth's darkness

For/to the city

in absolute rule

free

rich

city

law

I thank you

Wise (or clever fem)

matters

helpless (or impossible)

scheme (or lack of hair)

In troubles

In darkness

in/with what kind of funeral

through the city

memorial (or relic)

corpses

fortunes

must be attempted

[Flashlight go out; go on. All of the appa.

appa

Apparatus is/as/ is as before:

All look at one another, do the: Mamihlapinatapai

{whispers: a moment in our lives when we are

Speechless

+

# CONTRIBUTORS

**BRIAN MICHAEL BARBEITO**, a resident of Ontario, Canada, is a writer and landscape photographer. Recent work appears at Fiction International and The Tishman Review.

**NICK CHRASIL** is from Minneapolis, MN. He is currently studying journalism and history at Louisiana State University.

**LINDA HARRIS DOLAN** is a poet and editor. She holds an M.A. in English & American Literature from NYU, and an M.F.A in Poetry from NYU, where she was a Starworks Creative Writing Fellow. She's taught writing at The King's College and NYU. Linda's work appears in The Grief Diaries, Roanoke Review, and Blood and Thunder: Musings on the Art of Medicine, and she's a 2016 Best of the Net nominee. Her work combines poetry with photography, interview, and received speech as she seeks to portray histories of medicine and the sick body amongst daily life.

**DARCY ELDRIDGE** studied English at Purdue. She currently lives in New Orleans, Louisiana where she works as a photo developer.

**EVAN PAUL ENGLISH** received his BFA from University of Arizona, and earned his MFA from Pratt Institute in 2016. He has recently had a solo exhibition at NAPOLEON Gallery in Philadelphia, showcased work at The Boiler | Pierogi in Brooklyn, and presented his MFA thesis exhibition at Pratt Institute. He is a Stutzman Foundation Vermont Studio Center Graduate Fellowship Winner and current artist-in-residence at Surel's Place in Boise, Idaho.

**TRINIDAD ESCOBAR** is a poet, cartoonist, and educator from the Bay Area, California. Her work has been featured in various publications such as Rust & Moth, The Walrus, Red Wheelbarrow, Solo Cafe, Mythium, Tayo, Maganda Magazine, the anthologies Walang Hiya, Over the Line, Kuwento, and more. Trinidad has been a guest artist and speaker at the San Jose Museum of Art, Pilipino Komix Expo, LitQuake, and The Cartoon Art Museum in San Francisco. Her graphic memoir *Crushed* will be published in 2017 by Rosarium Publishing. Trinidad teaches Comics & Race at California College of the Arts in Oakland, California.

**THOMAS GILLASPY** is a northern California photographer with an interest in urban minimalism. His photography has been featured in numerous magazines including the literary journals: Compose, DMQ Review and Citron Review.

**JULIENNE GREY'S** writing has appeared in The New York Times, Joyland Magazine, Slice Magazine, SmokeLong Quarterly, and theEEL, among others. She attended the 2014 Tin House Writer's Workshop after receiving the 2013 Slice Literary Writer's Conference Scholarship. Follow her on Twitter @JulienneGrey.

**KAYLA KRUT** is a fellow at the Helen Zell Writers' Program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her work has recently appeared in minor literature[s], Contemporary Verse 2, and American Chordata, and is forthcoming in the Berkeley Poetry Review.

**CHRISTINE LABBAN** is a visual artist from Beirut, Lebanon. She received her MA in photography from LUCA School of Arts, Brussels Belgium. She engages photography and digital art with a desire to capture and portray the mundane from her own perspective.

**JESSICA LASER'S** work has appeared in journals such as Boston Review, The Iowa Review, jubilat, Lana Turner and in two chapbooks, Assumed Knowledge and the Knowledge Assumed from Experience (The Catenary Press, 2015) and He That Feareth Every Grass Must Not Piss in a Meadow (paradigm press, 2016). A Brooklyn resident, she teaches writing at Parsons and poetry at SUNY Purchase.

**PETER LONGOFONO'S** poems have appeared in H\_NGM\_N, fields, Luna Luna Magazine, and Tenderloin, among others. He serves as the Reviews Editor at Coldfront and makes music with Big Figment and TH!CK. His chapbook, CHORDS, was published in March 2016 by the Operating System. He lives in Brooklyn.

**ANTHONY MADRID's** poems have appeared in Best American Poetry 2013, Boston Review, Fence, Harvard Review, Lana Turner, LIT, and Poetry. His first book is called I AM YOUR SLAVE NOW DO WHAT I SAY (Canarium Books, 2012), and his second book is called TRY NEVER (Canarium Books, 2017).

**GRAYSON MORLEY** is an MFA candidate in fiction at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. A graduate of Bard College, he is originally from Canandaigua, New York. He is currently at work on an absurdist novel about UPS efficiency tracking software.

**SEAN F. MUNRO** lives, writes, and teaches in New Orleans. Other recent poems appear or are forthcoming in The Offending Adam, ILK journal, and Spork.

**BEN PHILIPPE** is a New York-based writer whose Culture coverage can be read on Thrillist, Esquire, BuzzFeed, Vox, and others. He is also an MFA graduate of the Michener Center for Writers.

**RUBEN RODRIGUEZ** is an MFA student at the University of New Mexico where he studies poetry. He is the fiction editor of The Great American Lit Mag and author of the chapbook We Do What We Want (Orange Monkey Publishing, 2015). His poetry has been published by Passages North, Beecher's, Superstition Review, Potomac Review, Bayou Magazine and others.

**BRIAN RUSS** is a photographer, musician, writer and teacher, living in Brooklyn for the past 11 years. He has played music in over 80 different venues in New York City, exhibited photos in several galleries over the years here and continues to teach middle children how to discover and pursue their inner passions. He lives in Sunset Park with his wife, Lauren, and their 2 year old son, Simon.



**DEREK SAFFE** is an Argentine photographer. Raised in Miami, he moved to NYC as punishment for growing up in a tropical paradise. He takes his sartorial cues from his grandmother and his eye for images from his mother.

**JAMES SCALE** lives and works in New York City's oldest house. His art and poetry has appeared in *The Birds We Piled Loosely*, *Sinker Cypress Review*, *Go Places*, and *Cadenza Magazine*, and is forthcoming in *Yes Poetry*. He graduated with an MFA from Washington University in St. Louis.

**OLIVER STRAND** is an M.F.A. candidate at Brown University. His furniture and wooden spoons have been exhibited at the New Hampshire Furniture Masters' Gallery, Soloway Gallery and HENRY. His poems have appeared in *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Synecdoche* and *Anomalous*.

**DANIEL TOVROV** has an MFA from Columbia, and is the recipient of a 2015 Pushcart Prize.

**TRAVIS VICK'S** work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Booth*, *H\_NGM\_N*, *The Mid-American Review*, *PANK*, *Parcel*, *Waxwing*, *Wordriot*, and others. He is from Texas.

**MAC WELLMAN** has received numerous honors, including NEA, Guggenheim, and Foundation of Contemporary Arts fellowships. In 2003 he received his third Obie, for lifetime Achievement. His novel *Linda Perdido* won the 2011 FC2 Catherine Doctorow Prize for Innovative Fiction. He is Distinguished Professor of Play Writing at Brooklyn College.

**ALLY YOUNG** is an MFA fellow in poetry at Syracuse University. She is a graduate of Kenyon College where she worked as a reader for the *Kenyon Review*. She is the recipient of the Academy of American Poets Prize as well as the John Crowe Ransom Prize for Poetry at Kenyon College. Her work has been published in *The Fairytale Review* and *Borderlands: The Texas Poetry Review*. Her first chapbook, "The West and Other Mistakes" will be released this fall from Dancing Girl Press.

