

SIN FRONTERAS



Volume XII, Number 1,
January 2002

SIN FRONTERAS

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Volume XII, Number 1, January 2002

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NON FICTION

One

Soffia Silva Rangel

I stare at the glowing stars in my ceiling. I can still make out some constellations my sister and I put up, but that was a long time ago, and the stars don't shine as brightly as they used to. I see Cancer, but only because I know it is right above me. I see Scorpio and Cassiopeia but I never lost track of those either. The rest have faded, or perhaps my sight has grown weaker.

It has been three years now since we moved to this house. At times it seems like an eternity, too much time has gone by. But most of the time, it seems like we moved in yesterday. Today is one of those days when I realize I'm a junior, only one more year of high school to go, and how did this happen if it was only a few days ago that I was pasting these stars in my room's ceiling with my sister? Has it really been five years since I learned to play guitar, and how come I still go to my locker and spin my 7th grade combination? How did it come about that it has now been six years that our dog Kino was stolen and we haven't had a pet ever since?

I still dream of my old house. I'm not quite sure if I've ever had a dream about this current one, but I'm surprised that whenever I dream of home I dream of my house back on Tiburón street. After all, I did spend thirteen years of my life there. In a life-time scale, three years are nothing, really. I'm not supposed to be worrying about time because I'm young. I should be enjoying myself instead, like I did when I was four or five, even up to when I was eleven. Afterwards, it is basically

impossible not to look back and wish to go back for a moment. Most of the time I do enjoy myself, though. A year from now I'll want to go back to this very moment, I'll wish I were writing an essay which always turned out to be therapeutic; I'll want to be at basketball practice, or at Dr. Hogan's lectures, or at the cafeteria with my friends. But moons line up for a nostalgic mood today. Lately, I believe they've been playing rough on me and they've been lining up quite frequently. I shouldn't be worrying, and junior year is not supposed to give you time enough to dwell on this kind of thoughts. I guess one will always find time if you schedule it mentally.

One love, one life, when its one need in the night, One love, you get to share it, leaves you baby, if you don't care for it...

- Bono (U2)

I picture myself at my funeral. I'd never done this until my high school principal urged us to do so. How optimistic. But in fact, it is. So I do so now: I picture myself. A few incidents I truly regret and wish they'd never happen; I wish my mother had never found a note in my pants' pocket back in 6th grade with filthy sexual language written on it (my handwriting, obviously, and one of my friend's); I wish my father had never caught me smoking at the roof top while writing in my journal; I also very fervently wish I hadn't left the door open for my dog to wander off one school morning. But at my funeral now I'm probably 80 or so, and smoking and crude language seem like a joke. After all, I don't have that many regrets and I have lived a good life. The problem with this exercise, is I don't know what things are still to come that perhaps I will regret; what things I'll want to go back

to, because I haven't even yet lived them. This uncertainty does not in any way persuade me to attend my funeral early, though. I must say I am in a way, a contributor to that high percentage of people who are afraid of death, but it's not my own death I'm scared of.

I am not one who dwells on the past and is fiercely attached to it, never wanting to let go. In fact, most of the times I am the exact opposite. I started recording my dreams only to search for signs of my future, luckily I've found some clues. I want to go forward, I have expectations of myself, and of my life.

It's this "one life," blueprint that troubles me. What I do, will be forever. What I don't, will never be. At night I go out on the balcony and pretend to look only at the moon. Really, I try to look further into the darkness, see what lies ahead. But only darkness stares back. There is no way of going past it until you've reached it and then it's not so dark. "The future will come when it comes."

So what else is left for me to do but search my past? If I could go back to any of my life's episodes, I'd go back to a night at the beach in Sayulita when I was about six. My family and uncles and cousins sat in a circle and sang a popular song from the camps organized by our church, "*Hay mil millones de estrellas, en esta noche que ahora negra ves, en el desierto un oasis te*

espera, aunque sólo arena veas..." I say, I'd go back to that moment and I'd live it now understanding the significance it would have the rest of my life. But I'm wrong there. Because not knowing it then, was exactly what made it significant after all. I lived a day at a time, and at that moment I was only singing a good song with fifteen people around me. Nothing more. I wish I could do that now: live, and think when I want about what I want to. But that is not what is expected of people my age anymore. Of course, it is one life only (that we know about), but how many different worlds, do we travel through in a lifetime? Nothing is ever the same. It's God's best gift to us and I thank Him every day for that, even though He will not cut a hole in his sky at night to let me peer in at the next day, or the next twenty years.

We cut as we go and anticipate as much as we can. I realize this is one of my moments, one that will never repeat. One moment, one year, one life. The math of life. I shouldn't let it slip right through my fingers. And if it does, I hope it leaves marks as if I had dipped my hands into buckets of colorful paint that create the imprint of a perfectly designed master plan. The plan and the colors of my life that had always been there for me behind God's nightly sky. Some day he will cut a hole for me to see.



Photo: Sofia Silva

NON FICTION

Second Thoughts

Martha Anguiano Ramos

I could have never imagined, not even last year when my brother was a senior, that he would soon graduate, and move on with his own life. He left his native country in search for a better education. Now, he's living alone in his own dorm, and finally has control over his own life. He worked hard all during high school to get what he wanted; a scholarship in one of the top-ranked universities in North America. He managed to get out of our house, and live his own life with no parents around to tell him to clean his room up or brush his teeth or to go pick me up at the club.

It's hard for the whole family to get used to being without him. It must also be really hard for him, for he has to start all over from scratch. For the first time he has to do his own laundry, iron his clothes, keep his little room clean; it's like if he had his own little house, where he has to do everything in order for it to be clean and not a complete disaster. It's not exactly a house, though, I mean it's just a tiny four-by-four dorm room, in which only an individual bed, an extremely small closet and a miniature desk fit inside. It must feel strange to move from a real-size house to a little room which seems to get claustrophobic at times.

It's really hard for me to say this, but I actually *do* miss him. Two months before he left, when we were still driving to school together and when he still lived here, I would constantly be upset, because he acted as if he didn't need me; as if he was not going to miss me. He backed away from me, in a way in which I couldn't understand. He felt superior, and looked at me with disappointing eyes and gestures. He would call me names, and whenever I asked for a

favor he would simply not help me, and he would answer with a smile, "You figure it out, I'm busy right now! Besides you have to grow up, and do things by yourself!"

I would ask him for a ride to my swim training and he would not take me, because he would try to always leave at about 3:30 p.m., when he knew that at that time, I just couldn't be ready. He knew that I didn't have the time to be at the club from 3:30 to 8:30. He could be there at about any

hour, and instead of waiting for me to leave at 5:30, when I could, he would always leave at the hours

which didn't accommodate my schedule. He started avoiding me, and this made me uncomfortable, but still I didn't want him to leave; his actions only made me feel worse.

By the end of last year, in my A.P. Composition class, we were asked to write an essay about the techniques we used in order to be stress-free. I wrote mine making it sound like if it was a real experience; as a personal essay. I wrote something about myself wanting to be like my brother. I said that he was my role model and even though he was applying to all these universities, he was always calm and stress-free. I compared him to myself, but in an exaggerated manner. I said that I was the biggest procrastinator and that I was always stressed out. I invented some techniques that I supposedly learned from my brother. It was a well-written essay and funny in a way because I knew that what I had written was not even close to reality.

Well, Dr. Hogan, my teacher, decided to read the essay that I had written, to his A.P. Literature class, in which my brother was in. I practically praised my

Vasta una nube para averiguar la verdad

- *Joaquín Pasos*

brother in that essay and it was embarrassing when I found out that Dr. Hogan had read it out loud. The essay was a farce, but my brother believed every single word that I had written, and he felt ashamed of himself, and he got watery eyes after my essay was over.

My essay made him realize that he had been treating me poorly, and after that day he suddenly changed his attitude towards me; he was more understanding and started helping me with my homework and everything else. I never mentioned to him that I had had so much fun writing that essay, since none of it was true. I just met him believe that I *did* admire him.

After the emotional feeling of my essay had passed, he again started treating me terribly, so I started acting mean towards him, just like he had been mean to me. I remember counting the days that he had left in Guadalajara. I was excited, for I was finally going to have my own car. When he had two days left here, I was so eager to drive alone that I took the

keys away from him and I placed them on my own Disney keychain. I didn't let him drive the truck anymore. Now that I think about it, I should have let him drive for those last days, for in the States he was not going to drive anymore. I *should have* thought of this before, instead of acting so selfish. I know that he misses our truck, and misses his daily driving. I know this because when I stop driving for about a week, I start missing that daily routine. It must be hard for him, not to be able to depend on a car, when he was so used to having one.

Two weeks before he left, I desperately wanted him out of the house. I thought that when he left, it was going to be really "cool" for me to stay at home as an

only child. All my parents' attention was going to be directed towards me, and they would give me whatever I wanted. I was going to get spoiled, being the only teen at home. Not that I like being spoiled, but meaning that I was going to get more "love" from my parents. That was something stupid to think about, for the love of my parents was obviously not going to increase when my brother left. It was an absurd idea now that I think about it.

I felt that he was usurping my own territory. I felt as if he didn't belong in my house anymore. I tried to block my fear of losing him by wishing him to leave as soon as possible. Besides, I also felt an incredible

amount of jealousy, because I felt like if *everyone* all of a sudden adored and admired my brother in such a way that I just couldn't handle. People instead of saying "hi" to me, would ask me how my brother was, how he felt about leaving, if he was nervous, what was he going to take with him and personal things, that it was obvious that I

didn't know; questions that only *he* knew the answers to.

It was absurd that people would ask me all of these questions. Weren't they capable of giving him a call and ask him themselves? These kind of details were the ones that got me in a bad mood, and people only cared to ask about him, rather than saying just a simple "hello" to me, before asking me whatever they wanted to ask about my brother. This provoked a certain kind of anger that I couldn't bear. I wanted him to leave so that people would stop bothering me.

I didn't even see him during his last days here in Mexico. He was always busy going to farewell parties. He was never at



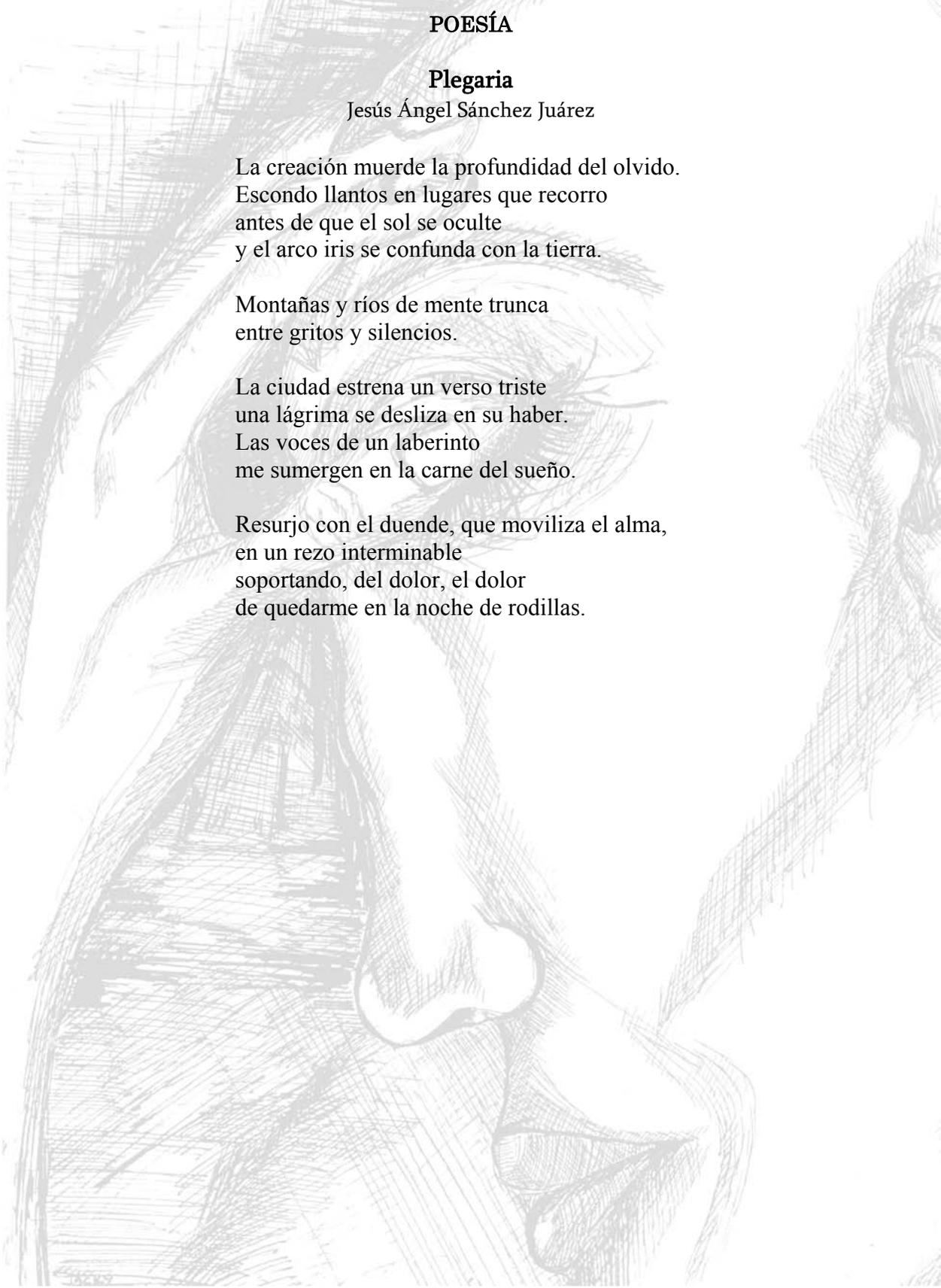
Photo: Luis H. Carbonell

home, but still it felt like if he were there. I missed the first week of school because we all went to take him to his college. During that week, everything completely changed, for all of a sudden we were together night and day, the whole twenty-four hours. The four of us treated each other marvelously, for it was probably our last trip together, with us as teenagers. Besides, we all felt weird, because on the way back home, there were only going to be three of us, instead of four. My parents and I felt as if we were being abandoned by a family member.

We first traveled to Washington and went to the White House, the Capitol and some museums. Then, we drove to Lexington, Virginia, where the University is. We helped my brother move in to his dorm, and that took us only a day. It was time to say "good-bye," that same "good-bye" that we had all been avoiding for the past months. It was time *now*, and my parents said "good-bye" to him first, and there I was standing, just staring at him, not knowing what to do, for it was *my* turn. I said good-bye to him and hugged him and kissed him on his right cheek. "I had been trying to hug you all week, and this was the only time that you let me hug you. Take care," he said

sadly. I just turned around and left, I felt like if my tongue had been cut, and words just didn't come out of my mouth. My eyes were completely dry, and I didn't cry at all.

It all seems to be real now. I just can't keep on pretending that he's on vacation and that he will show up in a couple of days. *Reality* seems to be slapping me on the face, it has hit me hard, but only two weeks after his departure. My eyes are not dry like when I said good-bye to him, they're red and swollen, for I can't keep on hiding from the naked truth, the bare reality, from another phase of my life. I feel a deep hole inside myself, the hole which my brother filled when he was around. I feel alone, desolate, I haven't been acting like myself lately, for I barely sleep. I keep thinking of all the things that I could have done to make things better with my brother before he left, but it's worthless now, for he is gone already. I didn't appreciate him when he was around. And now that he's gone, I finally realize after seventeen years of constant arguments, that after all, I *do* need him, for he's the one that completes that empty space inside me. I never thought that living without him would be so hard until today.



POESÍA

Plegaria

Jesús Ángel Sánchez Juárez

La creación muerde la profundidad del olvido.
Escondo llantos en lugares que recorro
antes de que el sol se oculte
y el arco iris se confunda con la tierra.

Montañas y ríos de mente trunca
entre gritos y silencios.

La ciudad estrena un verso triste
una lágrima se desliza en su haber.
Las voces de un laberinto
me sumergen en la carne del sueño.

Resurjo con el duende, que moviliza el alma,
en un rezo interminable
soportando, del dolor, el dolor
de quedarme en la noche de rodillas.

FICTION

Disturbing

Carlos Ochoa

The door will not open. I am not allowed to move past the threshold that stands before me. It waits for me. It knows I will dance for it. A kind of favor. In return the door will open. Click. Slide. Open.

I dance Juan Gabriel-style, as though I had an inconceivably small and invisible guitar and was trying to play it while dancing with small steps on one square yard of floor with my eyes closed and with an expression of ecstasy on my face. My purpose: To disturb anyone who happens to look at me behind the door. A lot of people do. They look at me and shake their heads, or stare at me in disgust. The desire to disturb people attacks me out on the streets, and when I am in mental solitude, secluded from the rest of the world, under the sun.

I step out into the scorching sun. Inclemently frigid air spills out behind me. I wait one step away from the door, barely allowing people to move past me. I turn left sharply without moving from where I stand.

When everyone quits looking at me and begin to mind their own business again I start to walk. It is one o'clock in the afternoon, but it's also a daylight savings day, like the rest of the summer days, so it is actually noon. The sun floats exactly above me, above everyone. There are no shadows to hide under for we are deprived of shadows, unable to hide from the sun's wrath. I keep walking.

I walk in people's way, almost stepping into them. I walk staring straight at their eyes with a blank face. This is excessively perturbing to people as well. I force them into stepping out of my way and keep on walking in a straight curveless path. I know that whoever has had to step out of My Way stays there and stares coldly and angrily at the back of my head which stares

back impassively. This, I am pleased to see, disturbs people as well.

When I get to the corner I have deranged one, two, three persons. I sharply turn left and they can no longer be disturbed by the back part of my head.

I walk for another block and turn right directly into an empty street. I walk straight for three blocks disturbing no one but the street itself. Consequently, the telephone poles — both concrete and wooden— parked cars, and trees suffer as well.

I am bound to the clocker's house. That is what I call him, clocker. Clock. Er. He is a clock and watch mender. I want to see if my watch can be fixed by him, that clocker.

As I walk down the empty street — not as a Pretty Woman, but as a Young Man— I wonder if at University you can get a clocker degree. Like a Doctor's degree. I wonder if instead of a Dr., a Mr., Mrs., or Ms., you get to be a Clk. So and So.

When I see the clocker's house I stop. I stop walking; I stop breathing; wondering. I stop living. A car rushes by forcing me to regain consciousness and resume my living, breathing. I begin to walk again. But I never resume my wondering, I don't want to, I am almost there.

I walk into the clocker's house without ever ringing the bell. His door is open. I do not have to dance for it.

The outside world is shut outside the open doors and I do not have to dance for it any more. Beyond the door frame that marks the threshold to this time bubble, lies tranquility. Above the couch staring disturbingly at me is the clocker. I look up, straight into the clocker's ghostly eyes, see past him, through him.

I hand him my watch without pronouncing a word. He examines it closely, and I cannot take my eyes off of him. It is as though he were an apparition.

Clk. I don't know what his name is raises a left bushy eyebrow in astonishment. I know he saw the date. My watch that is to be mended enunciates almost tauntingly that today is the 37th of an unspecified month. The clocker knows what to do.

He turns to me and his eyes tell me I have to come back in a couple of hours for my watch. So I leave.

I walk out. I ignore the Sun. I sit under it, not feeling its weight, but its vast extension. I do not wonder why its radiant heat reaches me, or any other person on earth, I do not think. My mind has stopped working.

I wait for a couple of hours sitting out on the sidewalk. I do nothing but wait. My whole mission in life is to wait for my watch. My philosophy in life has changed, on this 37th of An Unspecified Month.

The sidewalk is burning, I wait in solitude for a couple of hours on an empty street, sitting on a burning sidewalk. I regret the fact that I carry no eggs with me.

Tranquility lies on a couch staring disturbingly at the back of my head, drowning my efforts to stare back. It stares at me. Me and not you, or the clocker inside, or the mail man, or anyone else who might walk by. Or limp or drag by.

Only when my watchless wrist says that a couple of hours have gone by do I quit waiting and resume my life once more. I stand up and walk back inside.

Tranquility is still inside, lying on a couch. But now an elderly lady sits on it, she waits for the clocker. Apparently, her clock is no longer working the way it used to thirty years ago. She claims —as though it was of importance— that this is the first time the clock has ever failed its primary task. She shrieks about it.

She is disturbing Tranquility by failing to notice it at all, by attempting to break it, like silence breaks. Tranquility is now blind, but able to see in a couple of hours, when the old lady is up and around, her clock mended.

By then I will no longer be here. I shall be on my aimless way back home. I will be missed by a perturbing Tranquility in the Clocker's house.



Photo: Isabella Echeverry

NON FICTION

How To Be A Daddy's Girl

Julianna Capetillo

Many underestimate the benefits of being a true Daddy's Girl. Of course, as with anything in life, there is no free lunch. It is a precise skill. Although I personally wouldn't go as far as calling it an art form, it takes countless years of observation, dedication and hard work. Through the process of becoming a Daddy's Girl one acquires the mental clarity of a thoughtful and convincing debater, the talent of an Academy Award winning actress, the skills of a five-star chef, the mechanical expertise of an Indy 500 mechanic and the power to obtain anything your heart desires, with nothing but a slight tilt of the head, a heart melting gaze and the proper pronunciation of the magical word, please.

As I said before though, there is no free lunch. Still, the power that enables you to be a true Daddy's Girl is at the tip of your fingers. Learning to use that power to your benefit is the difficult part, though. It's like having a full set of scuba gear and not knowing how to scuba dive. If you learn, then a new magical world can be opened up to you; if you don't, then the gear will simply get old and rusty in a corner.

The following are a general set of rules to go by if you are interested in reaping the benefits of being a true Daddy's Girl.

Rule Number one: Always call Daddy, "Daddy." It reminds him that you are his little girl and he is needed. It boosts his ego, and softens him up. After all, we must not forget, even though he is a Daddy, he is still, a man just like any other. And, as we all know, the quickest way to a man's heart is through his ego, for example, "Daddy, will you help me carry my backpack?"

Rule number two: Always choose Daddy. Much like small children, adults enjoy having a gang follow them around. In

this case you alone will be the gang, yet will serve the same purpose. For example, when returning from a dinner out where both parents drove to in separate cars, always choose to ride back with Daddy. This is always a good opportunity to get Daddy alone and ask for a special favor or in any case he will let you drive home and practice your driving.

Rule number three: Learn the tricks of the trade. See every one of Daddy's phone discussions and heated arguments with clients, as a precious and golden opportunity. You can learn the way he thinks and analyzes situations by the way he argues. Pay close attention to deliberation techniques and even body gestures. Later when the time comes for you to debate something on your own behalf with Daddy, he will see himself in you. He will be left with little choice but to consent to your plea, after all, how can someone argue with themselves? "But Daddy, you said trust is everything right? Well I have never done anything to lose your trust, so then why can't I go to the club? Don't you trust me?"

Rule number four: Become an excellent chef. Once again we are reminded of the fact that Daddy is merely a man and the second way to a man's heart is through his stomach. For example, "Daddy, I saw we had some extra nuts, and I thought you would enjoy some cookies after work so I made you a batch. They are still warm if you want some."

Rule number five: Put up a fight, in all of life's battles but never be too proud to call Daddy into the ring and help you finish them off.

Don't forget that Daddy wants to see himself in his children. If you run crying to Daddy at even the slightest hint of a problem he is likely to think you are weak and can't

handle anything on your own. This is definitely not the image you want to send out. Instead, try and work things out on your own, and if stuff gets too ugly, tell Daddy about it and let him know how hard you have tried and tell him that you just need some help. Once again we are giving that ego a big pat on the back and, sooner than you can say please, Daddy will have everything worked out.

For example, “Daddy, I have this teacher in school and no matter how much I write he still gives me poor grades. I have tried everything you always tell me to do, I have talked to him about it, I have written even more, I have even baked him his favorite cookies and the grades still don’t improve. I don’t know what else to do! Do you think you could talk to him about it and ask him what I’m doing wrong?”

Rule number six: Know your rivals. Your biggest rival is your mother. Chances are, she herself was a Daddy’s Girl and knows exactly what you’re up to. Even though the two of you may have a good relationship, you are still involved in a fierce competition for the attention of one man. The easiest way to keep her out of the way is keeping her happy. If she complains to Daddy about you, your life will suddenly become very difficult. Even if it means making the extra effort to smile real big in the morning when you see her, do it, its worth it. For example, “Good morning Mom! How did you sleep? You look so young and rested this morning!”

Rule number seven: Listen!!! Always listen and pay attention to little conversations. Even the ones that seem pointless.

For example, conversations about a car’s cylinders. This in no way will ever affect your life right? WRONG! When the time comes to debate about which car you are going to get, having a well-founded knowledge will come in very handy. By having paid attention and learned about cars through all those “pointless” conversations, you now can point out the fact the Jetta, while it may be more expensive than the Ford, has four cylinders and will burn less gas and thus save money in the end if he lets you borrow it for the night.

Rule Number eight. Love. The above rules can get any aspiring Daddy’s Girl quite far, yet she must never forget to love or else they will all amount to nothing. In order to be a true Daddy’s Girl, you must truly love him, after all they say, the first true love of a girl is her father.

Little things are what work best to show him that you do love him. When he walks in the door give him a hug and a kiss, or when he falls asleep on the couch, put a blanket over him and tell him you love him even if he can’t hear you, or just hold his hand when you are crossing the street together. Being a Daddy’s Girl isn’t all about getting what you want; it’s also about the special relationship that only a Daddy and his little girl can have.

PROSA POÉTICA

Él

Mariana García

- Aquí voy. -

Todos me miran con atención. Es todo un reto. Aprender a volar. Mis alas son un poco pequeñas, pero todos dicen que puedo. Brinco del trampolín hacia el fuego azul. Mis alas comienzan a moverse solas. Voy hacia el fuego, pero no importa porque él viene hacia mí. Da un salto de pantera y me toma en sus brazos. Caemos sobre una nube de piedra.

Preferimos no hablar. No podemos arriesgarnos a que alguien o algo escuche lo que le quiero decir, Su mirada lo dice todo: "dímelo en un beso".

Tropiezo con su brazo y caigo hacia el agua. Él brinca conmigo. Olvido el uso que tienen mis alas y me comienzo a hundir. Se destrozan mis alas y pierdo el conocimiento.

Despierto nuevamente en sus brazos. Estamos atorados dentro de mi corazón. Veo la luna brillar con intensidad.

Verde, rojo, azul... son los colores que veo en sus ojos. Me toma por la cintura y me abraza. Siento el latir de mi corazón acelerarse.

Sobre la rama contemplamos el sol y las estrellas. Flotamos en el aire. Sin hablar nos comunicamos. Sus besos y caricias dicen "te amo". Muero feliz.

Lloro en mi soledad. Entro en un agujero sin fin. Él pierde contacto conmigo. Veo las nubes rodeadas de negro. Claro como el cristal se ve el aire.

Siento dolor y veo mi corazón caer al fuego eterno. Dejo de sentir mi cuerpo. Cierro mis ojos y pienso en él. Sus ojos, su boca, su pelo, su cuerpo... Comienzo a llorar de nuevo. "Regresa". Siento que trata de comunicarse conmigo. Llego al punto de nunca. Pierdo todo. Más que nada, lo pierdo a él. Él quedó atrapado en el fondo de mi vida.

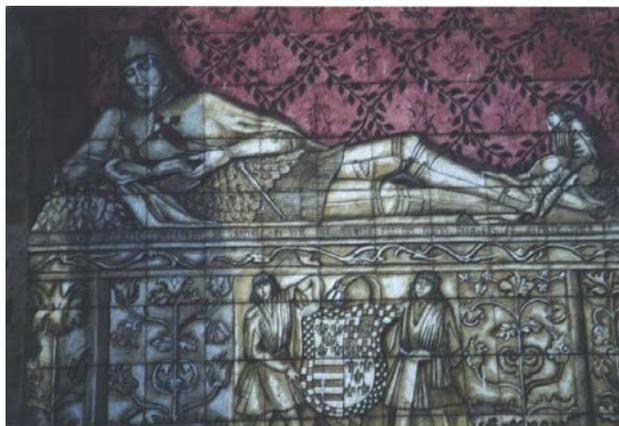


Photo: Martha Anguiano

NON FICTION

The Last Night

Alejandra Ruiz

That dreadful day is finally about to arrive. One more day and I will leave all my friends, my brother, my dad. It's the third time my parents have done this to me. They had promised me we would stay here for at least three more years. I love my school, my friends, my house. I love everything here. Why do we have to go?

I know my mom wants to be with her family, but why doesn't she think about who I want to be with? I want to be with my friends, with my dad, with my brother. Laredo is a small, boring town with not many things to do, I

know; but I have always managed to keep myself occupied. Why don't they do that too? My dad hates this town as much as my mom does. He'll probably spend more of his time with us in Guadalajara, to get out from what he calls the "dull, boring town" we've lived in for five years now. Anyway, my dad's job is here, so why move? He and my brother still have to take care of the office, it's absurd to move. He'll be having to go back and forth between the two cities and will get tired of it after a while. All I can think about is how much I don't want to move!

I can feel my face getting red, my voice starting to crack and that knot in my throat that won't go away. My eyes are about to burst. Finally, I feel tears running down my face; unstoppable tears that run all the way down, until they wet the soft sheets I'm lying on. My room is pitch dark. I can't sleep. I want to stay awake my last night here. I wish all my friends were here spending this last night with me, but they're not.

I decided to stand up and wash my face. I hadn't noticed the air conditioner was turned on so high. I feel somewhat chilly as I get up, and try to move as fast as I can. I open my bathroom door and get in. I'm surprised I haven't bumped into anything. It's actually very dark. I turn on the light, but in a moment I realize that's a mistake; now I can see myself in the mirror. I feel pity towards me as I see my reflection. My face is all red and swollen, you can barely see my eyes. Tears start running down my cheeks again. Now I'm crying louder. I don't want to cry anymore, I don't

want to be heard.

Everything is silent. All I can hear is my sobbing. I'm sitting on my bathroom floor with my face on my knees. Today seems to be the worst day of my life. Why wouldn't it be? I'm leaving everything I love behind. This is all my parents' fault. Why do I trust them anyway? It's not the first time they promised me to stay in one place. I hate moving and hate making friends and then leaving them. I shouldn't make any more friends. I don't want to disappoint them when I leave. I can't trust my parents to stay anywhere for any length of time: so there's my solution, I'll just won't make anymore friends and won't get attached to anything anymore.

Thinking about this makes me stop crying. I'm not sad anymore. I'm angry now, angry at my parents. I get up and look at myself in the mirror again. This time I look closely at myself. I seem so unhappy, I could almost bet I had never smiled before. I have dark rings under my eyes which make me look even worse, and my face seems to

*The mystery of life is not a problem to be solved,
it is a reality to be experienced.*

- Van Der Leeuw

swollen up more with each tear that I let out. It's such an ugly picture that I finally decide to wash it. It won't make my face look prettier, but at least I won't have that teary taste over it anymore. I turn off the light and start walking towards my bed. Damn it! I had to bump into my desk and hit my little toe! I sit on my chair waiting for the pain to lessen. I can feel some papers lying around on my desk. I wonder what they're about? I feel chilly again, so I grab the papers and hop all the way to my bed. I get in the covers, make myself comfortable and turn on the lamp next to my bed. Now I remember what these papers are about. Most of them are envelopes with cards inside from all my friends. They asked me not to open them until I get to Guadalajara. The curiosity is killing me, but I promised I would contain myself. I stare at the envelopes and lift them up facing the lamp trying to see what's written inside. Nah, I should leave them alone; I don't want to start crying again. I turn off the lamp, lie down, and close my eyes, it looks like I'm not staying awake after all.

* * *

As I finally was getting some sleep, I heard the rattling of some keys trying to open the front door. I'm afraid for a minute, but then remember my brother had gone out. My brother and I didn't use to get along, but now we're closer than ever. It really hurts me to leave him. I'm going to miss him so much.

He manages to get in the house and I hear him enter his bedroom. I want to talk to him, but don't dare to go to his room. Even though we have become quite close, it's not easy for me to tell him everything I feel. Sometimes we do talk about how we feel, but it's not very often. He would probably think it was weird if I went to his room in the middle of the night only to talk. I never do that! Besides, all he probably wants to do is get some rest.

I hear him open his door and think he's going to the kitchen to get some water. It surprises me to see him open my door. He walks in and asks if I'm asleep. I tell him how I can't sleep and how sad and angry I feel. He sits next to me and hugs me. I can feel that menacing knot coming back to my throat. The next thing I know, we're both crying. He stops first, he's not much of a crier, only lets out a tear or two. He tells me everything is going to be okay and I believe him.

We both go into the kitchen and I get something to eat. So much crying had made me hungry. As I prepare myself a sandwich, my brother tells me about his day. It's like any other ordinary night. I prepare him some "chocomilk" and enjoy spending my last night with him. As I eat, he stares at me and tells me how much he will miss me. It's the first time I've seen him opening himself to me. We had talked often before, but it had all been superficial talk. Tonight it's different. He's showing me how much he loves me and has actually cried already. I had never seen him cry before. He's twelve years older than me, so it has always been hard to carry out a conversation, but tonight it's like we're both the same age. It's so easy to talk to each other. I stare at him too and tell him how much I'm also going to miss him. I finish eating my sandwich and neither of us says a word. We walk to our rooms and say good night. I feel really tired by now. I kiss him on the cheek and walk into my room.

I take a look at those envelopes again, but decided to leave them where they are. I feel like it's all useless. All that anger and sadness comes back again. I hide under the covers. I'm crying so loudly, I don't notice my dad standing next to my bed. He's staring at me with compassion and love in his eyes. I've always felt safe by his side, but lately this hadn't been so. I've been really mad at him and my mom, and had pushed them both away. I felt that I couldn't trust him anymore. Having this feeling

toward him made me feel unsafe. I had no one to protect me.

I really missed feeling safe by his side. Having him here next to me now makes me feel better. He sits by my side and kisses me on the forehead; it's like we're talking without saying a word. I stop weeping and hug him. He hugs me back and tucks me into bed like when I was a little girl. I try not to be angry at him or at my mom anymore. I know they're not trying to hurt me, but it's hard for me to realize that right now.

I close my eyes and feel my dad still sitting next to me. He's playing with my hair and telling me everything will be all right. I feel safe now, even though I'm still mad at him. How could I not be? I'm having such a

tough time accepting I'm leaving everything I love behind, and it's all because of some stupid decision he and my mom made. But it still feels good to have him by my side.

I hear the screech my bedroom door does whenever it's opened and look at my brother and my mom coming in. It's funny that we're all together in my room at this time of the night. It's nearly about three

in the morning. They sit on my bed too and stare at me like my dad had a few minutes ago; they do it with love and compassion in their eyes. I feel really tired by now, but I also feel safe. Now I can sleep. So, I close my eyes and fall asleep with that picture of the four of us sitting together, lovingly, at night in my room. This is a picture I will not forget any time soon.



Photo: Sofia Silva

PROSA POÉTICA

Un día a la vez

Cyané Quijano

¡Un día a la vez no sirve! Aunque lo es.
Un día a la vez va matando un día, cada vez
que vives vas muriendo. Un día perdido es
la eternidad.

Un día a la vez roba un suspiro (el
aburrimiento que angustia a las piernas de
tanto caminar). La eternidad sin vida es un
día vivido.

Un día a la vez fluye como el agua y
como ella miente ser paz. No sólo se mira la
estela del mar en su reflejo, sino el mar se
mira en ella, se enfurece, provocando olas,
quienes revuelcan sueños y los dividen en un
día a la vez.

La esperanza de la vida se estanca en
un día, que si no fuera día, sería sol sin
madrugada; lluvia sin caer. Un día se
acumula en otro día, las memorias se borran
en un día: los recuerdos; las lágrimas que
perdidas no fueran gotas, sino lagunas, en las

que fango encontrarías si en ellas buscaras
un día más por vivir.

Un día a la vez es un sueño, un sueño
que sueñas soñar y de tanto que sueñas ya no
hay día, sólo hay oscuridad.

Un día trae otro día y ese mismo
traerá un millón más, “cuida los pesos y los
millones se cuidarán” ellos dicen.

¿Acaso no pesan su peso? Pues este
– un día – es más que un millón de pesos y
aunque el día no fuera día y fuera eternidad,
no habría otro día en el cual soñar soñar.

Un día no discute, no deja ni pensar.
No deja que las enredaderas enreden en
paredes de cristal. No deja al búho cuidar la
noche, que de tanto cuidarla merece
descansar.

Un día es solo un día y
la eternidad es uno más.



Photo: Hector Silva

FICTION

9,000 seconds

Ana Sofia Carbonell

It's almost three o'clock in the morning and I just woke up, I think it's because I find something strangely appealing about the hours between 2:00 and 4:30 am, and my subconscious knows it. I'm thinking about calling him, just to see if he is also awake, trying to grasp one last connection between us.

It's crazy, I'm thinking, just as long as you're around, then here I'll be dancing on the ground, double on the right side, ooh ooh or upside down, to each other we'll be facing... you know I mean to tell all the things I've been thinking deep inside... It's Dave Mathews Band playing.

The rest of the song doesn't have much to do with my situation but it's the kind of song that gets me writing and thinking and also remembering. I think I probably won't call him tonight. I can't tell him anything yet, as a matter of fact I don't think I'm ever going to tell him. He'll always have the benefit (or the curse) of the doubt. Instead I'll write, and remember, and soon forget.

Right now all I can remember is that one moment. Somehow I played the dual role of the observer and the one living it. I can see myself pointing towards the crowd I

just said good-bye to; without even looking at them. At the same time I feel exactly what I felt that moment. What I can't seem to remember is what I was saying, but it doesn't matter, the words aren't important, not this time.

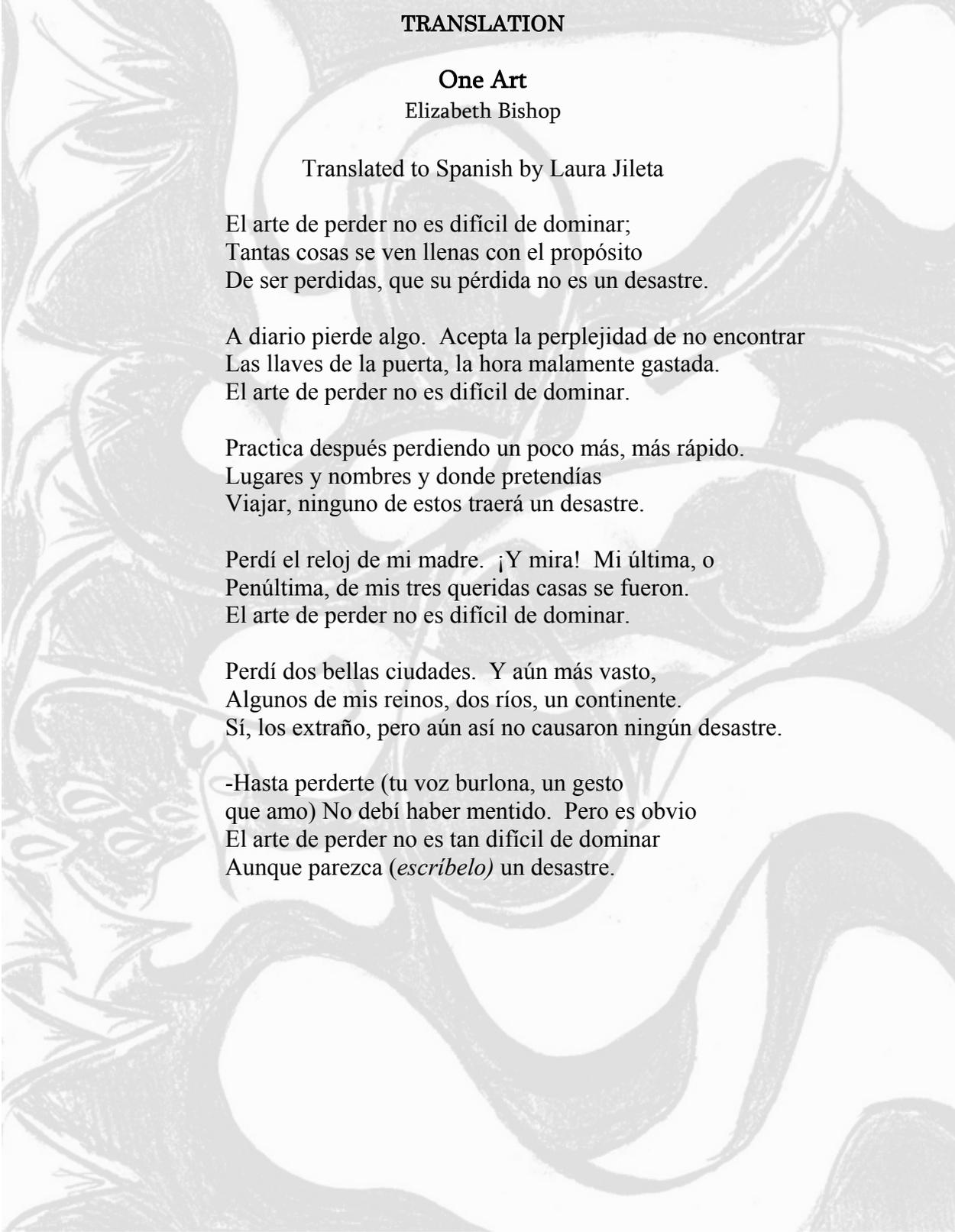
I'm getting the urge to call, again. The phone is resting mute beside me and I'm hoping it will ring first. It won't, so I pick it up and I punch the number. I do that sometimes, I dial the first seven digits and then hang up before the eighth. It's about whether or not I'll have the guts to press that last number.

- *F. Scott Fitzgerald*

Between 2:00 and 4:30 a.m. there is a certain privacy, it's as if the world stops for you. So during those nights I write rarely about this, but it may become an inevitable thing.

I want that three o'clockish conversation, but I'd also like an answer. Maybe then the urge will stop, and I'll be able to write about the enigma behind those 9,000 seconds.

It's three-thirty now, and I pick the phone one last time, I dial the eighth number, I let it ring three times... No answer tonight.



TRANSLATION

One Art

Elizabeth Bishop

Translated to Spanish by Laura Jileta

El arte de perder no es difícil de dominar;
Tantas cosas se ven llenas con el propósito
De ser perdidas, que su pérdida no es un desastre.

A diario pierde algo. Acepta la perplejidad de no encontrar
Las llaves de la puerta, la hora malamente gastada.
El arte de perder no es difícil de dominar.

Practica después perdiendo un poco más, más rápido.
Lugares y nombres y donde pretendías
Viajar, ninguno de estos traerá un desastre.

Perdí el reloj de mi madre. ¡Y mira! Mi última, o
Penúltima, de mis tres queridas casas se fueron.
El arte de perder no es difícil de dominar.

Perdí dos bellas ciudades. Y aún más vasto,
Algunos de mis reinos, dos ríos, un continente.
Sí, los extraño, pero aún así no causaron ningún desastre.

-Hasta perderte (tu voz burlona, un gesto
que amo) No debí haber mentido. Pero es obvio
El arte de perder no es tan difícil de dominar
Aunque parezca (*escribelo*) un desastre.

NON FICTION

Ashes

Lauren Nichols

I stood on the grass, crushing the delicate blades under my shoes into the dirt. I stared unblinking at the recently shoveled mound of pebbles and dirt that now covered my grandfather's ashes. My dark sweater made my chilly arms itch and, rather than scratch, I folded them and pulled my arms up against my chest seeking comfort. It seemed impossible that the box they had just buried held the remains of the person I had called my grandfather; it seemed impossible that I would never see his face again or touch his silky hands with their prominent blue veins. I looked over at my sister whose posture resembled that of mine, her cheeks tear-stained and her eyes swollen. My dad's face was painful to see, he bit his upper lip in silence. I turned away.

The last few days had been filled with somber silence. There had been no laughter or talking to fill up the empty space in my grandparent's house. My parents and aunt had gone through all my grandfather's belongings, pulling out his aged pictures from his time as a soldier in World War II and his old letters with yellow stains around the edges. My grandfather seemed so young in the pictures, too inexperienced to face the horrors of a war. Confident, shoulders back, in his dark green military uniform, proud to go off to serve his country. He looked so healthy and energetic in the torn and faded black and white pictures. There was a glint in his eyes that I had never been able to see, that had not been present when he had returned from the war, as if all the life had been sucked out of his skin, leaving it empty and wrinkled. I had sat with my older cousin and my sister in the basement on Grandpa's old smoking easy chair listing everything we could

remember that he had liked. All I could remember were things that he had disliked; people interrupting him when he was working, laughter or talking that was loud, asking him to do anything or move anywhere. I could remember him losing patience during Easter and Christmas celebrations, walking away from everyone and seeking a place where he could have peace and quiet. It brought back the painful memories that I would have preferred to have stayed lost in my mind but I was too scared to tell them to stop.

My father had always told me I was grandpa's favorite; I was the only one he had ever let sit on his lap and hug. The one he would bounce on his knees and flash one of his rare smiles at. I always nodded when my dad told me this but could never remember any of those moments. I would often peek in at him in his small closet-sized smoking room where he sat in his easy chair smoking the cigarettes that killed him and working on his eternal crossword puzzles. I vividly remember my grandfather mumbling his annoyance when I asked him a question about a wooden boat with its white-washed sails inside the glass bottle that sat on his desk and his order for me to leave him alone, shooing me out with a tired hand. I remember him giving my sister, Sarah, an old turtle piggy bank with a multi-colored shell and a craning neck and telling her to save all her money in it and to give to it her own grandchild. Eager to have a treasure of my own, I had asked him if I could have something to pass on to my own grandchildren but he had gotten upset and my grandmother had shooed me out of the room.

*I only regret... the possibilities
I didn't embrace*

- *Henry James*

“When you’re older. Grandpa’s tired now.”

I hadn’t asked him for anything ever again.

The last time I had visited him in the hospital he had thin green tubes in his nostrils and others leading into the delicate skin on the back of his wrists. He had reached out his hand but I had been afraid to touch him, afraid that if I did he would crumble into ash. I was afraid of his breathing that came only in painful rasps and the coughing spasms that shook his frail body. He had gotten upset when a young nurse in white uniform had jokingly asked what he had been like when he was young. In his fading grumpy voice he had told her to leave him

alone; he just wanted to sleep and was tired of being asked stupid questions. That was the last time I had heard his voice. I had been amazed how he had closed his eyes and immediately fallen asleep, his raspy breathing growing slower and heavier. We had watched in silence as his skinny chest, deteriorated from the cancer, slowly rose and fell, holding our breath and only exhaling

when he did, waiting for each to be his last. We each gave his sunken cheek a kiss and slid out of the room.

It was hard to imagine him ever smiling or ever holding me on his lap. But I continued to nod every time my dad told me I was the favorite. I could not erase from my pupils the image of his face pinched with pain even in his sleep. I stared at the grave that was now only missing a tombstone. How I wanted to reach one last time to



Photo: Joni Nichols

stroke his delicate fingers that he held out to me in the hospital or run up and give him the hug I had been too afraid to give him in the last few years. I wanted to be five again so he would bounce me on his knees, my pigtails bouncing up and down and for him to sing “London Bridges” in his

husky voice. I longed to smell his blue robe and house slippers that always smelled of inviting smoke. It would not happen. He had dissolved into ash after all, the pain in his lungs was gone but I felt his cancer pounding against my own chest and up into my throat, robbing me of even the luxury of tears. I was his favorite, I hissed accusingly in my mind and I let the ache overpower me.

NON FICTION

What's Always Been Real, Can't Ever Die

Marisol Pérez

Trauma:/ A profound emotional shock. (The New Webster's Dictionary).

Traumas are a big part of life to some people, even more when they become obsessions. But then again obsessions and traumas aren't the same thing. Some traumas occur in childhood. Remember back in kindergarten when you cried your heart out because some kid wouldn't let you use his green crayola marker? Or you messed up your art picture or you simply wanted your mommy? As simple and foolish as this may sound, such incidents can cause traumas, serious traumas. I don't want to sound like a psychologist or anything but it's true.

I happen to have a trauma. As I said before, a kid would cry for markers or the "I want my mommy" famous line. However that wasn't my reason. It all started at the beginning of the 90s or the end of the 20th century like 1989-1990. I was four years old, and I had just started going to The American School of Guadalajara. My uncle, who lived in Seattle, Washington had always been the black sheep of the family. He had never met me and he didn't even know how old I was. He told my grandma he wanted to make up for it and bring me a gift. He told my grandma he would be calling her next week. However my grandma would be out that next week, so my grandma told the maid she had left a scrap of paper next to the telephone, that contained the info my uncle needed. So my grandma wrote on the tiny scrap of paper: "The Girl is 4 years old". My grandma left.

The phone rang and the maid answered but it wasn't my uncle, it was someone else. So the maid wrote the message of that person on another piece of paper but dropped the pen. When the pen fell it made a tiny scribble on another piece of

paper, the one my grandma had written on. The maid however paid no attention to it, and who would? A while later my uncle called. The maid gave him the information. But it wasn't right. The tiny scribble the pen made when the maid accidentally dropped it, turned the 4 into what looked like a 14. The absurd line had changed my age drastically. But nobody noticed.

A month later my uncle came with a present and he was more than astonished when he saw me. Well who wouldn't be? He was expecting a 14-year-old teenager and there I was. A four year-old. He asked my grandma what the hell was going on, and together with the maid they figured what had gone wrong. "I'll keep the present," I said. Turns out my uncle brought me a tape of a Seattle-based band, from the small studio where he worked.

The band's name was NIRVANA. The name of the record was BLEACH I started listening to it non-stop and I loved it. Imagine a 4 year-old loving a rock tape! In school one of those days the teacher asked us to bring to class our favorite music and that she would play a song of it in class, she asked to have it exactly in the spot so she would be able to play everyone's tape. I was more than excited, I wanted to tell the world about the music I had just found, I wanted to share the euphoria I felt when I listened to the music. The next day all of us kids brought in music.

Cri-Cri, Barney, Barbie, Sesame Street, Muppet Babies and Power Wheels cassettes infested the classroom. The teacher kindly asked us for our tapes and the name of the song because, eventually, the teacher wanted to make a tape for all of us, with everyone's favorite song on it. I could

see that she was as excited about this as I was, though not for long. Her smile quickly faded away when she got to my seat. She looked down on me and said:

“Nirvana?” like the word had been something revolting and disgusting for her to say, like she couldn’t say it without having to puke. She gave me a queer look.

“Yes, Miss, the song is “Love Buzz,” I said proudly. She grabbed the tape with her index finger and her thumb like the tape was yucky sweaty socks. She looked at it and said:

“I refuse to play this, Marisol.”

I couldn’t understand a lot of English at the time but I could understand perfectly what she meant and I can still hear her in my mind. I don’t remember her but I do remember her voice

“Why not?” I asked in my very poor four year-old English, frowning.

“Because this kind of music is unacceptable for school, that’s why,” she said raising her voice. Some kids laughed at me. I frowned more, grabbed my cassette and sat with my head down, staring into the darkness in between the desk and my face.

I felt two hot, itchy, sour drops of liquid running down my face, as if it were a race and the left was faster than the right. This may sound corny as hell, but left is where my heart ironically is. I sat there by myself, crying in silence, ashamed, away from others, crying because they had denied my band, my music, most of all they had denied me. They had pushed me aside. I was crying harder and faster in silence. “What a coward you are! You are weak, you baby don’t cry, don’t cry,” I kept telling myself, but I couldn’t stop.

That moment I wiped my tears, got up, with my face all red and swollen from crying so long. My hair all messed up, not that I cared. Or care even today (some things never change). I approached the “listening centre” where the tapes were being played as they worked happily and I cried miserably.

I tore the Barney crap out and shoved mine in. I pressed PLAY.

The teacher frantically came to me and told me to go back to my seat and that she had clearly said NO! The kids were complaining that they wanted the Barney shit on again,

“Brainwashed dummies,” I thought. She was going to turn off “Love Buzz” but I yelled:

“¡NO! ¡Que NO!” And blocked her way to the tape recorder. She tried to grab me with both hands. Both failed and the kids were complaining. Now I remember how the teacher was willing to chase me all over the room, and Kurt Cobain was singing a cover of Shocking Blue in the background. But at the time I had never felt more fear in my life. She finally got sick of chasing me around the room. She pushed STOP.

It was like she had pushed stop to my life for the moment there. I felt like dying. She grabbed my cassette and placed it in her pocket. I saw that she had torn off a part of the tape which dangled out.

“¡NO! ¡NO!” I said crying. “¡Lo rompiste, mi música!”

“Go to the office at once!” She yelled enraged, with her hair and her face a mess from chasing me around. The kids eyed me full of awe, like going to the office was going to hell with the devil himself, waiting for me there.

“No! Gimmie mi música, dámela!” I whined.

“Go to the office, Marisol!” she said again and pulled me outside.

“GO!” she said again this time, livid.

She grabbed the tape and threw it at me, I tried to fix it and placed it gently in its case.

I stood there for a second, not feeling not moving not anything.

“Didn’t I tell you to go?” she yelled this time like she could rip my head off with her teeth.

I felt my body getting weak and my face getting hot and tears rolled down my

chubby cheeks. I took a quick look at the classroom and saw how the kids were laughing at me for being punished. Kids can be really cruel. So right there I made a promise that I continue to keep. I promised that I would never let anyone see me cry. And nobody has. Perhaps I've only cried like 4 or 5 times after that. I grabbed my lunchbox and my jacket and left the room and slowly headed to (HELL) the office.

Once I think it was 1991, my Gris, took me to the *tianguis* at Santa Tere. And when we had to leave the *tianguis*, she told me that I had been good and that she would buy something for me. I knew what I wanted. Music. We headed to the pirate music stand.

"Mija, escógete un cassette," my aunt said kindly.

Si,
Gichito" (my
pet name for
her).

My eyes
wondered up
and down the
stand like a
pinball, not
knowing where to land. Then I saw it.

It was a baby swimming naked, trying to reach something, but the picture was in black and white and was so low quality that the bottom of the picture came out all black. But I managed to read the title, it read NIRVANA. (so *chafa* it was written in pen).

"¡Gicho! ¡Gicho! !Nirvana, Nirvana mira!" I said.

"Si Mija, ¿quieres ese?" she asked
"¡Si! ¡Si!" I yelled

The guy at the stand looked at me like saying "freak," because imagine a six year-old liking Nirvana. I grabbed the tape and the guy at the stand said:

"Son \$500 pesos, señorito."

Back then 100 pesos was what is one peso today so the cassette's price was like 5 pesos. I have the image printed in my mind

the \$100 peso coins had Venustiano Carranza on them. I can remember perfectly how my aunt's fingers with their red finger nails deposited them into the vendor's hand. The guy then made the sign of the cross in his forehead mouth and chest with the money he had just received, I supposed it was the first thing he sold.

"Gracias señorito" the vendor said, and then we left.

Again, I do remember the guy's voice but not him, only his eyes, I could see he had been stoned or very, very sad.

I was eager to listen to my tape I was anxious I wanted to hear it so bad! The tape turned out to be so incredibly *chafa* that it took twenty minutes for the first song to start! Nevertheless, I loved the tape. I

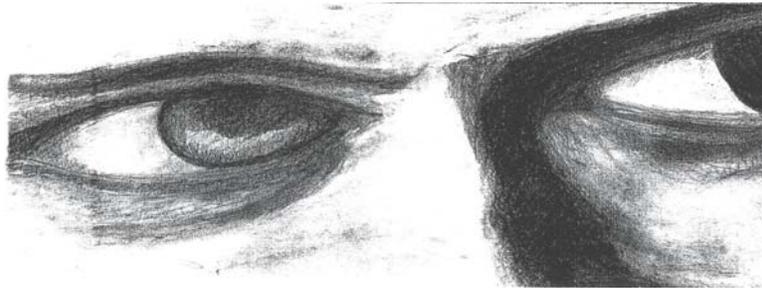


Photo: Ciara Ibarra

listened to it
over and over
and over again.
After some time
I forgot about
the tape though,
I don't know
why. I lost it I
guess. But I'm
pretty sure that if

I look for it in my aunt's house I'll find it, but I have the CD now so what's the use?

Three years later my life would be changed drastically in a lot of ways. It was 1994. "The year that ate shit," (according to Greenday's Mike Drint). I agree. My dad was elected legislator in the congress in Mexico City, therefore he had to travel a lot and I didn't see him very much. That affected me a lot. Now I know that my mum didn't neglect me because she didn't love me or because she loved me less but because now with my father gone she was busy with too much other crap. Plus she had to take care of three kids, two who were under six. My dad didn't leave because he didn't love me anymore, on the contrary he left because he loved us and he wanted us to have a better life. He wanted to work for us. That year I got migraines, which I will never ever

be able to get rid of. Imagine, think about it, having a damn headache, so bad that your eyes hurt, you can't stand up and you won't feel ok, until you puke the pain out of yourself.

Even worse, Kurt was found dead. I remember as if was yesterday. It was April 8, 1994. I was a girl, a little girl. Innocent? Yes maybe, but happy? One who was considered a weirdo for being the only one in the whole first grade to wear braces and to like Nirvana and rock bands when everyone thought that Power Rangers, Hot Wheels and Barbie Dolls were "in". Just for being different. Just for that. But I loved Nirvana, Nirvana kept my hopes up. That day I remember it was a Friday. It was cloudy. I woke up feeling a bit sick and dizzy. Then something went wrong, my stomach, I had a bad feeling. Then I felt like I had been hit hard in my belly with a baseball bat or something. I even had to sit down. My eyes flashed and I had a head rush. Then it left, the pain left. Trust me, I like pain. But again, trust me that was extreme. I remember I had felt that same pain a few days ago on Tuesday I think. The pain was gone but I still felt dizzy.

I got dressed for school, and I remembered that today was my little brother's birthday; he was turning two. I thought that might cheer me up a little, since we were having a party and stuff. But it didn't. Then the ouch feeling came again. This time even worse. But then everything seemed fine again. But I thought:

"¡Maldita sea! ¡Se me hace que me voy a enfermar!"

But since I felt fine I ignored it. I went to my mum's room and whispered to my baby brother who was still asleep in this crib.

"Feliz cumpleaños Pirito," (my pet name for him).

Gently, I kissed his head, like someone had programmed me to do so.

I turned on the TV and tuned it to the news. I should have changed the channel, I

never watch the news not even today, but I dunno why I did that day, I wish I hadn't but it wouldn't change things now today. The weather man said how the day was going to be cloudy and rainy all day. That sucks, I thought angrily and frustrated. No goddam piñatas! GREAT just great!

While I was having an internal fight with myself, the lady in entertainment said something about rock bands and I quickly turned to see.

"Today the vocalist of the grunge Seattle-based band Nirvana, Kurt Cobain was found dead by electrician Garry Smith when he was installing an alarm, the police suspect a suicide..."

I was stunned, astonished and numb. I nearly peed my pants. The stab feeling came again this time worse than the other one's I nearly collapsed. What? She's lying, I'm hallucinating. This is a nightmare, this is not real, I'm going to wake up! I kept telling myself, covering my ears.

When I finally came back to reality, I realized I was crying like a baby. I was scared stiff. Imagine me feeling unwanted, unloved, alone, at like 7:45 am, with my mum not being there for me (it wasn't her fault), my dad in Mexico City, miles away from me and my grandma dying (she was really sick at the time) and the only hope I had in life had just committed suicide. My throat hurt, like when you cry a lot, but mine hurt from just making sobbing noises. I wiped my tears, then my mum came in.

"¡Mija ya es tardisisisisisimo!" she said frantically.

"Mamá estoy malísima no puedo ir!" I said with tears choking me, not letting my mum see my face.

"No mija, ya vámonos hoy estoy ocupadísima, y luego toda la familia va a venir hoy por tu hermano..."

Then I couldn't hear anything except for my own emptiness and distress. I went quickly to change my shirt and my mum literally dragged me to school. I was scared. As soon as I got to school, I locked myself in

the bathroom, I spent the whole day there crying. I was destroyed and totally messed up. I was just a girl scared to death, scared out of my mind. I wanted to die.

I was sick of life at the young age of eight. Well, at that moment for sure. Kurt understood me, or at least I felt understood by him through his songs, but now he was dead and gone and there was nothing I could do about it. He was gone forever, and he would never come back. Ever. The idea of him never coming back freaked me out, to the point that the pit of my stomach itched. I sat there in the bathroom thinking about this crying. I was feeling destroyed, having suicidal dreams, hoping to disappear from earth at the age of eight. I was fantasizing how it would end, dreaming about my final day. Why? Why? Why? Was all I could think of WHY? He was 27 years old. I didn't understand how someone so loved, so admired, so successful, so rich, who had a family to take care of and a beautiful daughter could kill himself! But Kurt, who was so rich so famous as so unhappy too.

He was hope for me. And not only for me but for millions of kids out there, for millions of kids that felt outcasts like me, for millions of teenagers that needed a hand and Kurt gave them one, for millions a kids that lived for music. Kurt Cobain wasn't supposed to commit suicide! Kurt himself had been an outcast all his life and he made it, he inspired me, he gave me hope.

I have these dreams about Kurt where I see him thorough a very small window being slaughtered brutally with a baseball bat and doing nothing about it, and I can't do anything to help him. Like once at his funeral his uncle, Larry Smith, commented that once Kurt was slammed down by a 250 lb. logger (Kurt was only 5'7 and 125 lbs. when he died) and Kurt never fought back, just gave him our best finger.

It's not only the dream I can't do anything about. Some kids at school, think it's pretty funny to be cruel about stuff I'm sensitive about. And they come by and say stuff like:

“What are you going to do now? Your buddy is dead!”

That would piss me off a lot but I somehow have learned to live with it. What is important to me is what I think about Cobain and I think well about him and that is all that matters. Like his buddy, his fellow bassist in Nirvana, Krist Novoselic once said: “Remember Kurt for what he was: caring, generous and sweet. Let's keep the music with us. We'll always have it, forever.”

Why would I detest you if you said anything bad about Kurt? Why? Because he's one of the few people I actually admire and haven't lost respect for. Why ask why? Because what's always been *real* can't ever die.

PROSA POÉTICA

Vermelho

Rosalía Chávez Castrezana

Son las 7:31 p.m.; lo sé porque así lo marca el pequeño recuadro del microondas que da un ligero brillo verde-azuloso. Ambos, inertes, en lo que pareciera ser el abrazo más largo de cada una de nuestras vidas nos mantenemos suspendidos en la incertidumbre de la continuidad de un enojo, de consentimiento a una relación o la inevitable separación que tantas veces habíamos pensado que ocurriría. Y, sin embargo, trato de bloquear todo pensamiento de este tipo; no sé, no puedo definir la expresión de tu rostro y prefiero recargar la mejilla sobre tu hombro. Se forma una mezcla entre el tintineo del *wind chime* chino fuera de la cocina; aquel que habíamos colocado para evitar nuestra mutua energía negativa al pisar la cocina; o quizás era por la mera superstición de que unos cuantos delgados tubos metálicos agitados con el viento evitarían futuras discusiones. Todo se siente tan vacío, a pesar del *wind chime*, de la música electrónica que has aprendido a disfrutar, el soplar del viento y el ligero azote del mosquitero que cumplirá una tercera semana con la falta de seguro cayendo una y otra vez en el azote contra el dintel.

He aprendido a no espantarme mientras cocino; no por el miedo que solía tenerle al fuego y al aceite (más juntos cuando empezaba a brotar y a quemar un poco mis brazos con múltiples gotas; las quemaduras por las cuales intentabas regañarme mientras tu mirada expresaba todo lo contrario); lo que en verdad me asustaba eran tus entradas sorpresivas a la hora de la comida. Pocas veces ibas a comer después del primer año; jamás lo entendí muy bien. No comprendía si lo hacías por el complicado horario vespertino que no habías logrado cambiar o porque no te gustaba el sazón de mi comida (que en verdad era una

variedad de recetas cuyos componentes básicos recaían en las verduras, en la soya y en el germinado de alfalfa). Supongo que lo que hacía que me asustara era tu infalible costumbre de quitarte los zapatos antes de entrar a la casa (una costumbre que después de seis meses de haber vivido con Mayumi, tu prima japonesa, yo también había adoptado y que luego deseché). No sabes cómo me alegraba una vez que me dabas un abrazo por detrás, (aún tenía que poner atención a lo que estaba cocinando, pues a pesar de ser aceite de oliva, saltaba igual después de haberlo dejado mucho tiempo calentándose sobre las negras parrillas de la estufa).

Ahora son las 8:07 p.m.. Mantengo la mirada fija en el reloj del microondas esperando el próximo minuto; esperando a que sean las 8:08 para que regresemos a lo que una vez fue algo mágico. Espero el minuto ocho de la octava hora para romper aquel silencio, para romper aquella estabilidad que en nada refleja la realidad. Espero para poder moverme, mi cuello ha estado tan tenso la última semana y media que ni siquiera las toallas remojadas en agua hirviendo han logrado disminuir los nudos. Espero para que la cocina y todo lo que ella encapsula (tantos recuerdos, tantas veces que nos hemos sentado a platicar en la mesa de bambú con cristal hasta altas horas de la madrugada) cambie súbitamente. Y todavía, así, a pesar de tener la pierna izquierda entumida, espero y espero...Ahora son las 8:08, aunque deberían de ser las 8:88 para que los deseos que estamos a punto de pedir se hagan realidad o, tan siquiera, tener la esperanza de que algún día ocurrirán. Es así como por fin separo mis labios, secos, partidos, rasposos, para recordarte que pidas un deseo, pero tú ya te has acoplado a mi superstición; ya la has adoptado y eres tú el

que ha abierto sus labios más rápido que yo, pronunciando una de tantas frases nuestras, “pide un deseo”. Ambos cerramos los ojos como los teníamos cerrados a las siete treinta y uno y pedimos los deseos por separado aunque tú puedes adivinar lo que yo estoy pidiendo y yo puedo adivinar lo que tú estás pidiendo. Nos quedamos viendo el reloj hasta que son las ocho y nueve minutos, la hora ya no es especial, como nada de esto parece serlo más.

No sé qué pasará una vez que rompamos nuestra posición. No sé qué sigue de un abrazo como este, puesto que jamás había ocurrido el sentir que todo llegaría a un irrevocable fin como siento ahora; como sabes que siento y como tú también lo haces. Sin embargo, míranos, seguimos igual. Supongo que aquello que dice toda la gente que conforme uno va creciendo las palabras emergen describiendo sentimientos, es mentira. Tanto tú como yo hemos preferido el silencio puesto que ninguno de los dos sabría qué decir si decidiéramos hablar. No sé si después de esto tú sigas preparando el desayuno tipo continental de todos los días: un café, para ti, con leche descremada; un jugo de lima o de

zanahoria con betabel para mí; un pan tostado blanco con mermelada de zarzamora para ti y uno integral con mermelada de cereza para mí. No sé si después de esto yo siga lavando tus camisas con extremo cuidado y secándolas sobre una toalla para evitar que se le formen picos en los hombros al estar colgadas en ganchos aun cuando estos sean de plástico. No sé si tú seguirás sorprendiéndome de vez en cuando a la hora de la comida; no sé si nuestros nombres terminarán grabados en cursiva con tinta marrón sobre una tarjeta de presentación color manila claro. Creo que tampoco sabes qué pasará (o tal vez sí lo sepas y prefieras omitirlo). Tal vez tú ya no serás el que limpie mi cepillo de dientes (el mango siempre manchado de óleo en distintas tonalidades ocasionado por mi costumbre de pintar en las noches como técnica de concentración y relajación; aquella “maldita costumbre” con la que dejaba todo manchado y que en un principio tanto habías admirado de mí)... Los tubos metálicos siguen golpeándose unos con otros y, mientras que nosotros seguimos inertes en la misma posición, creo que preferiría la tarjeta color manila con cursivas marrón...



Photo: Hector Silva

NON FICTION

Travelling Parenthesis

Gabriela Silva Rangel

October. New York City. Fall. Orange leaves and Starbucks Coffee places on every corner of every street. Naly looked out the taxi window as it came to a stop in front of the Yoga Center and saw her best friend standing across the street, watching her arrive. Short auburn hair in ringlets, woolen magenta turtle-neck sweater, a familiar face. It felt like she had seen her the day before in school, as if they'd never been apart, as if nothing had happened and there was no need for words. Yet, eternity had happened. Yet, love had happened. Yet. Life had happened. To both of them, the twins, the soul mates. The best friends. Naly gave the dollar bill to the Arab taxi driver and climbed out of the cab.

They hadn't seen each other since summer, when both of them had started a new path. It had been an early August night and they had stood at the gateway of Violet's house saying goodbye. There was really nothing left to be said. They were prepared to get on their separate planes the next morning and go their different ways, in search of what was already waiting for them. That night they were leaving behind high school, graduation night, and fifteen years of memories that hurt with joy inside and wanted to burst outside their bodies and cry, knowing it was over.

Now, Naly came from Montreal to visit her friend for the first time in months. She crossed the street with her travel bag over one shoulder, a gift bag on her right hand and a bottle of water on her left. She engraved the scene in her mind. The wide

street and the Manhattan buildings before her. A smile, a hug, the peace of it all.

Inside the Yoga Center the smell of the incense and the flowers welcomed them into the harmony of the place. They explored the meditation rooms in silence. And God and the lights of the candles looked over them, watching them open doors, climb stairs and enter special rooms.

They bought a small plastic coated map of the city and subway system. They walked and walked, talking sometimes about what had happened to them. Love and God mainly. Love and God. They admired the wonders of every minute that had passed between August and October. It was everything, yet nothing. Even the sadness, the fear, the hurt, the homesickness, all had served a purpose. To bring them exactly to the point where they were now. The one they would eternally share. And other times, they walked in untouchable silence. Already everything and everyone around them said too much. The sky, the people, the pace at which

they walked, the clothes they wore, the things they carried.

At night, after a day of walking, sight-seeing, shopping and simply being part of the Manhattan flow, they took the subway and then Bus 81 at Port Authority, across to New Jersey to Naly's cousin's apartment. It was an incredible apartment. The guest room had a purple glow to it and Naly's cousin had prepared for them a feathery white mattress on the wooden creaky floor. The bathroom tub had light purple curtain showers and, once inside, it felt as if one



Photo: Hector Silva

were taking a shower in heaven. The mirror over the flowery antique sink was framed with white twinkling Christmas lights. The living room at the end of the hall, consisted of a big green furry couch and a red strange-looking carpet on the floor.

Already in their pajamas, with their eyes small with exhaustion, they talked in the dark. Naly told Violet about the love she had found and how it made her feel inside. She told her how much she missed him that very moment. *Call him*, Violet said. Two a.m. and the Naly picking up the receiver to call him was already so different from the Naly getting on the plane August 5th. Her skin glowed, and her heart beat with energy and beauty.

On one of those days of life's parenthesis they found themselves outside the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Outside it, photographers sold framed pictures of Manhattan views and perspectives. Naly bought one for her boyfriend and one for herself and then sat down to rest at the steps of the museum, waiting for Violet to finish browsing. She felt the warmth of the sun on her pale face. She saw Violet walking towards her with her hands behind her back and a strange smile on her face. *Here*, she said, handing Naly a paper bag. Naly opened it. Inside was a small black framed photograph of the Twin Towers. It was taken from the ground up and the towers rose up into the sky, the white spherical sun between them. The moment froze in time for eternity.

SoHo was filled with art, uniqueness and creativity. Violet and Naly walked down Spring Street admiring the boutiques and occasionally stepping into an art gallery. As they did this, they confirmed in practice what they already knew in theory, how grand, how vast, how full the world could be. At the corner of one street, the view overwhelmed them. The night had fallen, but the city was glowing. Each little window square of light upon each building seemed like a star. And thus, there were infinite stars in the sky that night. They entered a Starbucks and sat on big brown individual couches. They ordered coffee and tea and planned their next day.

On their last day together, they sat on a sunny bench in Central Park. The beginnings of the cold winter breeze were beginning to be felt. The leaves rustled on the trees and swept through the ground at their feet. The water flowed in the lake behind them. The twins sat enjoying the fall of the day and the end of their trip. They walked back to the yoga center and went in. A wooden table, a beautiful picture on the wall, a woman arranging flowers in a vase, mantra music, oatmeal cookies and tea. The last laughs, the last words, the last silences. At least for some time.

Their return back to their own destinations, now alone, was filled with a new strength, but also, a new fragility. Like a dancer, like a tower. So strong, but oh so so fragile. Naly looked out the Greyhound bus window at the darkness of the traveling space between city and city.

POESÍA

Que cabe en el corazón

Francisco Morales

Una frase que te he querido decir,
Un bisílabo
Un nombre... el tuyo
Las estrellas de esa noche
Una tarde sin voces
Un primer beso (sabor chocolate)
La mariposa que ya no es oruga
El miedo y la inseguridad
El sol, la luna
La llave para los cielos
El alma que retoña
Pero hoy:
Solo tú.



FICTION

Double Fault

Michael Hogan

He started off the morning with a double fault. He knew it was an omen. His shoulder was stiff, his posture awkward. He could detect a grin on the face of his opponent: contempt? superiority? pity? confidence that the match was already won before it had even begun? Something. Annoyed, he served to the other side of the court, a wide angling shot, barely returned, and yet the cross-court volley which should have put it away went wide. The next lost point was a smashed lob into the net. Then, double fault again.

They switched sides at one-love, then again at three-love. He thought about the horn which had inexplicably stopped working on his new car. The low pressure in the rear tire. He wondered if he had gotten as good a deal as he originally thought, then dropped another game by playing too tentatively. Less than a month remained before he had to go back teaching school. New students, two new teachers in his department, a new director. An in-service to prepare for, unfamiliar faces, changed hours, and the uncertainty, always, whether the momentum would be there, whether his new groups would merge with that mutual energy that made the classroom come alive.

Then there was the water pump on the roof of his house which probably needed to be replaced; the loss of several thousand dollars now on his mutual funds and the landlady raising the rent. So much to think about, so much to worry about. His stomach was hurting him this morning, too. Perhaps amoebas. And the pain in his lower back had returned.

The air was fresh from the rain the night before. The cloud cover kept the court cool and the mourning doves provided a kind of febrile accompaniment. He looked across at the carefully painted lines,

glistening in the wet. He served carefully, hard, with a sharp slice to the left. Unprepared, his rival returned it wide. His next serve was strong as well, and he was able to return his opponent's volley with a crosscourt backhand which caught the outside line. He picked up the next two points and the game through his rival's unforced errors. His own poor play earlier had created a negative momentum which his competitor had fallen into. But that was the high point of the set. His opponent easily recovered and, with an ace serve that cut the outside of the center line, ended it 6-1.

He went for water and a towel, thinking about the first summer he had played with any seriousness beyond just hitting the ball back and forth between friends. He was thirteen, the summer of his eighth grade year and his coach was a retired Army officer named Colonel Flack. The Colonel was loose and lanky, somewhere between the ages of 45 and 60 but somehow ageless: lean and hard, quick-wristed, able to execute drop shots, slices and angles returns that sent the boy scurrying this way and that, exhausted at the end of the morning, while the Colonel hardly raised a sweat.

Counting back, he was probably as old now as the Colonel was then. Funny how he hadn't thought about him in all those years. The Colonel used to tell him, "This is one sport you can play the rest of your life, son. Better than golf, because more physically demanding. But like golf, too, in that unless you empty your mind of everything except the game, you lose. It doesn't make any difference whether you're in good shape, or your strokes are smooth. If you're not focused, you'll lose."

The Colonel and his mind game. The Colonel was always focused. He was

single-minded. When he played tennis, he only thought tennis. There was something simplistic about that, the boy thought then. But now, on this cool July morning, he had begun to question his easy dismissal of the Colonel's advice. Even more frustrating than losing the first set, had been the feeling that he was not present in his own life. He took a deep breath and looked around him. The sun had streamed out in fractured rays from the cloud cover. A red-tailed hawk swooped over a nearby field. The bougainvillea, red and violet, sparkled in the morning light.

He breathed a thank you to whatever energy suffused the world and stepped back out on the court, his racket comfortable in his hand, moving in a bouncing step toward the service line.

The next game lasted 15 minutes with six deuces and a volley that went two dozen strokes. He was focused and intense, and his opponent rose to his level of play. On the final shot, his advantage, the ball coming to his forehand side, he twisted as his opponent moved, and hit a devastating cross-court backhand which caught his rival off-guard as he moved in the other direction anticipating a forehand volley.

They were tied at 5-5 when they finally took another break, had a drink of water, wiped off the sweat, and fanned themselves with their hats. They were both playing well, so they said nothing to each other. To compliment would be to jinx, a well-known psychological tactic. Make

your opponent self-conscious and he would begin to miss his strokes. Besides, no need to say what you both knew. That you were equals, evenly matched, playing at the top of your game. And that it had gone beyond competition, of who was the best, or of who would win who would lose. They were in the game, fully immersed, alive.

Then his opponent's cell phone went off. He spoke briefly to his secretary, advised her how to deal with a customer, then said he'd be back at the office in a half hour. They went back onto the court and the play was desultory. In the distance the church bells tolled as if they were in mourning for a lost soul. His opponent missed easy shots, tried to rush the net too soon, and was easily lobbed. He missed his first serves and was tentative with his seconds. The set ended 7-5 and they returned to the bench to pack up their gear.

"Good match," his opponent said, offering his hand. "We both won a set. Broke even for the morning."

He smiled as if in agreement. He thought of saying, You lost the last set because of a phone call. But then he'd have to say, I lost the first set because of a broken horn, low pressure in my tires, a new class, an in-service.

So, he added nothing. Just made plans to meet again next Friday. Anyway, he had things to attend to: a visit to the mechanic, a call to the school, and what was it his wife told him to pick up at the store on his way home?

POESÍA

Quando te vas

Diego Soberanes

El dolor llega cuando te vas

en ciclos, con oleadas, por momentos
unos malos, otros peores; nunca buenos

Llega callado o mejor dicho, calladamente
porque si llegara callado... pero no

llega...

con su maldito aroma dulzón
con la sonrisa torcida
que ni siquiera le pertenece
la que arrancó al último infeliz

y se queda...

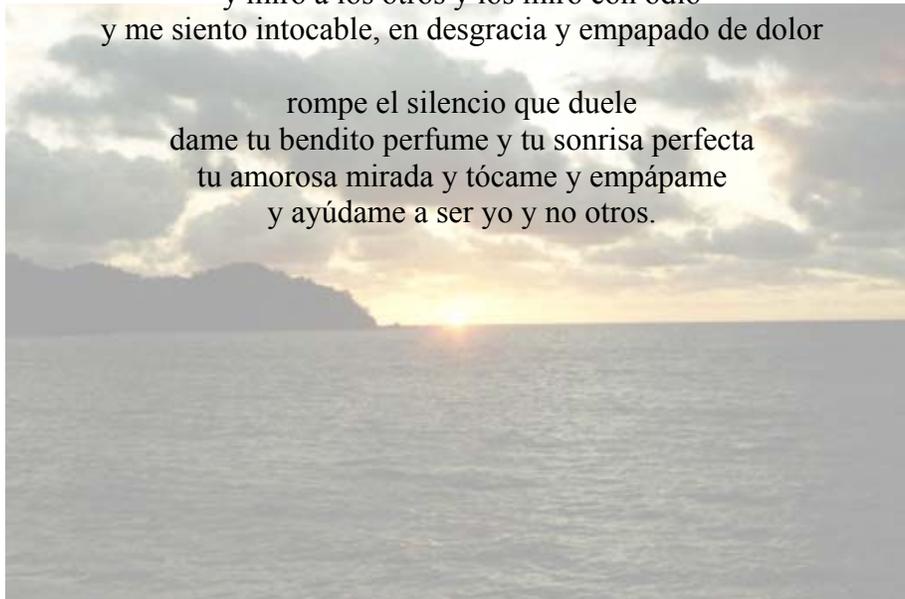
con la odiosa mirada de quien se sabe intocable
pero este desgraciado me toca y me empapa

y empieza el eterno mimetismo
y ya no soy yo, sino otros...

y me huelo almibarado y sonrío entre muecas
con sonrisas de otros dueños, infelices como yo

y miro a los otros y los miro con odio
y me siento intocable, en desgracia y empapado de dolor

rompe el silencio que duele
dame tu bendito perfume y tu sonrisa perfecta
tu amorosa mirada y tócame y empápame
y ayúdame a ser yo y no otros.



NON FICTION

Doing Magic

Francisco Morales

It is so hard to choose a metaphor for my life. Probably because I'm still young and inexperienced. First, I had a bleak remembrance of my life. I thought that a metaphor for it could be Hemingway with a shotgun or Keat's line "my name is written in water," or a dead Poe in the street. Why was it so? I'm not sure, perhaps because I admire their commitment to writing. But I am afraid that, unlike them, I might have a similar ending but without the recognition of their art.

Have you ever been on an empty stage? You get up, and it is usually dark, the lights which makes it shine during a performance, are all out. It seems a magical place. It is usually adorned by hanging curtains, they are long and cozy (if you ever happen to wrap yourself with them.) The light which enters is bleak, and it is chilly. If it is a good stage, you are capable of hearing your voice amplified, which gives you a hectoring presence you never thought possible. Then the floor. If it is wood, you're capable of stepping lightly on it, and it is covered by a thin screen of dust.

I like being alone on the stage. I usually sit at the edge of it and look at the empty seats. I like to imagine the reactions of the audience. I picture them laughing, crying and ultimately applauding, the gratification I feel whenever I hear any of these reactions in my mind is tremendous.

But the empty stage is different after the audience arrives. When it is empty it seems to be a fantasy in which I happen to live everyday for at least two hours or as long as the rehearsal might take. It is an extension of my life. But the minute the curtains are opened and the light hits my made-up face, the sublime dream vanishes into reality.

Lately life seems to me as a masquerade. I have to live up to the expectations of so many different people. There are those of my mother who wants me to be organized, careful, and for her I try to act in such a way. My father expects me to be a future business man, with good grades, and un Chingón. And I won't continue on with list, because it probably wouldn't end. But there's so many different expectations, that I don't want to fail any. But only when I'm acting or writing I can be myself.

Last year I was Bernardo in *West Side Story*, ever since I knew we were doing the play I expected to play Nardo. The director didn't want to cast me as Bernardo. He said Bernardo was cocky, un Gran Chingón and that I was the opposite of Bernardo. That day was the first time I've cried since pre-first, proving him right. After the first week of rehearsal he asked me to be Bernardo. I became Bernardo, even though he was the opposite of me. Acting as him made me see a cocky me, made me see myself through a new perspective. A Francisco which I had never realized that existed. Today Nardo is still a part of me.

Perhaps life being a stage is nothing new, Shakespeare understood this half a millennium ago.

I'm so tired, how can it be possible I'm still young? I drain my character's life to keep me living. .

Will I only get one role in my life. The stoics thought we only got one role, but I disagree. My character is continuously evolving and changing, revolting around the stage.

When I got on the stage for the first time, and I saw the seats, I remember that an emptiness engulfed me. Not only emptiness but insecurity as well. There's nothing but empty roads of chairs, a quivering voice, and

insecure movements. The first time on the stage I was struggling to survive, *now it defines my existence*. But with experience it gets better, I learned to love it. Sometimes to paraphrase what Franny tells Zooey, I was capable of seeing God in the audience.

At the end of *West Side Story*, the cast was on the stage. It was a goodbye, to my director to friends, as well it was the end. I was crying, Nardo was crying. I had to wait a summer to get once more on the stage.

Getting on the stage, wasn't easy for me. I had to become the character which is probably the most difficult step, but ironically the one I was the most used to. I have been acting for so long, so many different characters, the son, the friend, the lover, the student. I realized, when I played

Bernardo that every character was partly within me, and that after exploring it, it became one more fragment of my being.

The empty stage is magic. Which is not so difficult to appreciate, all I have to do is get on it. I look at the aisles, the empty rows, and picture myself acting in front of an audience, when I hear the first echo of a laugh I have become part of that magic.

I climb onto the stage, and stare at the empty rows of red chairs. It has been a long week. Opening night. I stare at the emptiness. I'm trying to find out what will make my character more real for the audience. For the audience but not for me. To me there's nothing more real than him. After all on the stage I surrender to him; he is I, I am he.

He is my mold.



Photo: Diana Mata

NON FICTION

Negro Septiembre Negro

Sofía Silva Rangel

Martes 11 de Septiembre de 2001 – *Un par de atentados a las Torres Gemelas de Estados Unidos, así como en el Pentágono se registró la mañana de este martes. La peor tragedia en ese país.*

Hay algo de septiembre: en sus noches de viento que imagino naranja desde tiempo atrás; en el fuego de cielo que sabe lo que le acontece ya desde años atrás. Lo ha visto, vive sobre el desarrollo de los planes y sabe todo... o casi todo.

Un ventanal del salón generalmente inadvertido y mi mirada fija afuera en otro día nublado. Yo, en cambio, tomo el viento y la lluvia como regalo y advertencia. En cambio, yo no tengo noción de quien vive al mismo tiempo lejos de aquí.

Hay algo de septiembre que advierte lo anormal y venidero; de la madrugada al oeste que intenta hablar con los pocos que aún estamos despiertos. En estas noches, al cruzar un breve patio, esta me ha hecho parar y fruncir ante un ambiguo pero escalofriante mensaje. Ahora lamento no haber aprendido el lenguaje nocturno como mi propia lengua. No nos entendemos. Hay algo de septiembre y un tiempo atrás que advierte... y aún no sé qué es.

A un medio mundo de distancia (quizás), alguien tiene ya el cansancio y la furia metida hasta los huesos; le impide pensar sin rencor y todo es buen augurio para mantener en pie los planes y el proyecto sobre la mesa. ¿Qué más da? Ya ni los malos augurios cuentan; no para ellos. Esto lleva tiempo, no existen ni se permiten especulaciones. Lleva tiempo: las cifras calculadas, las partidas aéreas y muy de

dentro, los itinerarios perfectamente vigilados. No hay margen de error, imposible. Por la noche, ayer, una sonrisa maniaca de aquel que se recuesta surreal en su cama después de incontables noches en vela; ayer una sonrisa arcaica de quien ha decidido por fin que septiembre es el mes; mañana el día. En su sueño breve verá las caras de su gente por quien cree abogar. Verá las caras de sus cómplices, los que ya caminan con los ojos engrandecidos esa misma noche al terminar la sesión, la misma sonrisa de él que se recuesta y las miradas que no comprenden ya más que lo que han de hacer la mañana siguiente, de lo que han venido soñando noche tras noche... ellos, suicidas que creen desear así la muerte, sólo así. En sus camas

se encuentran unos empapados en sudor, otros prefieren la vigilia al sueño.

Yo que quiero y no puedo conciliar el sueño, cruzando un patio vuelta y vuelta atrás hacia el mismo balcón, no advierto herida en el cielo (que sabe que es ya muy tarde para hablar). Ahora sólo espera en silencio.

Esta mañana me he levantado con gran dificultad. Reconozco el frío entre mis sábanas y opto por recuperar un poco de calor a pesar de que es tarde. Es un día de los que admito abiertamente me gustan. Nublado y viento americanamente frío. Hoy es un día perfecto.



Photo: Sofía Silva

Yo, que no sé si hoy es día para vestirse de azul o gris, y otros que repasan la manera en que deben caminar disimuladamente, la manera en que quizás entablarán plática causal con su compañero de asiento, un cronómetro que dicta el tiempo exacto en que revelará su identidad. Y estos, tan solo los detalles triviales. Pero lo demás viene por añadidura, ya es mentalmente automático. Esta mañana, en la gran ciudad, algunos han decidido tomarse el día. Algunos, gracias a la desorganización de su vida últimamente, llegarán tarde al trabajo. Esta mañana no miro hacia fuera por el ventanal... ni siquiera eso. Quien se imagina, es porque sabe.

Hoy le pido disculpas a septiembre por pasarlo por alto, y a un undécimo de sus días, como hice del décimo y el noveno. Pido disculpas a las noches de advertencia y

a la lluvia que hablaba en evidente código. Pido disculpas porque, aún atenta a esta noche y su lluvia que se exprime y se calma repentinamente – confieso no entender su significado. No es la primera vez, mas ya no se te recordaba como negro y ahora renaces como tal. Nadie te culpa, eres sólo el colapso final, una segunda torre y símbolos de fortaleza que duelen en la sangre callejeramente destinada y cenizas casi ajenas. Septiembre, eres producto de enero y febrero en adelante o tal vez mucho más atrás. Ahora eres un día más viejo y probado; yo también. Amaneció martes, para algunos nunca termina. *Hoy era un día para esto* pensé enseguida. Me retracto y me disculpo. Amaneció un martes perfecto, terminó una sonrisa exitosa y un septiembre nuevamente negro.

POESÍA

Contra la muerte

David Bak Geller

*“Cada encuentro de dos seres en el mundo es un desgarrarse.
Ven conmigo, conozco ese mal, y estarás mas segura
Que con ningún otro.”*

-Italo Calvino

contra la muerte desgarró un murciélago
en mitades idénticas contra la muerte
cae mi hoz de fuego sobre la flor
partiéndola en cicatriz de luz
contra la muerte
camino y en medio del camino
se abre una grieta
que desgarró el desgarró del hombre
y estas palabras inútiles
contra la muerte

igual que el relámpago reviento simétrico
contra la muerte
y divido el árbol en sombra y sexo
y divido el sexo en sed y sangre
desgarro un pájaro en dos
lo pongo al pie de tu puerta y entiendes:
a las siete
en la orilla del mar
contra la muerte



Photo: Luis H. Carbonell

NON FICTION

Toallas

Lauren Nichols

Often, people believe that because someone has moved to a new country when she was little, the change is less abrupt, that the barriers are less prominent, and that the child is oblivious to the difference in language and culture. When people ask me how long I have been living in Mexico, they nod their heads when I answer that I have been here since I was five, as though by only having lived in the United States for the first five years of my life made it any easier to leave my friends, culture, food and especially language behind.

I had arrived in Mexico not understanding what a country was, not understanding that what I was exposed to wasn't a different planet, as I had first believed. My mom had to explain that the plane had taken us to a different part of the same world and not traveled through space as I had originally thought. Mexico was so different that it might as well have been a different planet. I detested the food, with its powerful odors and tastes that stung my tongue, and the people with their tanned skin who would kneel down and grab my round cheeks, breathing foreign words into my face. I was scared of the noisy streets, with the huge busses that shook the ground when they passed by, and the men walking between the cars at stop lights calling out loudly and shaking newspapers at our windows. I was even robbed of my morning television shows that I had become so familiar with. I remember crying when I saw the Mexican version of *Sesame Street* with its red Oscar the Grouch instead of green, and its awkward-looking characters that I couldn't understand. I had yanked at my mother's sleeve, pleading for her to make the Elmo and Big Bird I knew come back on the screen and make these copycat characters disappear. It wasn't in her power

though, just as it wasn't in her power to make the cars stop honking at red lights or to force everyone to speak English.

Our first months in Mexico were spent in a hotel with our only distraction being the Sunday Brunches, when clowns would come to the hotel to play with all the kids, painting our faces and handing out arm bangles and hair scrunches as prizes for the games we made up. During the week we would spend our time playing "Go Fish" in the room on the worn-out carpet or, if the weather was fair, we would jump in the pool to ease the sweltering summer heat. But even the clowns and the pool could not make us forget that we would have to adapt our lives to a new lifestyle. No matter how much we tried to conform, there was a barrier that I would not find easy to cross. Spanish.

I remember one warm day I had been tired of playing house for the fifth time that week and had decided to splash around in the pool for a little while. I threw weighed rings into the blue depths, then plunging in after them, coming up to the surface to take deep gulps of air before diving under again. Even this game became tiresome after a while and, noticing that the sun was disappearing behind a thunderhead, I decided I would rather take my chances at another game of Crazy Eights than be taken by a thunderstorm. Noticing my mother calmly reading on a pool side chair I swam over to ask her for a towel. She looked at me over the top of her book and told me ask the towel man for one. The towel man was a dark skinned man in the hotel's blue and white uniform who sat next to a little white hut with clean towels, who served as a shoe shiner, lifeguard and distributor of towels. I saw him sitting at the edge of the pool, talking to another man who worked at the

hotel. I looked back up at my mom who had now returned to her book.

“Will you get it for me?” I had asked, expecting her to wave to get the young man’s attention and hand me a warm towel that I could wrap myself in to protect me from the breeze that had begun to blow through the trees.

“You’re a big girl. You can ask for one yourself,” she pointed out, motioning towards the man. “Just say, ‘*Toalla*, por favor’”

I stared at her in shock. I couldn’t ask for a towel in Spanish. I had always figured she would say everything for me and that I would continue using English for the rest of my life. When I told her I didn’t want to ask for one she had encouraged me to go ahead, calling over the towel man so that I could ask him. His dark eyes stared down at me, expecting. I felt stupid standing in the water with my arms wrapped around my shoulders to keep from shivering with nothing coming out of my open mouth. I looked beyond his blue and white uniform to my mom, who sat, waiting for me to speak. I looked at her, pleading for her to rescue me, to say the words for me, but all she did was raise her eyebrows.

“Just say ‘*Toalla*, por favor’ and you can have your towel,” she said shrugging her shoulders.

I felt like the grilled cheese sandwich that I had begged earlier for the restaurant to make me was rising into my throat, blocking my air path and keeping me from swallowing. My eyes darted back and forth between my mom’s face and the dark face that waited patiently. The words throbbed in the back of my throat as goose bumps coursed up and down my body. The sun

retreated completely behind a cloud and the water seemed to turn to ice.

“Please, mom,” I whined, jumping up and down slightly in the water to keep warm. “Please.”

“No, you can do it all by yourself.” She stated, a little annoyed.

The chilly water seemed to seep beneath my skin, gnawing at my bones. My teeth began to chatter and, even if I had had the courage to say the words, they would have been incomprehensible. My eyes began to swell with tears and my eyes soundlessly overflowed as my mom watched.

“Please, mom,” I tried one last time, pleading for her to save me, but my begging was received with a stern “no,” which only



Photo: Daniel Robles

brought further tears and whimpers that shook my already shivering body. The man, realizing what was happening reached for a towel behind him, but was stopped to my horror by my mom. I didn’t know what to do. The only thing that had stayed constant in my life those first weeks had been my mom and

now even she seemed to have turned against me. I cried into the chlorine- filled water, no longer trying to hold in my sobs. I headed toward the stairs of the pool and ran out into the freezing air and all the way to our room, as the first raindrops began to fall. I locked myself into the bathroom and turning the shower on, let the water run over my body, the warm water easing out my goose bumps.

“*Toalla! Toalla! Toalla!*” I yelled at the tile walls between sobs, my soaking hair falling into my eyes and mouth as I spit the loathed words out, trying to rid them from my system. “*Toalla, toalla, toalla...*” I let the words trickle out into the steaming water and let them be sucked down the drain.

Now, when I am asked about my life in Mexico, I nod my head when they say it must have been easy. When I read novels and write essays, nobody questions that Spanish did not come naturally, or that I might have despised it for years. The Mexico that had once frightened and intimidated me has now come to be like a safety blanket, protecting me in its folds of culture and even its language. The food and

people changed from being aliens to a large family that I have come to depend on, along with the honking traffic at seven in the morning and the yelling street vendors. There is even a comfort that comes from being able to ask for something in Spanish, the language that took me eleven years to call my own, even if it is to ask only for a towel on a windy day.

NON FICTION

Keeping Sane in the 11th Grade.

Martha Anguiano Ramos

DISCLAIMER: NOBODY HAS EVER ACHIEVED SANITY FOR THE ENTIRETY OF THEIR JUNIOR YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL. IT IS STILL CONSIDERED AN IMPOSSIBILITY. WHAT FOLLOWS IS AN EXPERIMENT, A DANGEROUS ONE, AND IT IS UP TO YOU, AS THE READER, TO FOLLOW THE TEXT OR NOT.

The junior year in high school is always referred as “the most difficult year in a student’s life.” I’ve been listening to this phrase since I was in sixth grade and my oldest cousin was in the eleventh grade. My aunt would brag that Ana went to sleep at two in the morning after doing her homework all night. At that time, I was still a tennis player and I had time to do everything. I just couldn’t imagine why people would not sleep enough while they were in their junior year. Why didn’t they organize their schedules?

I’ve already seen three generations in my school freaking out in their junior year: all the assignments, projects and essays due, were reflected in their daily attitude. When I was in the ninth grade, and my brother was a junior, I remember that he would tell me in the mornings that he had only slept two or three hours. I couldn’t believe it at first, but then it was obvious that he didn’t get enough sleep, for he would always be grumpy and in a really bad mood.

Now, it is finally my turn to be a Junior. Now I can finally show people that it is not necessary to go insane and be freaked out during this wonderful year. Students can pass this year with all of the credits needed and without getting stressed.

First of all, I will guide you through a day in school and later I will help you get through all of the assignments and homework. The first step, is for you to get to know your teachers. This is extremely important because, if you manage to get to know them, you will be acquainted with their expectations, and therefore you will

start to understand what goes through their minds. If an assignment is not clear (and they’re usually *not*) ask them to repeat what they want you to do. They know that you were *looking* at them while they were explaining, though *looking* doesn’t really mean *paying attention*. Most of the teachers will repeat what they want and even explain it better the second time. They will like you, because you actually showed interest in their class.

Beware of them, though, for you might think that they like you and that you are doing great in their class, but the truth is that they only smile at you because you smile at them, even though you might be failing their class. Sharpen that hidden sixth sense of yours, the one that will allow you to look beyond the teacher’s school-thoughts. You can break into their minds, and experience the feeling of knowing who they really like, what exactly they want, and what they really think of you as a person and as a student. *Observe. Observe* every little detail, learn from them, not only their subject, but the way that they are as human beings.

Respect your teachers, but don’t be afraid to correct them when they are wrong. Some appreciate this and some don’t. You *will* know if they like to be corrected or not. If they don’t, try to tell them in the most polite way that they *are* wrong.

Second, remember that participation is counted heavily in many classes. Raise your hand even if you don’t know the answer. Most of us raise our hands, and the teachers will be pleased with the class in general because they *think* that everyone

knows everything. This certainly raises your participation grade, and you will not be that stressed out with the *real* work. If they pick on you and you don't know the answer, just ask in a very proper and interesting manner: "Would you *please* repeat the question? It wasn't *quite* clear?" They will repeat the question, explaining it at the same time, and they'll just keep on talking and *they* end up answering their own question.

Third, you should write every single assignment in your agenda so that you can keep yourself organized. Organization is a vital element for the juniors since about four assignments are due on the same day. This is exactly *why* juniors go insane. All of the assignments are due on the same day!

When a teacher assigns an essay or a book to read, or any other project, don't ever ask for more time to do it. Try to accommodate yourself to the schedule that the teacher already has planned. Don't lie to the teacher, by saying that you have three tests on that same day, and that you are not going to be able to finish the work. If the whole class starts whining, the teacher will sometimes give in and give you more time. He will know, though, that you probably don't have those three tests on that day.

Fourth, do not procrastinate, it's the worse thing that you can possibly do in the eleventh grade. If you are given in-class work, try to finish everything in school, rather than taking it home for homework. Remember you don't have much time in the afternoons to be taking more homework than that already assigned. Do not create your own homework.

Fifth, start doing the homework from the subject you least enjoy, so that you finally get it done, and you don't have to think about it anymore, until the next day. If you are assigned to write essays, be sure to write a little outline or do free writing before you actually start writing the essay. This will help you organize the essay, and it will give you a chance to brainstorm. Just spend

about twenty minutes on the outline, and then the essay will just flow.

If an essay is not due the next day, try to write as much as you can of it the same day it was assigned. If you do this, you will take a huge weight off because it will take half the time the next day, and therefore you will not be going insane the day before it's actually due.

Sixth, if you have math homework, but you have absolutely no clue of how to do it, ask the teacher if you can stay after school so that he/she will help you understand what you have to do. You will demonstrate that you are interested, and the teacher will gladly help you. Manage to stay after school, only for a little while, and you'll do fine in this class.

Seventh, remember that exercising is a vital element for our growth. You are packed with homework, but you still have to manage to squeeze in at least an hour of exercising each day. Don't worry, there is time to squeeze in this hour. Just keep being organized, and you will find out that you even have time to take a long refreshing shower that will help you relax.

If you figure out that you can't get out of your house because your afternoon schedule is extremely crowded, exercise in your house. You can do whatever exercise you like. For example, you can jump rope, and this is a very complete exercise. Put some music on, and jump for about forty minutes. You will find out that this sport (which some of you do not consider a sport), is one of the most tiring exercises, but it is certainly therapeutic, for you manage to sweat all of your bad energy while jumping. Jump fast; it's better, and it helps you get rid of the stress that you have. After jumping, do some crunches for about twenty minutes non-stop. Then take a shower and you are again ready to go on with your homework.

If you don't exercise, then the blood in your legs will sort of stop circulating, and since you are sitting down at a chair most of the day, you will feel that your legs start

getting weaker. So try to exercise, because if you don't you'll start going insane because your legs have stopped "working."

Never leave the reading assignment until the end or right after eating, because most likely you will fall asleep reading. Try to read when you feel that you have energy and you will not fall asleep. Whenever you are assigned a book to read, and it is not due for a month, try to read ten minutes everyday. By doing this, you will not find yourself reading the book two days before it's due. Ten minutes... you can handle that.

Don't have a phone beside you while doing your homework because you will be tempted to call a friend, and another friend, and another friend, and when you notice what time it is, you would have preferred taking a nap, rather than calling people to disturb them with their own homework. Remember that you are not the only one with homework, there is a whole Junior

generation with the same exact amount of work.

When you have to get together with your classmates for any project, establish first the hours that you will be getting together. By doing this, you will all be organized and will not go insane. Work. Don't be fooling around the whole time, because if you do, the gatherings will take more than four hours. If this happens, you will be freaking out at night because you have not started the homework for the other classes.

Juniors: try to keep yourselves organized no matter what! Distribute your time to do your homework, leaving a free hour for exercising. Understand your teachers, and don't procrastinate. That way, you won't be like the rest of the juniors who start going insane after the second week in school.



Photo: Ivette Carbonell

POESÍA

Riesgo

María del Lourdes Govea

Esquivamos un beso
cada vez más cerca de los labios,
cada vez más prolongada la despedida,
más estrecho el abrazo...
la noche silente, oscura y cómplice...
la mañana descarada en un beso no planeado
como lluvia improvisada,
como viento no anunciado,
como fuego,
como incendio propagado en la hojarasca...

entonces acercarnos
construirnos
sentirnos
amarnos...

para luego desenamorarme
destocarte
desoírte
deshablarte
desnombrarse
derrumbarme
destrozarme...

riesgo y consecuencia:
enamorarse
desenamorarse
derrumbarse
y seguirte amando...

y otra vez tenerte (yo)
abandonarme (tú)
refugiarte (tú)
recuperarte (yo)
y otra vez amarte (yo)
¿y tú?

Dije no
también fue un riesgo
y la consecuencia también es el dolor

y otra vez abandonarme (tú)
porque no era cierto que te recuperaba (yo)

POETRY

Impromptu

Michael Hogan

How language stops time.

Like that.

The way things are always layered

like cacophonous car alarms

mangoes ripening on the tree

the tree itself dreaming against an adobe wall

the wall declaiming the limits of a garden

a garden transcending itself with hummingbirds

and crows and Monarchs from Michoacán.

So that

time is not stopped at all

but a different version exists

where moments are stacked like two-by-fours

and you could build something

or maybe something's already built

and you just need to step back

to find the face in the tree

the smiling cat in the leaves.

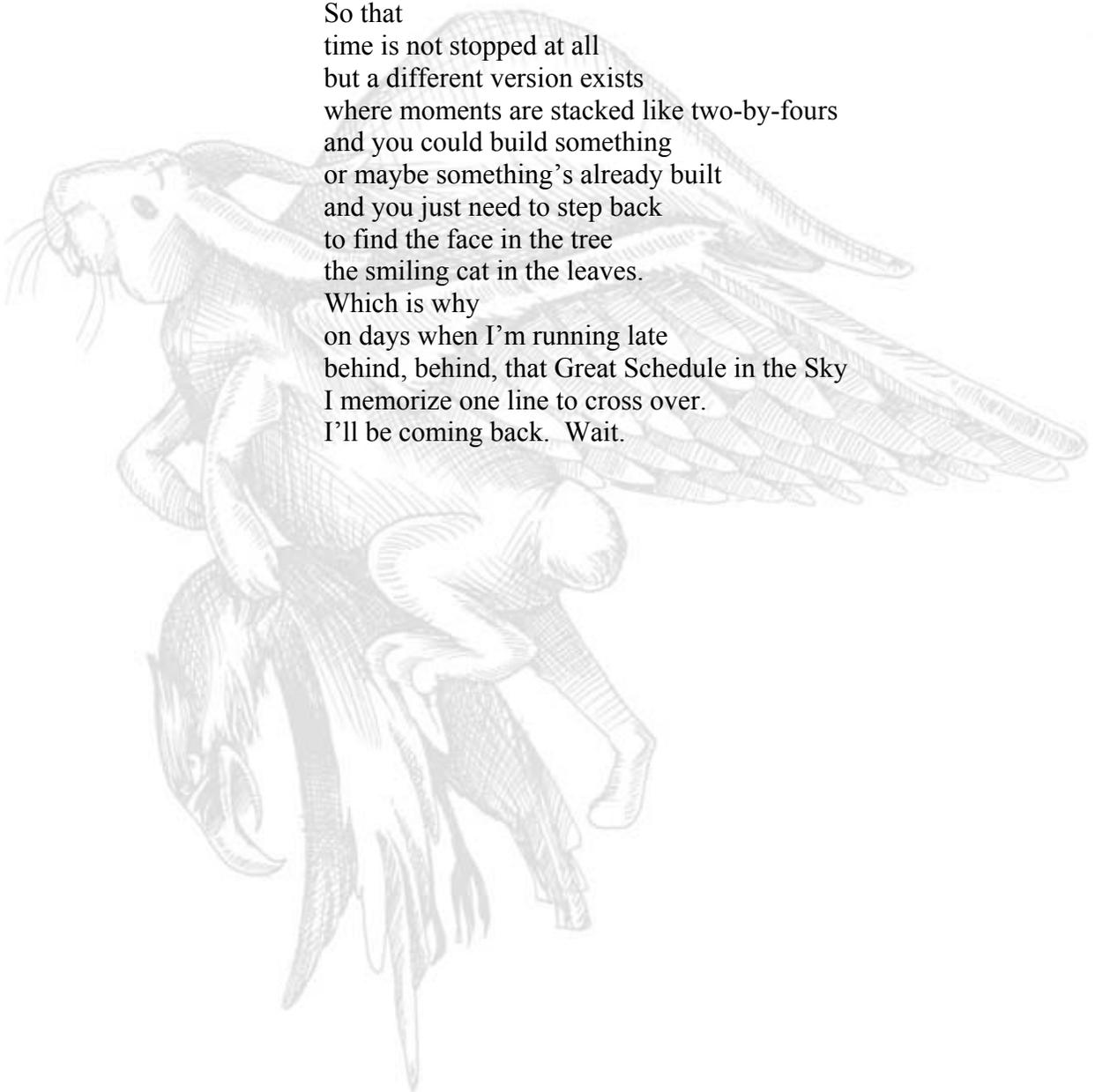
Which is why

on days when I'm running late

behind, behind, that Great Schedule in the Sky

I memorize one line to cross over.

I'll be coming back. Wait.



PROSA POÉTICA

El Novillero

Ana Sofía Carbonell

“Prefiero un bombero a un bombardero”

- Serrat

Mientras organizo las fotos para álbum, me doy cuenta de la que alguna vez fue, lo que ya no es. El futuro cercano o lejano del momento desconocido aún y ya olvidado por un tiempo, hasta que se redescubra la memoria en un papel vivo y lleno de historia.

Encontré una foto de mi abuelo toreando por primera vez; es vieja, con un tono añejo y un olor a tinta de 1948. Momentos después de haberse tomado la foto, (según cuenta mi abuelo) una de las banderillas que fue mal encajada cae en su pie abriéndole la espinilla. “¡Coño!” se exalta él, como si recordara el dolor. “Y cuando vi la sangre, chica, casi me desmayo”. Cuando cuenta una de sus historias exagera un poco, pero al hacer esto crea una historia más real y más cercana a la verdad de lo ocurrido.

La foto del “novillero Carbonell” se encontrará en la sección de antigüedades. Aquí también se podrán encontrar unas fotos sobrevivientes de una Cuba vieja, en la cual la historia es aún su presente. En estas fotografías los edificios son nuevos y decentes, con diseños antiguos, tienen los clásicos balcones que adornan las angostas calles de secciones de la Habana. Más adelante, en la sección más moderna del álbum se encuentran unas fotos a color. Estas muestran las mismas calles, los edificios conservan el mismo diseño desde hace más de 40 años, pero se han ido

deteriorando. Parece una ciudad detenida en el tiempo que se ha ido erosionando, llevándose consigo la belleza del lugar y su gente.

En una imagen reciente, aparece el primo de mi abuelo recargado en la entrada de la plaza de toros donde alguna vez participaron. Las paredes están cubiertas de mensajes de hace cuatro décadas, sobre la revolución social, cultural, política y militar que encabezó Fidel Castro, el cual viste con la misma fachada de aferración al pasado.

Las demás fotografías cuentan mi historia hasta ahora, la mayoría son de amigas. Hay fotos de la playa, de fiestas, de obras y de viajes. Uno de los viajes más documentados es el que hicimos a Nueva York.

Recuerdo la foto que tomé de las torres gemelas desde un “ferry”. Nunca

me hubiera imaginado el destino de estas ni el de la gente que en ellas se albergaba. Se reabre un sentimiento hueco y ajeno a mí al verlas por primera vez desde hace tiempo. Trataré de conseguir la continuación de la fotografía, la imagen de todos los voluntarios, bomberos y doctores – los héroes – cubierto en ceniza y polvo – la gente.

Existen miles de fotos, pero son contadas las que tienen el valor de seguimiento, el valor de continuar la historia de la vida y sus ironías. Es un nacimiento, un presente, un futuro y un recuerdo en una sola de ellas.



Photo: Luis H. Carbonell

PROSA POÉTICA

El lento morir

Gabriela Silva

¿Y qué más da si todo a mi alrededor me da lo mismo? ¿Qué más da si las memorias no son más que eso y el futuro no es más que un concepto vacío? ¿Qué más da si estoy feliz o triste o radiante u ojerosa?

No me siento joven. Fotografías que nunca parecieron tomarse y tiempo que no corre. Hoy el día no me dice nada, hoy septiembre no me dice nada y hoy ni la música despierta el más mínimo interés dentro de mí. Hoy, que nunca acaba y que prefiero pasar dormida. Hoy, que me acostaré como cualquier otra noche, como las pasadas siete mil doscientas, para despertar perezosa al llamado de un nuevo día que aún es negro.

Hoy, que si me veo en el espejo nada me gusta y hasta pequeños indicios de arrugas aparecen en mi frente. Y las ojeras que muestran no fatiga, no falta de sueño, sino simple desinterés por cosa alguna.

Hoy que todo da igual y que no sé ya si reír o llorar, quisiera no estar. Desaparecer y dejar de sentir esta pesadez de vida tan solo por algunos momentos. No ver estas paredes de calor, no oír estos ruidos cotidianos de noche sofocada, no ver estos tatuajes de mí que no son nada.

Hoy, regresan las pesadillas de hace un año. Aquellas que pensé enterradas bajo la tierra. Caer otra vez en el círculo de ellas, que aparecen y no se van. Y que están ahí, maldiciéndome, burlándose, mofándose de mí porque han vuelto y no puedo hacer nada. Yo que las pensé lejos, olvidadas, borradas de la faz de la tierra. Y no, ahí están más dentro de mí que nunca, tan asquerosamente silenciosas, despreciándome, recordándome que tal vez estuve mal.

Yo, que hasta ayer pensé que había esperanza. Yo, que no me dejo vencer aún en el hoy del desinterés y del enojo. Hoy,

volver a caer en lo mismo. Sola, con las arrugas de preocupación en la piel y los objetos vacíos de mi cuarto que dudo alguna vez tuvieran algo real que decir.

Yo, que hasta ayer encontraba significado en el vaso de agua sobre la mesa y la lámpara encendida a las tres de la mañana. Hoy, que se avería el carro, se acaba la tinta y vuelven las pesadillas. Hoy, que todo alrededor acaba derrumbándose sobre su propia fragilidad. Que la risa es hueca y el llanto insatisfactorio. Que la máscara sigue siendo máscara y la lluvia sigue perdida en el rincón de otros. Que el olor es añejo y mis manos las mismas.

Yo, que hasta ayer pensaba haberme burlado tan fácilmente de la vida. Cuando en realidad había sido al contrario. Y es que, ¿cómo puedo tratar a esta vida como un juguete? Tan superficialmente cambiando de estación como se cambia de ropa. Pensando un momento una cosa; al otro, otra. Creyendo la verdad un día y la “verdadera” verdad al otro. Qué facilidad del nacer, del morir, del renacer. Qué olor de ayer, qué sed de nada, qué agotamiento del tratar, qué falsedad de claridad, qué desilusión del volver.

¿Y qué más da si no me importa? ¿Qué? ¿Es que acaso hasta ayer pensabas que una señal, una llamada, una nueva forma de mirada, un acontecimiento espectacular podría cambiar tu vida? No. No te ilusiones. El reloj no dice más que la hora... y sus ojos igual.

Y es que el problema es que sí importa. Porque mañana caerás en lo mismo. Pensando que te levantas y que todo saldrá bien. Pensando que será diferente y que lloverá y reirás y bailarás y harás nuevos amigos y te vestirás justo como quieres verte ese día. ¿Y qué pasa al final? ¿Qué pasa

con la llegada de la noche y el sopor de
septiembre? ¿Qué pasa con la vuelta de
pesadillas y el olor de antaño? Se cae la

esperanza y comienzas a morir. Lentamente.
De aquí a sesenta años.



NON FICTION

Coming to Terms with Goodbye

Maria Muller

The predawn air was unusually cool for that time of August. A strange almost surreal haze formed a misty blanket over the surface of the sleeping neighborhood, making the houses, trees, and parked cars form part of a motionless dream world. The dawn's rays still had not peered over the horizon; instead it seemed as if the sun were cautiously, or hesitantly, evading the act of shedding light onto this tremulous day. Nothing stirred on this summer morning: not the stray cats who wandered aimlessly from yard to yard, not the chirping birds on the branches of the ficus tree outside my window, not even the middle-aged woman across the street who dedicated every day to exercise, namely her version of heavy panting, loud foot clumping, jogging.

Staring out onto this foreign terrain from my driveway, the faintest sound was a bombardment of noise, an interruption of the silent tranquility, a predator cutting into the peace of this dreamland and bringing in fear and pain. The screen door slapped shut as my father, lugging a heavy black suitcase in one hand and a map of the Mexican-American border in the other, pushed through. The click of the car doors unlocking seemed to clatter and echo off the house wall. The slamming of the trunk resounded down the sleeping street.

But then there was silence. The sadness was defined by the tears streaming down both mine and my father's faces. Our love was blinding in our long, firm embrace. Our desperate longing to see each other again soon, to laugh and talk and hug again, was obvious in our hesitation, our forced parting from our tight clutching. But I should have been used to this. I should have known better. My life has been composed of goodbyes, yet this one was brutally different.

I have been acquainted with farewells for as long as I can remember. The deep, low humming vibrations of airplane engines have lulled me to saddened sleep every time I've moved from one country to another, leaving behind one life to blindly create a new one wherever I went. Silently, trickling tears have followed when I shuffled through old pictures of the friends I just left, dimly wondering if I'd ever be that lucky again, if I'd ever find a class of such good friends anywhere again. These moves have all been permanent in the sense that I was leaving my home, school, and friends to replace them with new ones and I knew that I wouldn't be returning in the near future, if ever.

Something about this goodbye was different, though. It was definitely permanent as well, but it caused a sharper piercing within me. Whereas moving in the past had evoked a dull, constant loneliness that enveloped me, this parting caused sharp, continuous pangs of pain. The short quickened gasps of my usual crying were replaced by sobs, slowly rhythmical and deep. I had never lost someone this close, an immediate family member, a person I had greeted "Good morning" to everyday as I scarfed down my breakfast, who would coach me on my spelling words and batting grip, who tested me on my German verb conjugations, and who held political debates at the dinner table concerning current topics from my Model U.N. class at school.

My Daddy was leaving. The same austere man who could direct an entire consulate through diplomatic emergencies was suddenly speechless because he had no control. The stout, determined man who could meet with ambassadors and deal with company executives lost control of his stern emotions and released a single tear from

each eye, the only tears I have seen him shed my whole life.

I think both of us were ashamed at being unable to control our crying. I had learned from him as a young child to conceal emotions from public view, I suppose in order to uphold a mask of serenity, power, assurance. In this instance we should have been completely serene and prepared, for we knew the parting was approaching months before. Yet as we stood there in the dim driveway, tightly holding onto each other, practicality could not penetrate into our hearts. Desperation shattered us.

In recent years, due to a large influx of young personnel, the State Department and Department of Defense have jointly begun an “eliminating” process comprised of hiring young professionals and retiring officers who have reached a certain promotion. After twenty-five years in the Foreign Service, my father confronted this rather brutal reality last year. Preparation for retirement began months before his departure in August, yet the truth that his life, that my whole family’s life, was about to change did not penetrate until the farewell parties were celebrated, the best wishes proclaimed, and the goodbyes whispered. On that August morning my father was leaving for Washington, D.C., driving north to Texas, then steering east across the South, and finally slanting northward to the capital. The purpose of this trip was to attend a retirement seminar at the Department of State and then to venture out in hopes of finding a new job. Not only was this the loss of Daddy, but I was losing an integral part of my daily life on which I had been unconsciously dependent all those years past.

Remembering this day and thinking of the emotional intensity it has produced in me, I am strangely grateful for it now. Ironically, I feel I gained more than I lost. I have friends who have lost immediate family members to death or have been separated from parents due to divorce, yet I had never

fully encountered the pain and emptiness of losing someone so close, of losing Daddy. I guess that the multiple moves in my life have helped me cope better because I have left behind close, even best friends. Losing my dad, though, the one who’d help me on an unsolved math problem, play catch with me to break in my new mitt, watch ancient Fred Astaire and Ginger Roger’s classics, was different: stunning, shocking, shattering.

In the past year I have barely seen him. I feel I have matured somewhat, learned to look out for myself more so as not to burden my mother. Sometimes I feel as if I left him early for college, as if this parting was the first step in learning to say goodbye to my family. That agonizing sting was a foretaste of what was to follow: an absolute farewell to my family who raised me, confided in me, cared for me, laughed with me.

In our ironic reversal of roles, my father stooped into the car, revved up the cool motor, and waved his final goodbye as I stood on the porch and watched, my tear-glazed vision blurring the details of his ageing face. After the gray station wagon pulled out and slowly, almost tremulously, drove away, the sun finally yet timidly reached the horizon, the birds cautiously began their morning hymn, and the lady across the street silently stretched on her porch.

One hug had revived thousands of memories; it created a dream world that comforted my heart for the quivering moment that it lasted. The enchantment dispersed into the awakening morning. My tears were the only evidence of the past moment. All else, every encouraging hug, joking smile, goodnight kiss, every memory we shared was invisibly encased in my last two words to him: “Goodbye, Daddy.”

The dawn of that summer day was the ending of a life I had not anticipated losing so soon, a shock I had never been trained for even after several encounters with the monster of goodbye. It became

clear, however, as the initial scars began to heal over the months that followed, that a new stage in my life had commenced that morning. My farewell had in fact been a greeting to newfound independence, a frontier I had thought I would dread yet unconsciously had been prepared for by my dad's departure. Goodbyes work in repeating

cycles. Just as the word has brought change into my life in past moves, it did so again as my father turned the street and out of sight. Goodbyes are usually sad but they aren't always negative. It's not wisdom of experience or years that has taught me this lesson. Just an early summer morning, waving goodbye to my Daddy.



Photo: Luis H. Carbonell

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