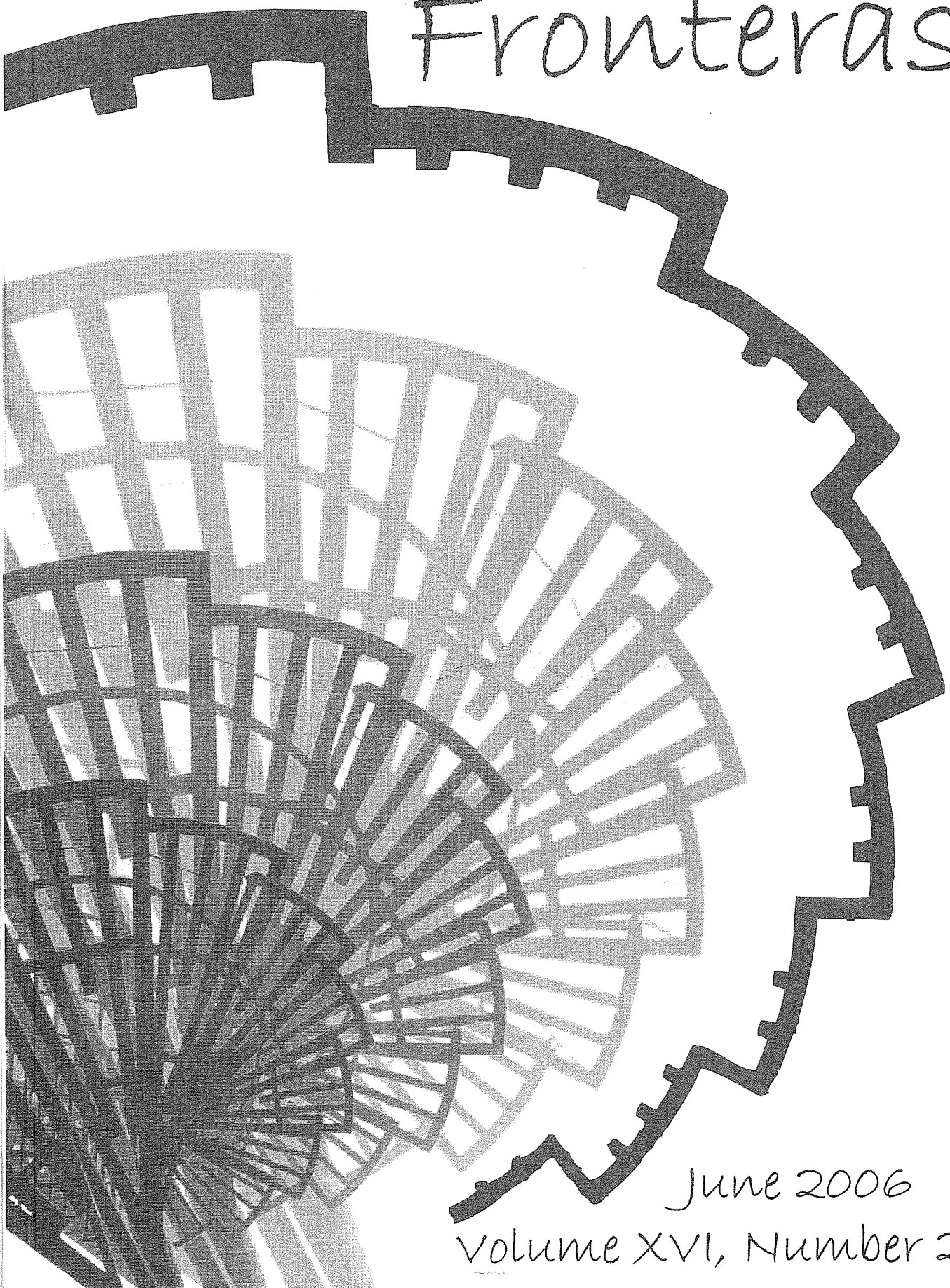


Sin

Fronteras



June 2006

Volume XVI, Number 2

SIN FRONTERAS

Volume XVI, Number 2, June 2006

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has granted SIN FRONTERAS the following:

1993, 1994, 1995 Excellence Award

1996 Award of Superior

1997 Highest Award

1998 Award of Superior

1999 Excellence Award

2000 Highest Award

2001 Highest Award

2002 Award of Superior

2003 Excellence Award

2004 Highest Award

2005 Award of Superior

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Cover picture: Lauren Henry

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.

~Anton Chekhov

Each piece in this magazine is sparked by a moment of illumination, disappointment, satisfaction, or other deep-felt emotion that first moves its writer to place his or her thoughts onto paper. The writing process begins. Each writer crafts his or her work with the same care and creativity that goes into creating a recipe: measuring just the right amount of flour, sugar, lemon, and salt, choosing just the right amount of soothing imagery to balance a bitter spoonful of reality or stirring in the perfect amount of metaphor to explain an emotion in hopes of embodying that spark of inspiration. Many times a mixture turns out too soggy or too sweet, but a writer trusts that his or her recipe can be perfected. In the end, after many hours of editing and revising, meticulously adding baking powder pinch by pinch and blending food coloring one drop at a time to achieve the perfect tone, a scrumptious batch of poetry emerges, crispy but not burnt, sweet but not cloying. And as much as writers enjoy tasting their own perfections, the true satisfaction comes from sharing them with a reader.

The array begins with "White Empty Walls," in which Alexia shares those emotions which so fully flavor even the most vacant moments of solitude.

Next, Abigail, in her poem, "Sun's Blood," and Marco, in his poem, "Afterglow," both describe a sunset using arrangements of vivid colors and images.

Then there's Paulina's "Carrousel" and Andrea's "Temporada de Mangos," two different stories of discovery. While Paulina's is a delicate blend of explored barriers and disappointment, Andrea's is a humorous glass of gratifying curiosity.

With a mixture of interesting images, Erik conveys that feeling of foreboding change on the morning he moved away from "the ranch" in "The Trip I Used to Take."

Juan Pedro's recipe for "Carrot Soup" comes alive with a dash of nostalgia mixed into an immortalized picture.

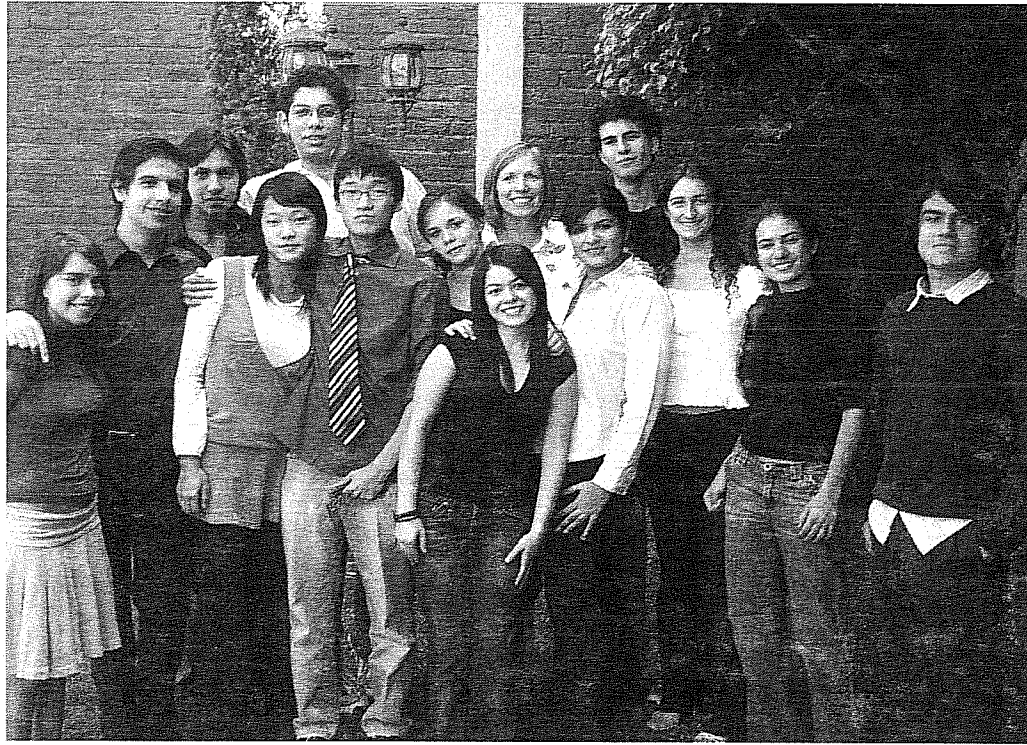
And bringing the magazine to a close are Ana Marva's "Lies," which whimsically blends an original style and some fibs from her childhood which you might recognize from your own, and Ana's "1993," a satisfying anecdote about kindergarten.

The writers, editors, and all of those involved in the creation of this magazine invite you to taste each piece, the sweet ones, the tart ones, the smooth ones, the bitter ones, and the ones in between, to experience a variety of flavors and textures that we hope you will enjoy.

Carmen O'Rourke
Editor-in-Chief

STAFF

June 2006



BACK: (from left to right) Daniel Pérez, Diego Hernández, Paulina Aldana, Amanda Hamilton (faculty advisor), Erik Verlage.

FRONT: Alexia Halteman, Juan Pedro Andrés, Cho Eun Jang Lee, Byung Ryu, Andrea López, Ana Gaby González Ayala, Carmen O'Rourke, Ana Marva Fernández, Patricio Suárez

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Non-fiction

White Empty Walls

Alexia Halteman

I step into the front seat of the car, ready for a weekend escape from the city. I get comfortable in my seat, knowing I will have to sit there for the next four hours. I buckle my seat belt and recline the seat backward. Ready.

The sun is almost setting, giving off an orange tinted light. I know what will happen when the sun is completely hidden. My mother will turn on the headlights, blindingly white for the atmosphere. They will cut through the densely vegetated walls of green on the side of the road. My mother will put on classical music and will concentrate on the winding road ahead, driving as quickly as her nerve will let her.

I will tell her I want to get some rest and put my head back silently, staring out through the sunroof. I will see the stars. They always seem to be melancholically brighter when you are not in the city: you are looking at something that is presently dead and dark. I realize this while seeing the stars and the half-moon through the tips of trees.

Then I will let the tears dribble down my face silently. I will do this because I will never have another chance. This will be the opportunity to let them flow freely, interrupted only by notes of tranquility. Each suppressed feeling captured in the droplet of salty water, splashing and disintegrating itself. I will cry for the things that are missing and the things I have too much

of. I will cry for treasured company and for solitude.

The waves came and went, brushing up against my bare legs like cold silk. My feet sank into the security of the thick cut sand, like the anchor of my body. I felt the different sizes of grains and shells in between my toes. I had subconsciously curled my toes a little; they wanted to grasp what they could hold on to. I could almost feel each ray of sunlight gently caressing my back.

Not wanting to be seduced by the chilly and menacing water, my eyes

turned toward it, assessing it. What I saw was the shadow of my head, the place where the water seemed dark and dirty, and around it a series of rays of sunlight. In the parts that were being showered by the sun I could see the tiny particles of sand that kept the water from becoming fully transparent. The particles glimmered and shined with the encouragement of the sun. I liked the idea of shining rays surrounding my head, almost a halo. Even if it was only in the water.

Just for a second, a cloud came over the sun and the magic was gone. Discouraged, I looked out towards the line that divided water and sky, far off. Exposed to all that blue ahead of me, I felt tiny and insignificant. I was again a mere human like any other, overwhelmed by having so much unknown ahead of me. My eyes glazed over the sea and my whole body

"My life, all compacted onto a dark-colored wooden table, is foreign to me."

shivered at the thought of its immensity. I felt the cold water wash over my toes, slightly moving the grains of sand back and forth, making my feet sink lower. I no longer felt warm, and there was no one there to wrap me in a towel.

My desk is cluttered. As I look at everything, the papers, the books, the coins and pens, I don't seem to recognize any of it. My life, all compacted onto a dark-colored wooden table, is foreign to me. The book with

some of its pages folded seems to have never been held in my hands, even though I turned and turned its pages many times. A piece of paper lies there, alienated by its color, the red heart has a name to it that now seems to have never walked my lips. The people in the pictures are like aliens, their eyes uncomfortably shiny, their smiles uncomfortably big. I grab a little black stone from my desk, a smooth and slightly spotted one. I turn in my chair, not being able to handle it. I turn to the comfort of the white empty wall.

Poesía

Momentos con la naturaleza...

Julián Alberto Flores Díaz

Olivo mar en
sereno atardecer:
brisa, arrozal.

Lágrimas frescas
sobre mi rostro, nace
llorando el día.

Cielo en calma;
relajo en el aire:
¡pasan los loros!

Bellas Monarca,
hálito de otoño,
hojas doradas.

Flor Jacaranda:
sonrisa morada de
La Primavera

Entretejido
de araña; lluvia, malla
de filigrana.

Titán de roca:
¡rugido, fuerza, luces,
flujo de calor!

El cielo rojo,
fuego que se extingue;
termina el día.

Sombra sin rumbo,
se rompe el espejo,
¡salta la trucha!

Manto oscuro,
brillando el cometa
rasga la noche.

Ráfaga fugaz,
¡aleteando colibrí,
cruza mi jardín!

Copos de nieve,
ventisca: blanca danza
veo en el aire.

Como diamantes,
siete cabritas brillan
en negro manto.

El rayo de sol,
cambia blancas garzas en
flechas de oro.

Noche de lluvia,
concierto en el charco,
cantan las ranas.

Temporada de mango

Andrea López

Antes del primer beso, las personas hacen dos cosas: se imaginan que el beso será con alguien extremadamente hermoso en un lugar perfecto o practican el acto frente a un espejo. No voy a mentir, yo llegué a hacer dicha tontería, eso del espejo solo me calmaba las ansias.

Fer mi amiga era una experta para los besos:

-Es como cuando te comes un mango. Sí, eso es. Ve. Muerdes el mango y entonces el juguito se escurre por tus manos...así es un beso apasionado. La saliva se desborda, no se resiente el jugo pegoso, se disfruta, se saborea. De repente muerdes la cáscara tantito para después soltar de ella y exprimir el jugo que aún queda. Así te va a tocar y hasta vas a querer más.- me dijo Fer entre risas.

La verdad es que sonaba loco al principio; toda esa metáfora del mango, su juguito y esas babosadas. Esa Fer sí que sabía de qué estaba hablando; ahora entiendo porque a los chavos se les cae la baba por estar cerca de ella; es una coqueta besucona. Tal y como me lo dijo, así me paso.

El era seis años mayor que yo, en pocas palabras el ya tenía experiencia en cosas del amor. Yo, de quince, solo pensaba: "es como el mango, rico. No importa que se escurra". Era joven y bruta, así que me metí en la cabeza que besar era como morder el mentado mango y que además él era ya un viejo amigo y no sería tan difícil. El

guapísimo Sebastián me invitó a comer. Estuve a punto de llorar de felicidad cuando lo hizo. Pasó por mi y me llevó a los mariscos El Negro, buenísimos, nunca se me va a olvidar esa comida; "la comida del beso". Revisé la carta entera, estaba buscando algo que no tuviera cebolla ni ajo, porque no quería que me hediera la boca, y menos cuando iba a comprobar la metáfora del mango. Me decidí y pedí unos tacos *gobernador* (los que traen de todo, para disimular que yo sí le *entraba* a todos los mariscos y no era una niña *especialita*), y un cóctel de camarón. Platicamos un rato. Él me tomaba de la mano, yo me apenaba pero disimulaba que era natural para mi toda esta acción de roces. Jamás lo había hecho, eso de agarrarse las manitas y coquetear a cinco centímetros de sus labios, nunca lo había sentido, era una sensación como cuando iba de viaje con mis papas y por primera vez me daban mi brazalete de adulto en el hotel porque ya había cumplido doce y ya no aplicaba el servicio de "Niños gratis" para mi. Era nuevo para mí, pero a la vez sabía que estaba perdiendo esa niñez, esa inocencia que me hacía parte de lo gratuito.

Era tan cariñoso que no me resistía al detalle de sus besos en mi cachete, a sus manos suaves sobre las mías y a sus miradas picaronas que me sonrojaban. Eso sí, era un coqueto de lo peor, lo que no tenía de borracho lo tenía de coqueto.

Acabamos de comer y me invitó a una reunión de sus amigos. En pocas palabras, una morra de quince iba a convivir con unos chavos universitarios, de esos que ya trabajan y tienen sueldo fijo, mientras que a mí me seguían dejando tareas sobre geografía de Jalisco en la prepa. Me dio una vergüenza enorme rechazar la invitación, y entonces acepté, aparte de que me suplico mil veces que lo acompañara. Me moría por darle un beso mangoso, ¿de qué me quejaba?, a eso iba a la mentada fiesta, no me importaban sus amigos, yo iba por la mordida de mango. Me importaba él, y después... él. En fin, nos subimos al carro y se quedó sentado como por dos minutos sin decir nada. De la nada volteó y me besó. Esta vez sí fue en la boca. *Maldita sea*, pensé, todavía ni me como las mentitas que trajeron con la cuenta y este ya me quiere comer a besos. ¿Qué tal si le sabe a camarón? No me quedó de otra que quitarme y esperar una próxima oportunidad. Sabía que era un buen día, un buen momento, una buena temporada de mango.

No se repitió el incidente hasta varios minutos después. Tal vez 5 o 10 minutos más tarde; mientras, en el carro íbamos cotorreando sobre música, películas y otras tonterías. Hasta que me dijo:

- Niña. Desde que te vi, me gustaste. Y como te prometí, en cuanto cumplieras

quince te iba a conquistar y pues ya ves aquí estamos. La verdad es que eres una niña hermosa, me encantas, eres súper madura y me lates un chorro.-

Ándale. Ahora sí, ahí viene el juguito rebosante. O se me avienta o me besa, o compro el kilo completo de mangos. Entonces le dije:

-Pues tú sabes que siempre me has gustado, la verdad es que me llevo muy bien contigo y me encantas. *Tonta, bésalo ya, es como un mango.*-

En el siguiente alto se acercó lentamente hacia mí, forzándome a voltear hacia él. Cerró sus ojos y me besó.

Mango tropical, maduro pero no verde, jugoso y dulce, casi como malteada, fresco y hermoso.. Suave, un lado, otro lado. Se escurría por dentro, pasional y trascendental. Casi perfecto. De lo más natural, sus labios fríos, los míos envueltos en su invierno. Una locura de beso. Se quitó despacio, nuestros labios se despegaron como cuando ya muerdes el último pedazo del mango, el que más se disfruta. Sonrió y aceleró.

Cómo lo quise por besar tan rico, tan natural, tan auténtico, tan nuestro, tan jugoso. Le eché una miradita y le dije:

- Sabes a mango.- Y sonreí como una tonta.

Book Review

Mother, May I?
The Awakening
by Kate Chopin
Marco Sanchez

According to Carl Jung's theory, deep within our unconscious we all have the same file of information. It is because of this that among all things written, there are recurring images, emotions, situations, and characters that continuously reappear time and time again. Since their first appearances in some of the earliest literature, their continued presence eventually made it possible to make out certain patterns. Jung referred to these patterns of thought as archetypes. Once these archetypes were classified they became the categories into which all of literature's characters were fitted: the helpless maiden, the manipulating trickster, the androgynous shadow, and the mysterious stranger, to name a few. A problem arises, though, when a round character is expected to fit into a square archetype.

Kate Chopin's direct approach to adultery and women's sexuality has been a matter of controversy ever since *The Awakening* was first published. Nevertheless, Chopin's openness regarding sexual matters is not the only place where she attempts to break away from the literary and social paradigms of the time in order to establish truths that lie beneath Tuesday dinners and the middle-class façade. Kate Chopin presents Edna Pontellier, a female character that shatters the typical mold and challenges the mother

archetype through her self-centered way of life and her promiscuous sexual escapades.

When we think of the epitome of motherhood the Virgin Mary undoubtedly comes to mind. The pure and immaculate mother figure provides life and love for her young, and although, when it comes to mothers, tales about loss of virginity or even sexual intercourse are scarce, the children most certainly had to come

from somewhere. Take for example the very Biblical Eve. "Earth's first woman" goes from being kicked out of paradise on one page to having three

children in the next with no mention of sex, pregnancy cravings, or nine month waits. Even Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was bold enough to talk about adultery in the 17th century, skips right through the delicate subject of pregnancy straight into the aftermath, not mentioning a word about Hester Prynne's pregnancy. All in all, it is the rule and not the exception that mother figures should be selfless, sexless and unblemished.

Then, in comes the exception. The main aspect that sets Edna Pontellier apart from other mothers is the fact that she does not see her children as a priority. In modern teen drama terminology one could say that she loves them, she just doesn't LOVE

"In modern teen drama terminology one could say that she loves them, she just doesn't LOVE them, love them."

them, love them. This is an extremely rare case, for even when dealing with characters that are evil or sinful, the love for one's offspring is always present. Characters such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's sinful Hester Prynne, who will not let go of her little Pearl at any moment; and Leo Tolstoy's divorce-seeking Anna Karenina, who travels from western Europe all the way back to Russia to see her son on his birthday, show that even when a woman is not the most perfect being she would still do anything for her children. With Edna things are a little different. She does have certain affinity toward her kids (she *is* a mammal, after all), however she struggles with the fact that as she steps into motherhood she will have to sacrifice part of herself to her children. Edna's dilemma comes from the fact that she wants to be a good mother for her kids, but at the same time she wants to be independent and protect her own identity. This mental turmoil itself is another telltale sign that Edna is not your typical mother. Add psychological angst to the motherly insensibility and the wanton behavior and you are left with one unusual mother figure.

With the exception of the suicidal Madame Bovary, we had never seen a character like Edna that "*had once told Madame Ratignolle that she would never sacrifice herself for her children.*" To Mrs. Pontellier there was nothing more important than Edna herself. Kate Chopin emphasizes this idea of a mother living only for the sake of her children through Madame Ratignolle who possesses "*the more feminine and matronly figure*" of the two women and believes that "*a woman who would give her life for her children could do no more than that...*" By presenting the nurturing mother archetype alongside Edna, it creates an even greater contrast that stresses the unusualness of her character. However in this comparison it is not all black and

white. There is really no clear sign as to which approach to motherhood Kate Chopin favors, instead she leaves it up to one's conscious: "colorless" submission or scandalous freedom.

And then there's sex: *she has abandoned her Tuesdays at home, has thrown over all her acquaintances, and goes tramping about by herself, moping in the street-cars, getting in after dark.* It cannot exactly be said that Edna's behavior is reminiscent of that of a prostitute, however for a high middle-class housewife in New Orleans during the late nineteenth century, it was-and still is- not the definition of moral correctness. Edna Pontellier is a very sensual character who has her fair share of passionate affairs. (Not exactly the kind of woman one would want to be taking care of children, anyway) Edna's lust reaches a high point during an amorous night with Arobin, whose kiss "*was a flaming torch that kindled desire.*" It is clear that Edna stands apart from the crowd, and also from the typical mothers. Not only does Kate Chopin shake things up by admitting that Edna, a mother, has sex, but she makes sure it is done with a bang by giving Edna a handful of tender lovers, all of which are younger than her.

Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* masterfully defies the mother/wife archetype. Edna Pontellier's antic disposition towards life and her hesitation over the embrace of her role as a mother both point to a different type of mother figure. What is most important to realize is that Chopin's portrayal of the nineteenth century mother is not necessarily inaccurate, in fact, it is probably more accurate than our immaculate archetype, and it was the boldness in it that made it stand out. It is in this way that Kate Chopin breaks free from one of the most predominant female archetypes, and while in our collective subconscious pure and uncorrupted mothers might be in vogue,

that does not in any way reflect what motherhood is like in this concrete world. The sex, the lack of love for the

family and the aloofness towards life may be all in a day's work, not just in New Orleans in 1899 but all the time.

Fiction

The Piano

Carmen O'Rourke

Her hand gently stroked the piano keys, lifting up swirls of dust that spiraled in the slanted light. Aside from the beam that entered through the boards over the window and the long line it drew on the piano, the room was dark and brown. A memory glittered in the back of her mind like the particles that slowly passed through light. She tapped one of the keys and listened as the note rang through the silence. It resonated in the dark corners of the room until it slowly died down and a thoughtful silence replaced it again.

Somehow the room was the same. In the dark shadows she could see the lumpy figures of a couch draped in old, yellowed sheets and a small table with slender legs. On top of the piano sat the same white vase with faded blue feathers painted along the round body and rim. Only a small, shriveled brown petal lay fragilely next to it, almost absorbed by the dust on the piano. She blew softly and the petal fell down onto one of the keys. She gently pressed her fingers to the key to dust the petal off, when the key sank with a loud, deep tone that once again penetrated the silence. She stopped and listened. Her hands felt stiff; it had been ages since she had felt the cold ivory of her grandmother's piano.

But she slowly set her hands in place and lightly tapped a few keys. She absorbed herself in the soft, sharp, and gentle tones as her fingers moved across the piano, tentatively at first but then fluidly and gracefully, playing from a reservoir of memories through which she had not wandered in years.

The petal sat on the same key until she pressed it down again and the petal crumbled. It had once been the silky blue petal of a morning glory from the vine outside that was now smothered by weeds and eaten by snails. She wondered why she had stopped playing. The piano had been her favorite instrument, and she had always



Andrea López

loved to play it in the slanted morning light that poured in through the bright window.

That room which used to be so colorful was once a living room through which her young brothers loved to run, and there was an indentation in the old couch where they used to jump. Their laughter and shrieks tangled with the quick, cheerful tunes she would play to warm up. As she noticed her shoe prints on the dusty floor, she envisioned their little bare feet running through the room on a holiday, awakened by the cloying smell of maple syrup and pancakes in the kitchen.

She remembered moving away. Had it been the right decision? She had never asked herself before, but the sad yellowing walls and disintegrating cloth draped over the furniture made her wonder. Her brothers had soon followed and finally, her parents, hearing nothing but the echoes of their shoes in the hollow rooms, had also moved away.

Now, living in her own home and making her own pancakes on Saturday mornings, she was compelled to visit the old house – maybe to remember, or to find something she had lost, a life she could never live.

As her fingers played more slowly, she looked around. The slanted light had turned a deep golden tone, and most of the dust had settled. She hit the last key and stood up to go to the window. The boards were dry and full of splinters, but she slid her hands through the narrow cracks and began to pull. At first, the boards did not budge, but soon the rusted nails began to crumble, and the board came loose. A bright square shone on the piano as she left the boards and approached it, sat down, and continued to play. The tones felt hollow, impossible, but she continued playing; it was all she could do.

Poetry

Afterglow

Marco Sanchez

Gilded veil of light forsaken as all that is left behind
Dye with shining shades of red and veins of gold.
A mem'ry of the saffron jewel: the sun.
Calming coruscation the remains
You abscond into dusk
Fleeing from the sky
leaving my sight
Till tomorrow
Said
I

Sun's Blood

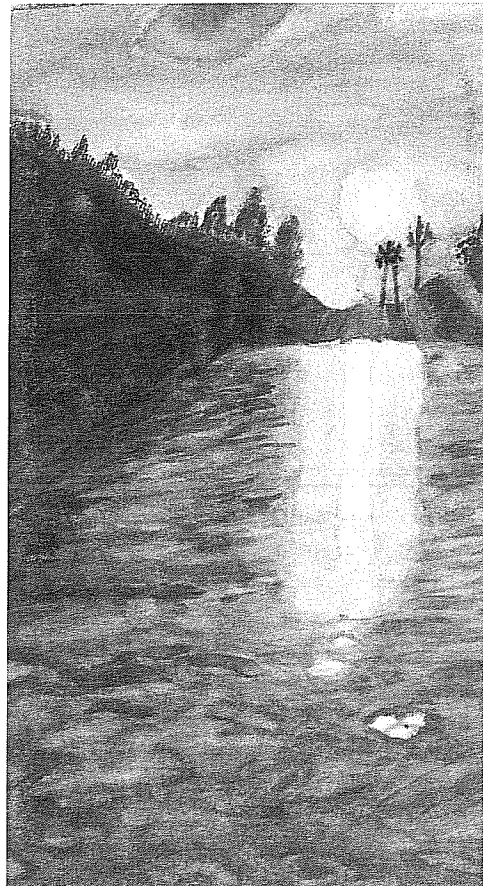
Abigail Salazar

As I stare at the horizon
oozing its orange blood,
and sit on the blades of grass,
air whistling,
I find myself just wondering
whether it's a morning
or perhaps the last evening.

Dim shadows are cast
reminded they're soon to die
or perhaps learning they were just born
in a purple sky that holds fire,
that holds life in reaping hands

As I freeze that image still
the whole world keeps stirring,
fleeting by—
ignoring the blooming fireball bleeds,

sitting, my eyes stare
consuming, bleeding, absorbing
all the sun's strength out.



Romina González

Non-fiction

The Trip I Used to Take

Erik Verlage

It is very dark and still this morning. I can sense dawn but it's not quite here, and I get up quietly in the broken light from the candle. The candle, of course, provides an eerie glow to the room and sends quivering shadows across the walls, but it also adds to the incredible silence. Its wavering light bounces around, and the shadows are never permanent or any real shape; they just glide across the room, black smoke crawling on the wall. I know I am awake, that I have seen this before, but I was half-asleep the other times, and the dreamlike appearance sifts around my room.

I don't know what makes so much noise during the day that it is missed in the early morning. Maybe it's the sun, heating things up into a constant drum, so that even when my family isn't making noise there is a pleasant, constant background hum. Or maybe it's just the generator a hundred meters away from our house, and the loud electricity it gives us. Or maybe there is *less* noise in the day and the constant hum is what I hear now, like the lack of precision you hear underwater, far away but still loud. The air feels dense and sound echoes in the sea of air around us. Whatever the case, it is different at dawn.

I'm groggy as I pull my clothes on, the only good ones left in my drawer because the rest are already packed. I walk out of my room, and the

hall is a dark, sealed-off tube I must go through to get to the kitchen. My footsteps are soft and constant, and I can hear my brother and sister, getting up in their own every-day rituals, putting on their clothes. I walk past the front door. There is no light outside to bring out the colors of the stained glass that frames the door; the glass looks thicker by candlelight.

In the kitchen the inconsistent rumbling of the refrigerator is gone, and my mom is emptying it. She packs the food into a blue ice

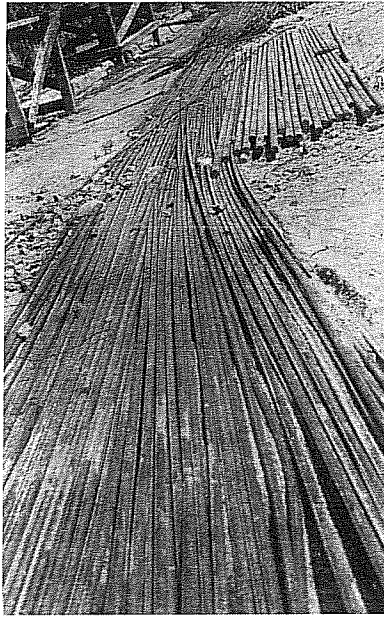
"I know I am awake, that I have seen this before, but I was half-asleep the other times, and the dreamlike appearance sifts around my room."

chest with a white top, and gives us the things we need for a quick breakfast. There will be no one to turn the generator on to keep the fridge running, and no one to eat the green apples and sausages while we're in Tampico. We won't leave anything behind, even for my father, who always stays on the ranch at Oma and Opa's house, his parents' home down the road. Since we're moving to Guadalajara in a week, going to a new life on the other side of Mexico, he won't have to do that anymore.

My kitchen has so many windows it seems to have no walls. Normally you can see our yard, with the little garden of asparagus fifty feet away from the house. You can see a few palm trees in the distance, but we have only one stout tree visible from the kitchen windows. It's right off the porch surrounded by a ring of huge rocks.

Right now, in the absence of day, the windows are black as the ocean's choppy waves at dusk. The flashlights and candles don't give me enough light to see more than a shadow of the porch outside, only the faint outline of the columns that hold up the roof. The windows are dark, but they are not cold; instead of making the kitchen open up into the abyss of the outside world, I feel they block it. The windows are an insulator against the night, and even though it is dark I don't feel threatened. My house is dim but my mind is warm, and I'm home.

When we are all fed, we get into the packed Suburban. We're already dressed for school, but we'll get to sleep most of the drive. The road outside my house is made up of dirt and many large, round stones half-buried in the ground which don't let us go too fast, a mile-long speed bump. I once pushed my bicycle in front of the Suburban late at night, and the headlights sent the shadows of the rocks along the road. While I was pushing my bicycle I could almost



Ana Paula Godoy

imagine I was walking on rocks jutting out of a river. The black water running by my feet left the tops of the stones untouched, and as the car followed me, unsteadily, the water flowed downstream. I kept stepping on the rocks in the spotlight as their shadows created the river, and my bike splashed through, wheels dripping with the shadows.

The car is sending these shadows now, and that's what my cousins probably see as we come around the corner. Montana and Mariana have their backpacks on for school, ready for the last week, (their mother will bring their clothes with her to Tampico later in the day), and we're ready to go. They get in, and we drive off toward the ranch's gate. As we get closer we can see the cars on the highway, little flashes of light. Once we get to the smooth highway we will be able to sleep, and my mom will wake us up when we get close to school. Right now I look out at the home I won't see this early in the morning anymore, and wonder if I'll recognize it in the light of day.

Poetry

Ch-ch-changes

Stephanie Santillan

I closed the car door
and lowered the mirror to fix that unwilling, rebellious hair
I buckled up 'cause we both knew
that we could always end up brutally smashed
into something foreign,
something past our vehicle doors...

That defiant hairpiece eventually made me give in,
and so, defeated by myself
I placed the mirror back where it belonged
and allowed my world to mingle with yours.

...err..no..

it was before that,
I'm positive it was..

See,

it all happened as soon as I got in your car and
as soon as you started the engine;
as soon as we cast out that dull, frigid morning
with all that glee that your music
with-held.

Then,
and only then,
did we really grasp on to what momma liked to call:
"bonding time".

Our conversations?
Trivial..
The time of the day?
Irrelevant!
Our mood?
Pointless!

The only issues that mattered
lived in each and every album you owned.

To this day, Ziggy still plays guitar
Yoshimi keeps on battling the Pink Robots
and Freddy Mercury still seeks "somebody to love".

But it's just not the same without you kid.

Ashley Schmidt

Non-fiction

White to Purple *Amanda Hamilton*

...Each flower is a hand's span
of her whiteness. Wherever
his hand has lain there is
a tiny purple blemish. Each part
is a blossom under his touch
to which the fibres of her being
stem one by one, each to its end,
until the whole field is a
white desire, empty...

— from “Queen Anne’s Lace”
By William Carlos Williams

Everyday it's the same. She's standing in the doorway of the gate. He presses against her, their bodies fused at the hips. His arms clutch her waist, drawing her ever closer. It's unclear whether they're kissing or talking, because their faces are barely distinguishable, barely moving. As I approach, there's no acknowledgement of my presence or my stare or my quickening steps. They don't untangle, they continue their urgent grasp. I can't decide if theirs is an act of defiance or of utter, absorbing love. I'm not sure which one I would rather it be. I'm not sure why I care.

I know that feeling. I have felt the urgent, self-crushing desire--when the grab isn't tight enough, when the body isn't close enough, the kiss isn't deep enough. And so I usually blush when I walk by, pretending that I don't see his hands up her white shirt, her hands gripping the upper part of his thigh (the strange desperate claw of

desire). My stomach sinks with nausea, or is it something else?

It's been a long time since I felt like them—that strange mix of fear and excitement that the first touch of a lover gives. I flash back to sitting on a couch, watching a movie, and feeling the hand on my leg, knowing very well I will not remember what's on the screen but the way the heat from his hand has gone beyond the mole that marks the middle of my thigh. I can picture him walking me to class and putting his mouth to my fingers, a ridiculous gesture that is meant to be silly but from the way his mouth parts just a little as it touches the cleavage of my fingers I know it is also meant to be a thrilling promise.

Fingers are no longer electric. Hand holding is holding hands.

They never cross the threshold of the gate. I imagine her mother has told her she can't leave the house with that boy. So she doesn't. But surely her mother must see her from the window, see the way his hands move over her

body like someone well acquainted with the territory, not a hesitant explorer tracing boundaries. I hear my grandmother's voice, "If he touches her that way in public, you can just imagine what he is doing in private."

She reminds me of Shannon, a 10th grader I taught my first year. Shannon was a strange mix of childishness and sexuality. She lives in my memory as three distinct images, each one a chapter of a sad story. The first is her in the white cheerleading uniform, all boobs and polyester, bent over a Winnie the Pooh coloring book, lost in thought during class. She sighs a little and half-heartedly picks different colors out of her pencil box, red for the shirt, green for the grass. The boy behind her balls up bits of paper and tosses them one by one into her mousse crusted blonde curls until she turns around and flirtatiously smacks his shoulder. As he feigns injury, she catches my stare, rolls her heavily mascaraed, eyes and says, "Boys!"

Before it has faded I hear the echoing giggle of the next chapter. We sit outside on top of a lunch table and she and her friend Rachel have a secret they want to tell me. I play along, prodding and trying to guess. Is it something with Ricky? Has he asked you to the prom? She shakes her head and laughs uncontrollably, nervously and what I now see as desperately. "Ms. Hamilton, I'm pregnant!" She covers her mouth with her carefully manicured hands and chokes back more laughter. The wooden planks jab into me as I try to understand that she will be responsible for raising a child but also memorizing vocabulary lists.

Finally she is bringing the thick black-haired baby outside of my

classroom. She lifts him out of the deep purple carriage, awkwardly, unsure, and puts him in my equally awkward and unsure hands, telling me, "Of course I'm coming back next year. I'm not missing my senior prom! Rachel and I will double-date, right?" My eyes meet Rachel's as she hurriedly says she has to go to math. Shannon yells after her, "Call me later, k? Don't forget!"

How old are the lovers? They both have the willowy look of young adolescents. How quickly this will fade. Instants separate childhood and adulthood, youth and age, unknowing and knowing, passion and accustomedness. How long before my own daughter will be standing at the gate, hopelessly twisted, mingled with a boy scarcely older than herself? How long before she will push boundaries that she doesn't understand? Will I try to deny her that thrilling touch and the stirring of desire?

The fleeting acceleration of my heartbeat makes me undeniably nostalgic. For a moment I wish I were back on the couch, when every touch was a discovery and a kiss wasn't simply a prelude. It's the latent energy of a wrapped present, the saliva that fills your mouth before the first bite, the free fall in your stomach right before you jump.

But then I want to push him away and yank her back into the house. I want to lecture them, protect them from risks they can't possibly understand. I want to tell them to slow down, but not just because deciding to raise a baby or not raise a baby is not the same as deciding what to wear to the prom, but because things that are savored last longer and they will miss this moment at the gate desperately. The



Anonymous

hand that thrills, scares, pushes, tantalize, turns white to purple, the unknown to knowable -- can only be touched and not held.

But I put my head down, stuff my hands in my pocket, hurrying home to see my little family. I walk by unnoticed, silent, feeling guilty and

mortified and responsible. I understand the intense addictive pleasure that physical relationships are when they first begin. What could I say that would be more powerful than that? And besides, I'm afraid they will call me out-say that I'm jealous, not protective.

La Biblia

Juan Pedro Andrés

Desde chico he cargado la Biblia a todas partes. Una costumbre. Siempre salía de viaje y en mi mochila vacía cargaba con la Biblia. Mi mamá nos regaló una a mi hermano y a mí cuando cumplí siete años. Tuve que aprender a respetar que el regalo de mi hermano también era un regalo para mí. Las hojas eran delgadas, tenía un forro plastificado, que con el tiempo fue desprendiéndose, dejando solo el cartón impreso, un fondo blanco y LA BIBLIA escrito en dorado.

Cargaba con la Biblia. Era pesada y la mochila solía ser arrojada. No venía con ninguna clase de estuche, era solo una Biblia, cartón y papel. Dorada, con una dedicatoria. “Para mi hijo Juan Pedro (La otra decía Memo), de tu mamá, que te quiere muchísimo.” La dedicatoria está intacta. La Biblia esta forrada de tape vainilla. Protegida, pero con las puntas achatadas y alguno que otro pedazo colgando. Algunas páginas estaban arrugadas, otras mostraban signos de haber sido mojadas y otras simplemente no estaban.

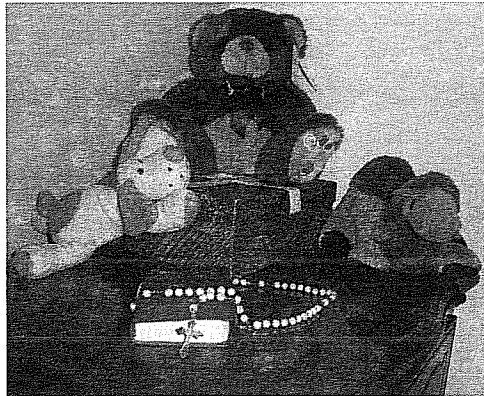
Llevaba mi nombre escrito, claro está, por mi mamá con su inentendible letra cursiva. No solo en la primera página donde se encontraba la dedicatoria, pero también en la portada. Igual que un cuaderno escolar que dice, “Nombre- Juan Pedro Andrés.”

Creo que leí alguna que otra vez las primeras páginas del Génesis. Alguno que otro pasaje cuando estaba triste, enojado, tratando encontrar alguna reconciliación con Dios que no había podido encontrar con mi mamá. A veces la leía cuando estaba enfermo y no había podido ir a misa. Leía acostado boca arriba, mis manos temblando por su peso, tratándome de convencer que así estaba más cómodo.

A los 8 años la leí por puro entretenimiento. A los 10 escribí un trabajo escolar sobre Los Salmos. A los 13 le perdí y a los 13 la volví a encontrar. Y a los 14 postré mi mano sobre ella mientras me confirmaba y en el verano, mientras estaba de campamento, la usé de almohada.

Las hojas eran delgadas y traslucientes. Suspiraba y las páginas se cambiaban. Ese era Dios que quería que leyera un pasaje en específico.

Solía ir a clases de Biblia. Todos los miércoles de cinco a seis. Aprendí a encontrar pasajes velozmente. Sabía que el Génesis era el primer libro y el Apocalipsis el último. Sabía que estaba dividida en dos partes, el antiguo y nuevo testamento. Sabía que antes de Salmos estaba Job y que a San Mateo le seguía San Marcos, San Lucas y San Juan. Sabía quien era Josué, Samuel, Moisés, Isaías. Sabía que se me estaba prohibido leer el Apocalipsis. Sabía que



Andrea López

era pecado. *Sabía* que era pecar. Sabía que era pecador.

Poco a poco fue desapareciendo mi niñez en busca de algo nuevo. Días que dejaba de ser religioso porque me mataba mi conciencia al no poder dejar de pensar “Dios es puto, Dios es puto... No! por favor perdóname... joto, culero, maricón!” Lloraba, anhelaba confesarme pero me daba miedo, estaba seguro de que era el pecador de pecadores, de que lo que hacía era imperdonable y lloraba. Algunas veces llegué a pensar que yo era ese tan aclamado “anticristo”. Entre Biblias se

fue perdiendo mi amor a Cristo, entre miedos.

Perdí la Biblia con la dedicatoria hace un año cuando cambié de casa. Ahora esta es reemplazada por una más pequeña que también sirve de llavero. Dice “La Sagrada Biblia” y no contiene dedicatoria. Le faltan algunos libros, más de la mitad. No tiene el plástico, ni está cubierta de tape. Y las gruesas páginas de papel bond no están leídas, ni arrugadas. Y estoy seguro de que Dios me espera, espera a que abra mi vieja Biblia y pueda mostrarme algún pasaje que leer.

Poetry

Airborne

Jan Hendrik van Zoelen

The engine begins to roar,
Just as your seat presses on your back,
And your back presses on your seat,
But your mind hasn't entered the plane yet,
You are still walking through a street
As the chilly air slowly enters your coat
As your eyes keep working harder
To read the streets' numbers
Since daylight is long gone.

Yet your hand is not cold
Nor alone in your coat,
There is another hand, a lover's hand,
Fighting the chilly air alongside yours,
You smile feebly as you see the hand's owner,
This is the last night for some time.
In some hours,
Your mind will enter a plane,
As you become airborne.



Patty O'Rourke

Non-fiction

The Knee

Doug Parker

On either side of my right kneecap I have a small scar, almost imperceptible, about the size of the eraser on the end of a pencil. Sitting in a leg extension machine in the gym the other day, which sits directly in front of a whole wall of mirrors, I noticed that as I flexed and straightened the leg, the scars began to appear like two eyes on a face, and the tendons running down to the femur gave the face a triangular jaw line. A somewhat frightening face, a mythological beast, a primitive mouthless mask.

I have been thinking a lot about knees recently. In October of last year, after weeks of excruciating pain, I had arthroscopic surgery. I am amazed at how quickly and simply my problem could be removed. I had the operation on Monday morning, left the hospital with no crutches the next day, and returned to work on Thursday. All that is left now is the two dragon eyes beside my kneecap. And the DVD of the operation, which I have not yet seen, but take to any social engagement that holds the prospect of being asked to watch new parents' videos of their child or a fundamentalist's slides of their trip to the Holy Land. I will gladly watch their life defining moments, if in return they are willing to watch the surgeon invade my meniscus. I hope I never have to use it.

A DVD full of blood and parts of the body that were never meant to be displayed on a Trinitron must not be

pleasant. Knees in general are not particularly attractive. Faces, yes. Shoulders and chest, of course. Bottoms. Even the lowly foot is not without its fetishists, but I have never heard a line in a love song about the

I would rather die standing
than live on my knees.

-Emiliano Zapata

shape of one's knee. If anything, the knee is a joint that we have never been entirely comfortable with.

It has been the couture Maginot Line where fashion meets fundamentalism. Hemlines define themselves in relation to the knee. Below the knee says wholesome, morally non-suspect. Fashions above the knee provoke outraged knee-jerk bluenose reactions: shameful, licentious, depraved. And so the seasons pass, knee proudly on display or prudishly hidden.

Knees are also the least accessorized part of the body, with the possible exception of the chin, which as far as I can tell only exists to make shaving difficult and to help us put pillowcases on pillows. We have rings for ears and nose and all extremities, hats for heads, belts for waists, shoes for feet. What for the knee? While it is true that flappers in the Roaring 20's were known to rouge their knees, there is a curious paucity of products to glamorize the knee. This was not always so. In ancient times, nobles who were made the Knights of the Garder were adorned with a blue ribbon to be worn at the knee. On the other side of the ledger, and perhaps explaining the current lack of knee baubles, is 16-String Jack Rann,

an 18th Century highwayman who was known for his fashion sense, especially the 8 brightly colored ribbons he dangled from his knee breeches. He was hanged in 1774.

A few short years after 16-String Jack's ribbons dangled from his dangling body, the French Revolution brought to prominence a whole class of French society named for their lack of knee breeches. The *sans-culottes* were so named for the fact that they preferred the working class' long pants, covering the knee, rather than the more aristocratic *culottes*, or breeches. They spoke for the extreme radical side of the revolution, pushed for universal democracy, and turned against the king. They refused to bend their knee to absolute monarchy, to pay what Milton called "knee-tribute... prostration vile." Throughout political history, the working class constantly brushed the dust from the knees of their trousers. All such lowly laborers and penurious peasants were forced to genuflect (from the Latin *genu*, knee, meaning to bend the knee in subservience) to the knee-breeched and gartered monarch. In the French Revolution, they refused to recognize the authority of the king as genuine (also from the Latin *genu*, from the ancient custom of a father acknowledging the paternity of a new born by placing it on his knee).

Bending the knee has also been a highly symbolic gesture in organized religion. One kneels to pray. Penitent worshippers walk in Holy processions on their knees. Believers approach their Almighty on bended knees. The marriage ceremony involves bride and groom getting on their knees, as Shakespeare recognized in the "wedding scene" in *Othello*, where the evil Iago and the desperate Othello both get on their knees and pledge loyalty to each other.

Curiously, and ironically for anyone who knows the tragic and violent history of male domination of women, men are expected to go down on one knee to propose marriage. I tried that once. Unfortunately, this took place in a crowded disco in the 70's, and in getting to my knee to pop the question I knocked over the table, sending a shower of brightly colored drinks over my polyester shirt and bell bottoms. A sign, perhaps, a premonition?

The next time I proposed I was driving a car on Highway 401 in Toronto, and that marriage makes me (metaphorically) get down on my knees and offer thanks every day.

While I have never had children of my own, I can imagine happy couples weak at the knees when they find out they will soon have a baby, their joy at watching their child crawl, the absolute euphoria at seeing Junior push his knees straight and take his first steps. (Imagine, I said. No videos, please.) This amazing little creature, knee-high to a grasshopper, toddling into the world. I remember as a little child riding the horsy that was my father's knee. Later, as I moved from knee to lap, I remember the books propped on my mother's knees as she read me Bible stories. The expression "learning at someone's knee" is truly apt. But all too soon, we get too heavy for father's knee, too big to sit in mother's lap. And we watch as those amazing people get smaller and begin to complain of aches and pains. "Housewife's knee," they might call it.

My first real job after I left home was installing carpets, tile, linoleum. I spent most of my days on all fours, on hard concrete floors, slamming my knee into a special tool called a kicker that is used to stretch carpet. Carpet layers sacrifice their knees to provide cushion and support for the knees of others. Later, I became a baker, and my knees ached from standing for long hours in

front of huge ovens. I was lucky, though, that I never got Baker's Knee, an inward bending of the knee caused by carrying a heavy breadbasket on the right arm.

But I blame neither of these occupations for my recent surgery. It was sports done me in, I figure. Knees are the Achilles heels of athletes – well, not physiologically, I realize, and I am happy that my doctor knew the difference. I remember lying in the hospital the night before my operation recalling pictures I had seen of Bobby Orr, one of the all time great hockey players and a childhood hero of mine. I lost track of the number of knee operations that he had. Once I saw him on television at a golf tournament. He was wearing shorts and both of his legs had gashingly hideous scar marks from mid thigh to mid calf. He was a young man, but limped painfully even walking from the golf cart to his ball. Knees injuries are certainly the most prevalent injury among athletes, and the greed that is crippling our games is

destroying knees at a truly prodigious rate. Athletes play longer seasons on artificial turf, which is murder on knees, and promising careers end under the scalpel. It is true that sports medicine has made great progress, and one wonders how long Bobby Orr might have played had they had arthroscopy then. My two tiny scars, and my short recovery time, are testimony to the improvement in medical procedures.

I told my doctor how happy I was with the results of the surgery. He

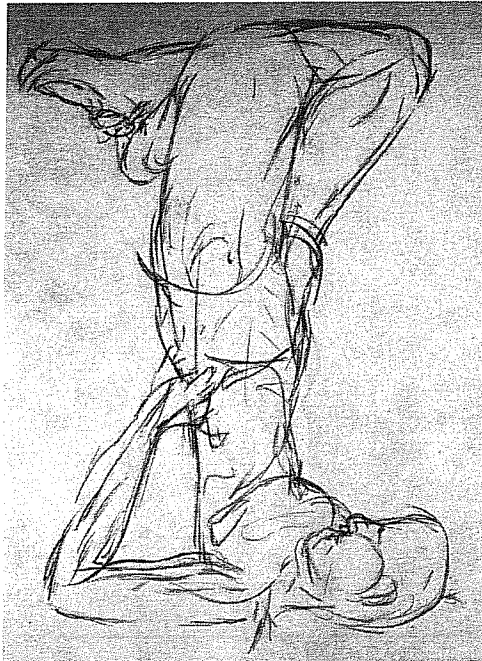
spoke of the success of most knee surgeries, these days, but then he said the words I had been dreading. "You can use your knee completely as normal," he said. "Of course, you shouldn't expect to run any marathons or be a catcher on a baseball team again." The marathons would not be a loss – I run with all the stamina of a firecracker – but to not be a catcher? Most of my adult life I have played baseball, and have always been a catcher, and have spent countless hours of my life that I will never regret bending my knees behind a batter. "He

squats to conquer," I used to boast.

You see, baseball is the greatest game in the universe, and catching is not just a position, but a calling. I figured it out once that baseball success is based largely on staying as close to the earth as possible. No team wants to have the opposing players hit towering fly balls or long line drives. We strive to make them hit the ball on the ground, where they can be thrown out. A good pitcher must

deliver the ball low in the strike zone, closer to the ground. An outfielder must learn to make low throws to his team-mates, keeping it no more than six feet from the earth. A shortstop is constantly reminded to stay low when fielding ground balls.

The catcher, squatting in the dirt every game, is the closest of all to the earth, the most connected to the universal spirit, the chi of baseball. Like Antaeus, the mythological character who could not be defeated as



Miki Ishikawa

long as he was in contact with his mother, the earth, the catcher is just more connected.

But catching is hell on knees. My doctor assumed that my knee problem was probably connected to all those games I spent with bended knee, genuflecting worshipfully to the soul of the game I love. He told me that I could play baseball again, but not the position that I loved, the position that had defined me for as long as I could remember. I have never heard words of such ugliness.

He also told me that it would be a good idea to strengthen the muscles around the knee, to lose some weight, to take some of the pressure off the other knee. And so that was what I was doing in the gym the other day, sitting in the leg extension machine, seeing my knee transmogrify into this voiceless beast.

Or, rather, that was not the only reason.

In less than two months, the baseball team that I helped start in my hometown, the team I played with until it became like a second, better family, is having its 25th anniversary. We will go to see the current incarnation of the team play a league game, have a golf

tournament, a dance. It will be a wonderful chance to see my old teammates, meet their children (grandchildren, in some cases), re-tell old lies and create new ones. A major reason I am in the gym watching my knee roar silently is that when I go to the reunion I want to be in shape. I want them to look at me and think that time has treated me kindly. So, with each barbell I lift, each circuit of the elliptical trainer, I have this image of me as I was 25 years ago – less hair, certainly, much wiser, I hope, but still looking like an athlete.

O.K., there is one more reason.

On the last day of the reunion there is going to be an old-timers' game. As the starting catcher in that very first game twenty-five years ago, I plan to be the starting catcher in that old-timers' game, scarred knee and doctor's warnings be damned. Salvador Dali once said "I seated ugliness on my knees, and almost immediately grew tired of it." The thought of not catching that game is more than I can handle. Once more I want to, I must, strap on the catchers' pads and bend my knee to mortality.

Fiction

Reflection

Cho Eun Jang Lee

January 11, 2003.

This room is where I breathe your warmth and perceive your smell. Here is where I stand for hours looking from picture to picture, taking a glance at our past memories; from friends to girlfriend and boyfriend, and from there to fiancé, but not a single one as husband and wife. But I guess having pictures of us as *one* would make such a difference, since I now don't seem to see the love you give me take shape before me. You've changed. I hate your change. I miss you.

February 3, 2003.

Today I realized what I miss in you. It's that look you had in your eyes. Five years ago, before our marriage, you only had eyes for me. I was the only woman, that one lucky woman who got all the love from you. I was the only one for you. And you were the only one to me. You still are. But I miss those eyes that only saw me. I don't like your deep shiny gray eyes that have learned to see other women.

Deep inside I only murmur with a pitiful belief, if you'll change. Sincerely believing that I will once again be able to see your grey eyes drowned in mine, evidence of deep love.

But will you? God, I hope you do. I will wait for the glint in your eyes to come back. We have time.

February 7, 2003.

I am desperate to know, what has changed you.

Should I tell you what I see? What I feel? And what I want?

But I can't. Anxiety fills me up.

I fear you'll leave me without saying a word.

I will keep silent, with hopes of getting you back again. All of you.

But I notice that the look in your eyes has worsened.

February 8, 2003.

I love you. I love you. I love you.

Today is the 47th time you sent flowers and gifts to the house. Can't you just deliver them yourself? Like you used to? You say more I love yous than any other man will in his entire life.

I'm getting sick of it all. I don't like deliveries. I don't want any of it.

I want to see you in daylight. Not in the dim lights of our bedroom after 10 p.m., three hours after you have gotten off from work.

I feel left out.

I love you. I love you. I love you.

Don't you ever get tired?

February 12, 2003.

I love you.

To the most beautiful woman.

I love you.

To the most beautiful woman.

February 14, 2003.

Valentine's Day. The whole mansion decorated in pink, white, and red. Beautiful face, perfect silhouette, floral dress, diamonds here and there, shining. *Fancy* life? Maids and chefs running to and fro with smiles on their faces. A perfect fake one on mine. I find him and look into his eyes. In the middle of the grey eyes, I see a curious reflection. There's a woman with the same floral dress and diamonds but she wears another face. Another woman. Another *me*. Maids and chefs serving at the party with smiles of contempt on their faces. Fake. FAKE. FAKE!

February 15, 2003.

Frazzled.

Impatient.

Desperate.

February 16, 2003.

Hi. How was your day? Fine. Hug. Kiss. I love you. I love you, too. You look beautiful today. Really? Yes, of course. Thanks. Stab. Struggle. Stab. ***** Lose control. River of blood. Scream.

February 17, 2003.

Mr. Veducchi. R.I.P.

Poetry

To See You *Paulina Aldana*

To see you vulnerable
For the first time
Lying in bed.
A glass of water sits next to the two aspirins
You forgot to take.
The bed is still made.
Your mouth is slightly open
Still breathing last night's mistakes,
But everything is fine
Because you'll wake up
Under the nostalgic, grey Sunday sky
(Like when you woke up under the sound of a morning show
When you were seven)
And ask me what's for breakfast.
I'll smile
At your door.
Today I'll leave the curtains drawn
So that the sun won't reach your eyes.



Andrea López

Dísertación de Pedro Páramo

Gízeh Becerra

Comala es un pueblo con una realidad fragmentada, ambigua. Es un espacio fuera del tiempo, cuyos habitantes viven en el recuerdo. El pueblo no está habitado por gente, sino por almas en pena, por murmullos. Este pueblo de fantasmas no es el lugar donde se desarrollan los hechos de la novela, sino un hecho por sí solo, una realidad mágica cuyo rol se va discerniendo a medida que el lector se pierde en los fragmentos y en los monólogos.

"Este pueblo de fantasmas no es el lugar donde se desarrollan los hechos de la novela, sino un hecho por sí solo..."

La estructura de la novela se presta para crear un sentido de irrealidad, el cual elimina la noción del tiempo y mezcla presente con pasado. No existe una realidad fija. Los pasajes se pierden para comenzar con otros abruptamente, y luego volver. En un ir y regresar y adelantarse, la vida de Pedro Páramo deja de pertenecer a otro tiempo y se integra al plano "presente" en que habita Juan Preciado.

Los fragmentos dejan de existir por separado a medida que el lector se pierde entre los dos planos. Al igual que los personajes, el lector queda atrapado en un ambiente anacrónico donde tiene que discernir que es real y que no; pero como sucede con Juan Preciado, el lector también se deja llevar por las palabras

(los murmullos) y a medida que la novela avanza termina por aceptar esta ruptura del tiempo. Así, las realidades de Pedro Páramo y de Juan Preciado dejan de estar intercaladas y se funden en los recuerdos de los muertos.

"Ruidos. Voces. Rumores. Canciones lejanas..." ese es el entorno al que pertenecen Juan y los demás. Los personajes no son más que recuerdos. Recuerdos anacrónicos que ahora pertenecen al pueblo, a la tierra y que despiertan con la

lluvia. Todos piensan, todos hablan, toda la historia del pueblo se vuelve un conjunto de monólogos interiores. "Este pueblo está lleno de ecos. Tal parece que estuvieran encerrados en el hueco de las paredes o debajo de las piedras...Oyes crujidos. Risas. Y voces ya desgastadas por el uso."

Los fragmentos y los murmullos de la gente crean esta existencia fuera de tiempo; haciendo que la narrativa misma se convierta en un susurro, un lamento de un pueblo que cayó en la tragedia. El estilo de Juan Rulfo mantiene a Comala en estado de arrepentimiento y rencor: siempre recordando, siempre rumoreando, siempre penando.

Non-fiction

Life and Unexpected Visitors

Diego Hernández Díaz

How often does one find himself in an awkward position because of an unexpected visitor? Be it a meteorite that comes crashing down to earth, compressing all the air beneath it so fast that the temperature rises to a number comparable only to the surface of the sun, or a long-lost friend that leaves damp towels on your bathroom floor, or a parent arriving at a friend's party, they are all the same. An unwanted visitor hits like a meteor and leaves little trace. They are the perfect crime.

Memories are my unwanted visitor. Memories have the ability of baring the soul to the jagged knife of remembrance. For me it all begins with the sight of a picture, the reading of the news, or just leaving my mind open to whatever thoughts may come. Memories rush in, taking advantage of the unlocked back door. They are unstoppable, indomitable; even when I attempt to distract myself from them they get their hold and I am caught. You can't run away from your memories. They stake their flag and sit back admiring their conquered territory.

As I walked down the cobble stone streets of my hometown I looked at the forest. There it was, my home and backyard: beautiful, silent, dormant. I wondered what living beings dwelled there at that moment, existing quietly in the tranquility of the afternoon: birds, lynxes stalking rodents through the

trees, ants: red ants — but then my thoughts were interrupted as a beat-up pick-up truck drove by playing loud country music, leaving my mind blank and vulnerable...

My dad and I start jogging at eight o'clock in the morning towards *La Primavera* woods. My dad talks to me, in perfect control of his breathing while checking his pulse every five minutes on a little watch-like device he wears.

He tells me of his days working the fields in *Jiquilipan* and of my grandpa who punished them for not doing their homework. *Eramos unos vagos* he says, almost to himself. My dad says my grandpa would always tell them to look up when walking and when working; not only would it give them good posture, but it was the only way they would achieve anything. At seven years of age I never truly understood the significance of his story.

It wasn't until then, almost ten years later, that I began to grasp its meaning.

A little later I notice the road beneath our feet has run away from us and we are now jogging cross-country, an enjoyable sport, especially back then when tourists had not invaded every square inch of virgin territory. We continue jogging, listening to the smooth thud-thud-thud of our shoes against the green slopes. We only stop long enough to crawl below wire fences or to cross the many small canyons that plague the countryside.

Fish and visitors smell in three days.

-Benjamin Franklin

I remembered falling into one of the canyons once. Time froze as I was suspended in the air for a millisecond before I accelerated, dropping 4 meters into the pit. I was dead. I was sure. That is, I knew I was dead until I found myself waist deep in two meters of dead leaves. Funny how the dead keep the living going.

Yesterday I found myself reading "A Brief History on Nearly Everything" during one of those very rare and very special moments in junior year in which one not only has the time to pursue an interest of choice but also the energy to indulge in it. I found myself in the middle of a particularly fascinating chapter discussing the beginning of the universe and its size (apparently it is so large that the idea of aliens travelling a hundred billion trillion miles to leave unclear messages in corn fields seems to be naïve) when my mind began digressing. I had just read about a particular theory that claimed that the moon was a residual part of the Earth, ejected into space by a massive meteorite comparable in size to the one that extinguished the dinosaurs. I thought of how peaceful and restless dinosaurs would have been when the blast wave tore their flesh cleanly off their bones and almost destroyed every bit of life the planet had managed to create. Life has a nasty habit of surviving anything the dead throw its way.

I sat in the waiting room. Somewhere inside my mother sat, her leg torn open after a biking accident. My father came to me, took me to her room, and instructed me to watch as the bike grease inside her calf was removed, her skin punctured, and her leg sown. As I tried to clear my mind, I let my memories surround me.

I was in Germany three years ago during my summer vacation. My parents had started the tradition of shipping me off to the old continent for the duration of the summer when I was nine. This particular summer had been restful. The thing about a summer in Germany is that it is unlike any other; one day the heat is unbearable and the next the cold numbs the senses. I was living with Julia, a Mexican-German who I had met in Guadalajara when she was visiting her grandparents

Germany in summer is a well-tempered mixture of Italian gelato, German Bratwurst, and Turkish döner-kebab.

The day before we had been at a party until 2 a.m. when one of our mutual friends decided to jump out of the window of the 5th story apartment building we were in. The music came to a screeching stop as the few of us who were sober raced to the street both hoping to and wanting not to get there first. As we crossed the building's lobby and ran to the street we saw Johann writhing on the floor. He had jumped feet first and his legs were a mess of splintered bones and gushing veins. The base of his foot touched his knee as half a dozen severed muscles tried to keep the whole ensemble together. His face was white with pain and fear and his palms were so bloody; he had peeled his skin off the bone in



Miki Ishikawa

the fall. We bundled his legs in jackets and covered him with a blanket while we doused his head with cold water to keep the fever from getting too high as we rushed him to the hospital.

Two hours later, with my hands caked with blood, we went home. There I rinsed my hands and watched as the red rivers ran across the kitchen sink.

Johann lived after he spent 5 weeks in the ICU. The dead didn't want his company.

I sit on my bed with my model airplane kit. The television is on, the music is playing and my mind is stretched. I turn everything off fearing what I know will come.

I remember sitting between my mom and dad on a Mexicana plane. My hands trembled a little. I was only two when I took my first plane trip – that is, the first I could remember. The flight attendant brought me some crayons and told me to pay attention to the security instructions. After the belt buckle explanation (for all those who had never ever been inside a car or could not figure out the two-piece puzzle), I stared out at the wings through my little window. My mom asked me if everything was all right as the plane shuddered away from the terminal, looking for its place on the runway. I turned to her and asked her when the wings would start flapping. My mom laughed as she tried to explain that planes didn't flap their wings. All the way, and for several years afterwards, I wondered how planes flew.

Even now the principles aren't very clear to me, which troubles me every time I hear the groaning of the plane as it fights gravity.

And so now I sit and wait. There is nothing to be done.

I came home late that Friday night. As I fumbled for my keys in the near darkness I stumbled across a crying bulk of a man. My neighbor lying on the floor cried for his father and brother. I tried to help him up, the smell of cheap alcohol and cigarette clinging to him like a second skin. *Come on Francisco, time to go home.* He was a forty-year-old man with arrested development in a shameful state of inebriation

I've been thinking. Too many people make a living off the dead. Death is a wholesale business it seems. There are makeup artists, taxidermists, undertakers and grave diggers to start with. I think this as I walk through the forest; it's that time in the year when the floor is carpeted in a soft bed of pine needles. They are bright red, like fire ants that make diligent columns and carry the fresher pine needles to their camp in a tireless effort to feed the colony. A beautiful, cleared-out, rocky area.

Then the ants flash in and out scurrying out of the sheet of red pine needles. They stand for fire without heat. Ants and memories, it seems, hide in that red thicket we call our brain and come and go at their own free will, entities beyond our control.

Poetry

IN RUINS: There Are No Foreign Objects

Daniel J. Hamilton

Unlike us
a pencil, a wristwatch, a cup,
even Odysseus' oar
planted upright in the earth;
No thing
is truly foreign.
Left in any country long enough
objects pull on their coats of dust
with perfect equanimity.

Time is the currency
with which an object buys a place.
In a country where no one salts their meat
Odysseus' oar has weathered and been bleached
in turn by rain and sun. The oar
(unknown by that name)
does not miss the sea.
Here it is the measure of snow,
silent witness, and everyone's memory
of fierce, unforgiving Januarys.

And what of us
who no amount of time or dust
can release from stubborn individuality
or enfold in warm arms of belonging.
Exiles, transplants, foreigners,
home was not a room to simply
close a door and walk away from.
And the path we are on
will never take us there again



Marilyn Jimenez

NOTE: The prophet Tiresias instructed Odysseus to appease Poseidon's wrath with a sacrifice made far inland. "take up your well shaped oar and journey until you come where there are men who know nothing of the sea, who eat unsalted meat, who never have known ships painted purple or well-shaped oars. Then you must plant your oar in the ground and make ceremonious sacrifice.

Poetry

Chemo

Ana Gaby González Ayala

It skydived into the trashcan
Friction-full free fall
A committed crime.

The weapon was wiped
And strategically left
On the wooden surface
Of the bedside table.

The malevolent comb
Turned the black into shiny and-
Bald.

Turned her beauty into frailty
Turned her breathing into sighs.



Anonymous

Non-fiction

Carousel

Paulina Aldana

We were next to the road to Zapotlanejo. The speeding semi-trailers buzzed the *hacienda* and made the rusty carousel half spin. I had been watching it for over fifteen minutes now, trying to find significance in the elephant's blackened eyes. Someone, sometime, had decided to go ahead and blind the blue elephant. Now, eyes completely black, a straight smile, and his upraised trunk. I couldn't dare walk down to the heavy, dusty grass it lay on. I used to, but now his eyes couldn't see and I knew that as a child I would have fooled around, imagining it was the devil, but not today.

It was easy for you to lay on the bed, half naked, no covers. You had done nothing different, your life had not changed forever. I could still smell the booze you spilled last night on the mattress; it echoed my laughter. The semi-trailers kept roaring. Somewhere outside our window stood a bearded, old man, selling coconut water. Next to him sat his wife peeling *tunas* with her bare hands, rough and callous, swiftly avoiding the tiny thorns on their skin.

And then you served us breakfast. Scrambled eggs and milk. These I hardly ever have for breakfast, they bear such a stoic taste. But today you searched through the musty, wooden cupboards for some bowls. You

washed off the layer of time that had settled on them and served. My fork's tines were twisted almost all to the left.

We spoke, mostly about the weather and how warm, uncomfortably moist it made us feel. If it were an

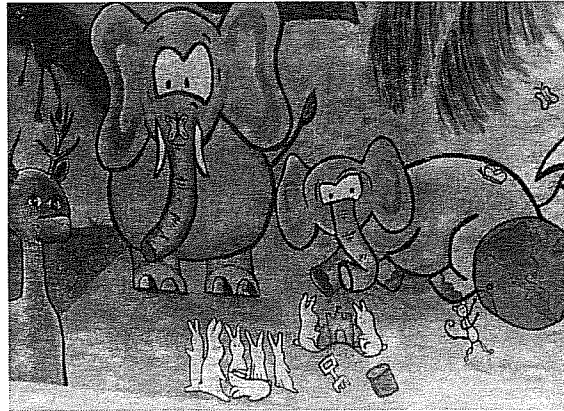
earlier time, a time when I did know where the bowls were kept, we would be talking about our next trip to the pig's pen, or the next race to *Don Benito's* hut where he would serve us a warm glass of fresh milk.

The TV would be set in the

background, *Chabelo's* voice would ring from its speakers, comforting, like the feeling of waking up on a Sunday morning when you are eight and your mother has already served breakfast.

Now the pigs were gone and they left behind only the chilly structure of their pen. *Don Benito* lay in bed, suffering from a heart attack and weary with the passage of time.

We were heading back, you carried the bags and I called home. I felt sick. Deep inside I knew I wished my mother had never let me come. It was useless, we were still afraid of each other's insecurities. I wished you knew that the real reason I was wearing my sweatshirt around my waist was because I was hiding my hips. You hesitated when you spoke to me and never looked me straight in the eyes. It would have been so much easier if we had just told



Michael Valdivia

each other everything we wanted the other to know about us but we kept it in silence, like if that covered the fact that you had a scar on your arm that you were always trying to hide and I had huge hips.

The road to Zapotlanejo was left behind, one or two men in *sombreros* headed its way. I've never ridden a road without my father and now it was you who switched the speeds with your right

hand, occasionally resting it on my left leg. Still it was nothing different to you. You were safe and heading back home after a weekend away. You had taken a bath and left your blonde hair unbrushed.

The thing is, you didn't notice the elephant's black eyes. Somebody blinded him and I knew why. That elephant had witnessed many lives and nobody dared to go near him.

Poesía

Solidaridad

María del Lourdes Govea Mendoza



Miki Ishikawa

Solidaridad

Es llanto que no corre
intenta y se detiene
intenta y se contiene
inventa que sostiene
ilesa me pretende

es agua que se estanca
grito que se calla
mueca que se apaga

Dolor ajeno pero mío
pena de otros que son míos

Poesía

Viejecita Paulina Aldana

*“Los ancianos se asemejan a aquellos
libros viejos y por lo común apolillados,
podridos y mal encuadernados que contienen
cosas excelentes”*

- Clemente XIV

Andas siempre sonriendo
Tapadita con tu chal salmón.
Pareciera que alguien puso ahí esa sonrisa,
Dedicada.
Pero tú, la de los cabellos rojos alborotados,
No sabes ni como me llamo.
Te paseas solita por la casa,
Chancleando,
Para avisar que por ahí andas con tu plato de papaya.
Ahí se te ocurre limpiar la cocina,
Pasas un trapo remojado por la cantera gastada
Murmullándole a los aires
Que tus nietos hijos de la fregada
Te la andan ensuciando.
Ándele, a ver su novela, que ya esta anocheciendo.
Váyase viejecita, con su linda sonrisa.

Non-fiction

Washington Square Park

Diego Hernández Díaz

"I'd like to play against you, sir."

"Sho' kid, five dollars will get you a game."

I agreed with quiet determination as my friends sat down looking at the board expectantly. I watched his large, brown hands move with ease across the fallen pieces that lay on the built-in chess board in the park's small tables.

His fingers moved carefully and expeditiously as he made the rooks, towers, pawns, horses and bishops stand proudly.

"I'll play with 3 minutes on the watch kid." After considering for about a second he said, "I'll let you have five."

There it was, the mind game began.

"You start," he said, in the sort of calm voice one would expect from a man who plays chess for a living with New York City tourists who have a deer-in-headlights look on their faces. He knew I was only a young man playing at being a chess player.

I moved. The man took all of two seconds to consider his play and moved his horse. Time wound down and I wondered how these men did it. They sat around Washington square in the sub zero weather with the wind viciously

biting at their bones waiting all day for a contender. They wore suits and button-up shirts that only had half the buttons.

"Come on, kid, you don't wanna do that...think!"

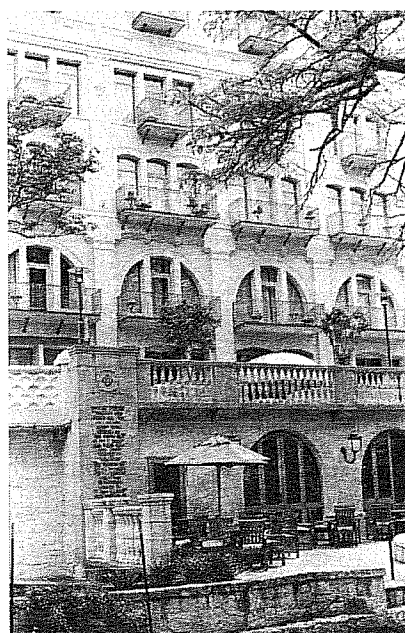
Many things in my life call for instantaneous decisions. Deciding what to eat when reaching the end of the line at the cafeteria counter, choosing what

color ink to write in: blue or black. Should I stay in the left lane or move to the right lane? Trivial things completely unrelated to a game of chess. And yet here I am thinking this as the temperature drops and I watch my little white soldiers be defeated by little black horses. Chess is good against evil in the struggle to have the last king standing. A game of chess happens faster than live.

I moved my queen to the center of the board in an attempt to capture his bishop. Alas, a trap I did not

see lay in hiding ready to take my brazen knight. They say a fool know no fear, a hero shows no fear. I'm afraid I am the former.

When a warrior steps up to battle and surveys the horizon of opportunities he chooses the ones that will let him stay alive. Minutes pass and as he finds himself in the heat of battle it dawns of him, no choice will let him keep his life.



Ana Gabriela González González

His tower will take my queen, I eat the bishop. Moves that place your most powerful weapon in a vulnerable position should not be done in the heat of passion. Bring out cannon onstage only if you plan on using it wisely.

“Passion should never, ever rule reason, kid. Are you listening?”

I have no time to trick and deceive; no time to set a simple trap. I find myself constantly scrambling to survive.

“I can’t castle while in check, can I?” You’d think a simple question.

“Of course not. The game would be too easy if you could. This ain’t a game of checkers kid. Your pieces ain’t going to live. Funny, ain’t it? Live is just evil spelled backwards.”

There is a stirring behind me and my classmates point at Seymour Hoffman, the man who played Capote, and whisper. I sit impressed; a simple man choosing not to stop and look at the chess game on his way home with a brown bag of groceries in hand. I wonder if he’ll wave back— STOP! Concentrate on the game. Like that tantalizing promise of eating his queen that if I do will leave me in check. What stars will do to you; look up to them as long as you don’t bother them.

What is it like to be someone else for an hour and a half? Makeup on and you are what you’ve been assigned. It must be liberating experience. Much like when a pawn turns into a queen as it reaches the end of the board. It must be the sense of freedom, of moving in two planes rather than one. I could never do it. It’s hard enough to pretend you’re a salesman or an agent during the scarce minute and a half that a prank call lasts. I wonder if a pawn feels itself enlightened as it gains the two-dimensional movement. If an actor “feels” like

another person as he veils his face with powders and shadows and becomes.

If only life were like chess. Not chess like the one I’m playing; a life lived in a hurry is a life wasted in time. Chess is not meant to be rushed. That isn’t to say that chess ought to be slow, every move considered lengthily. It should be efficient and certain, or close enough. No choice is certain in chess. What if we were the little black and white men doggedly moving forward stepping sideways only to destroy someone else? No middle ground; black or white.

“Like I said kid, you shouldn’t have done that, shouldn’t have done that.” The man then proceeded to show me just how many ways he could check me. I was empty handed, no cards. Here was a man showing me all his cards and I could do nothing. It is then when I realized that he could have shown me the world but with no cards of my own to play, it mean nothing.

“Chess should come to you like a second nature. Like the twitching on your eye or the ups and down of our chest,” said the man, his hands were rugged. They were dry and flaky with thick knuckles. His brain had the chess pathway imprinted. Chess, as a life experience. He is a bishop among men travelling straightforward paths in black and white.

“You ought to think three steps back and three steps ahead, both in life and in chess, kid. You need to think before you act, be confident when you do and bold as you do it. Basic street smarts, kid.”

I moved my last knight into a desperate position to place him in check only to get captured by a solitary pawn.

“That’ll be five dollars.”

And then all my thoughts, the
tingling of fingers, the frostbite in my
cheeks and moving of pieces ends with a

single material statement. Much like life;
rest in peace.

Non-fiction

1993

Ana Jiménez

I have vivid memories of my kindergarten room, K-5, and my teacher, Ms. Suelen. Some people, I imagine, fell in love with their first teachers. Perhaps they have fond memories of listening to a matronly woman bring stories alive or staring in awe as she shows them the wonder of an ant farm or moss. Not me. Ms. Suelen yelled all day. It was as if someone had mistakenly let an angry parrot out of its cage and into our kindergarten classroom. She had a long nose that pointed downward and she used to flap her arms whenever she got irritated, which was at minimum, three times a day. And how can I not remember her annoying screechy voice? "Finger-painting should not cause all this mess! Why are you never careful?"

During that year I was left at after school care for the first time in my life, and I was not very familiar with what was done during those hours after the normal curricular finger-painting and name-writing lessons were over. So I did what I loved the most, I played with the wooden blocks. Ms. Suelen was in the classroom and I knew she hated noise; as a result, there I was, quietly and calmly building myself a block mansion when I saw Carlos. I was lucky to have him present on that boring afternoon. He was that kid that every kindergarten class has, the one with the clever ideas, who is always in trouble for them. Like the time he decided to

put glue on a chair and waited for someone to sit down and get "stuck" but instead ended up making a white, soupy mess to which no one got near.

He approached me with a grin on his face and made an interesting offer. I stared at him, wondering for a minute or so. Then I looked around for any signs of Ms. Suelen; she was nowhere to be seen, so I decided to take

"As I sat there, I was wondering if my parents would react as Ms. Suelen had, dreading they would think the same of me, hoping they wouldn't be disappointed."

his offer. He leaned forward and kissed me. Undoubtedly it was a kindergarten kiss, as innocent as the Clifford book which had been

read to us an hour before. But to interrupt our moment was Ms. Suelen, of course.

I don't know where she came from but she started yelling like crazy, and flapping her arms frantically. We just stared at her, with our eyes wide open, stunned and confused. Apparently she did not share our concept of a good way to throw some sparks into an otherwise boring afternoon. I was not very used to being yelled at, so I started to cry. I did not quite understand why what we had done was something so utterly wrong. But at the same time, I felt mortified for disappointing her. We were sent to different corners of the classroom until it was our time to go home. We sat staring miserably at a white wall, trying to figure out why we were there, since that was what we were told to do. As I sat there, I was wondering if my parents would react as Ms. Suelen had, dreading they would

think the same of me, hoping they wouldn't be disappointed.

As soon as my mother stepped into the classroom, Ms. Suelen started bombarding her with all the details of the horrible thing I had done. My mother listened patiently and as soon as Ms. Suelen finished yapping, she took my hand and led me out the door. My mother's reaction was opposite to my teacher's; she was not freaking out and she was definitely not sending me to a corner all by myself. We got home and continued our day as any other one. My mother's attitude hinted that I had done no wrong. But still I was not completely sure. I was eager to know what was going through her head. But I just felt eager, she did not make me feel scared.

I have never feared my mom. I respect her; and this respect is not one based on fear, but on trust--the trust that I can take risks and do what feels right to me, without being judged or yelled at. Looking back, I can see that this trust in myself and in risks, and most importantly in the unending, impartial, and yet loving support of my mother began the same day as of my first kiss.

When night came, my mom took me to my room, ready to go to bed. She tucked me in, kissed me on the forehead, and said her usual, "Good night, I love you," to which she added, "Hey, why'd you kiss that boy?" I looked up from my pillow and answered, "I wanted to see what it felt like." She smiled and said, "Oh...I see."

Fiction

Carrot Soup Juan Pedro Andrés

Her hair was pulled back, as she always wears it now, and her eyes held that familiar warmth which was typical of her. She was wearing her long silk dress, the one she usually wore when going out, but instead of elegant black shoes, she wore soft slippers. Her legs were crossed and the dress was pulled back showing her knee. Her overlapping foot was half drawn from the slipper, barely showing the blue-green veins wrapped in the felted shoe.

She didn't know why I was taking that picture. I'm certain her eyesight was so diminished she couldn't distinguish the camera in my hands from a common cup of tea or bowl of carrot soup. Yet something in her look told me she had been waiting for that picture. It was impossible for her to know my intentions, but she didn't pose, she was herself. For the first time in my life she wasn't wearing that glamorous persona: her eyes were silently smiling as I pushed until I heard a click. Christina won't remember her; she is only two. Neither will Arthur, he is due in two months. But the picture will always be mine to keep and to show to my children and to tell them, "*This was Grandma.*"

Mother has never learned how much I will miss her. How much I have wanted a good picture of her to put on

my bed side table. I have one of my father; he died long ago. My mother gave it to me when I was seven. She told me, "This was your father." My father has only ever been the man in the picture. I don't know anything other than that. He used to wear khaki pants, and he had a dark mustache. He was bald, but the little hair he had, he pulled back as if it were abundant. He possessed a fatherly grin, wrinkled and soft. For all I

know he was a sailor, a fireman, a police man, or best of all, a hunter, going out into the woods everyday, climbing trees, crossing rivers, lurking silently in

search of the great bear I imagined and fighting it with his bare hands.

Yet now, at thirty-four, it's harder to imagine him that way. Mother being sick and all, it's hard to remember him as something more than a picture she had given me.

It's hard to fill my mind with something more than how horrible it is inside my mother's room. I once went there for comfort; now it is just a broken room. The smell is thick and the bed is always undone, my mother lying in it. The light that enters the room shows the tiny dust particles that give off an ancient feeling which is new to this room, poisoning it, poisoning my mother. Only twenty five years ago, this dust had been made of gold and shined

"There are bowls all around the house, half emptied. They are cold, heartbreakingly cold, heart-shatteringly icy."

on top of the bed cover, the pillows, and the rug when I would slowly walk into the room, and hide in a place that might be overlooked. A few minutes later my mom would find me and tell me it was ok if I didn't want to play the piano.

My mother is now an old woman, too old for her age. The curtains that rest on the couch die mercifully, along with the symmetrical cushions, arranged to perfection. Square pillows placed diagonally, those same cushions she had asked me to mess up when I was little.

My mother is now merely a replica of her former self, a mere reflection of her warmth, her smile, her pain. The camera shows that well. The ashtray is empty but she chooses to leave it on the table to remind her of the good days.

I used to love carrot soup. She used to make it when I was sick. If I finished it, it meant that I would get better soon. Now I make carrot soup for her. Yet this is not the same warm and loving carrot soup I used to have when I

was little. There are bowls all around the house, half emptied. They are cold, heartbreakingly cold, heart-shatteringly, icy. I know it, but it still frightens me when I dip my finger in to make sure.

I don't want to tell her, tell her that this picture is the only one I will have of her and that it will be the picture that reminds me of her once she is dead. She will be gone one day, even forgotten, but the picture will stay in my room and she and my dad will be together. It will turn sepia and the edges will rot but it will stand longer than my hopes ever did. She endures her treatment, and I take pictures of her.

Someday, my children will come up to me and ask me, "Who was your mother?" and I will show them this picture.

"This was her." Her hair will be pulled back and she will always be happy. The light will be perfect. Her legs majestically crossed one over the other sitting on her couch in a first grader's frame, adorned with blue, green, yellow, and red buttons.

Tú

Tú,
Que dejas caer
Los pétalos
Para que luzcan las espinas.
Y con el tacto
Envenenas las manos,
Soplas el corazón,
Muerdes el cerebro,
Y aun así te quiero.

Siniestro

El deleite de pensar
Que el morir
No es el final,
Y que al pensar
Se puede acariciar,
Y que al amar
Se puede razonar
Yo por eso escojo:
Un amor
Y tres cafés,
Una sonrisa
Y dos pastillas,
El cielo
Con sus libros,
El infierno
Y ser ateo,
La vida
Y no la muerte,
El espacio
Y no a la gente.

Las Persianas

El viento suaviza
tu cabello
despegándolo involuntariamente,
haciéndote cubrir
los pocos rastros de piel,
que enseñaba tu cuello.

Tus manos, agitadas,
se revuelcan con tu aliento
mientras esperas
al coche que llega tarde,

los
que te ven y no se arrepientan.
huyen y luego regresan.

Piden asilo,
te aman,
te escupen
y se van.

¿Y yo?
Me escondo entre las persianas
Volteo,
Y me da miedo.

The Checkered Scarf

Megan Verlage

I moved my pen along the seams of my hand. My hands always seemed to have ink on them, probably 'cause I often found myself with nothing better to do. I was sitting at my usual place on the steps, surrounded by my same six childhood friends. The talk of the day was the usual – chicks. Me and Jeff were the only ones without girlfriends, and frankly, I lost interest in the conversation very quickly. My pen ran out of ink. I frowned and threw it across the street. My eyes glanced up to see where the pen had landed, but they instead focused on a small dog sniffing a nearby tree. My instincts picked me up on my feet and urged me to jog towards it. The dog was scared, and was dragging a blue leash behind it. When the dog saw me, it bolted, but I dove and caught the end of the leash. It tugged me frantically, yelping. I got up and, despite its efforts, pulled the runaway dog towards me. My friends were all still as statues, silently staring. After wiping off the dust from my jacket and adjusting my checkered scarf, I picked up the squirming dog. Jeff walked over from across the street towards me.

“Tim, what do you think you’re doing?”

I looked into his cold steel eyes. He wasn’t the nicest guy, but he didn’t smoke. That was the only reason he was my roommate. I couldn’t stand the smell of tobacco.

“What breed is it?” I asked.

“Did you not hear me? What are you thinking, going around rolling in dirt? Look at you! You’re filthy!”

“Since when do you care?”

“Since I’ve had to share an apartment with you, which I am tired of cleaning up”

“Tell me what breed it is, or I’ll pound you.”

I could see that he finally realized I wasn’t kidding, and was hit with the fact that I was much taller and broader than he was. He gave me a long, hard stare and

then looked down at the dog. His bushy eyebrows were furrowed, but not out of concentration. Jeff didn’t like to be pushed around, but I didn’t care. I glanced over and saw that the rest of the group were entertaining themselves by putting graffiti on the wall that was behind them.

“It’s a beagle, and by the looks of it, it cost someone a pretty penny.”

Jeff knew animals, but didn’t love them. He worked in a pet shop three blocks away.

“I’m going to keep him, Jeff.”

If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you; that is the principal difference between a dog and a man.

-Mark Twain

“And what, let it piss all over the carpet? I’ll keep it at the pet store ‘til someone claims it.”

“I’m not going to leave it in some stinking pet shop.”

I returned his cold, unblinking stare. He laughed.

“Fine, fine. I’ll go nick some biscuits from the store.”

He turned around and walked off towards the store.

“Tim! Wanna come bowling with us?!” someone yelled from across the street.

I could see they all had their cigarettes out, and the sight of them made me refuse the offer. As they obnoxiously walked down the street

together, I set the dog down, keeping a firm hold on the leash. The ink on my hands was smeared on the dog. I looked over to the wall they had ruined, and saw what they had written on the wall: “Bird Lives.” While staring at it, I heard a piercing whistle. The dog went ballistic and was tugging towards a man who had suddenly turned the corner. I ran along with the dog until we got to the old man who had produced the ear-splitting whistle. As I panted along with the dog, the old man stood staring in silence. He was wearing the exact same checkered scarf as the one around my neck.

“Looks like you’ve found my dog, boy.”

Poetry

Rain Over Panama Bay

Michael Hogan

And birds splashing in dentures the tiles make.
Everything corporal melting in the mist:
water dimpled and undimpled
and pleasure boats nodding surfeit of sunsoaked idleness.
Canella-toned girls in halters
secure in *fresa juventud* do not see
what fate takes for granted
not the flash of wild canaries
hummingbird-like between drops
nor the centuries-weary olive presiding over untended gardens:
exposed roots like rotten molars
grandmother mosses that suffocate in the sound
of earth slowly subsiding into the Canal.
accumulating rust of a Colonial soul
letting go.

Imprisoned in a Memory

Alexia Halteman

He sits on the cot, alone in the tiny space, looking at that Polaroid picture of his daughter, happily hugging him. Afraid that the excitement his daughter shows in the picture will be taken away, ripped out of his hands, once she knows her Daddy has been a bad person, he grips the picture a little tighter. He knows she would defend him, say her Daddy had never done anything wrong; she'd say her Daddy wasn't capable of such a thing. He doesn't want this to change.

He hopes desperately that his daughter is too naïve to understand, that she doesn't know why she has to come and visit him every other weekend in this horrible place instead of taking a ride on a carousel, like normal kids do on Sundays. He knows he has erred, but so have so many others. It was just a coincidence that he was the one that got caught. And now he's stuck in jail with his guilt for two years.

He peers into the picture through pained eyes:

A room of brown tiles all around, dull to the last spider-webbed corner. The only thing in it is the standard issue wooden table with two chairs to sit on. There he is, a man of about thirty-five with a stubby beard that gives him a filthy look; his brilliant, blue-green eyes are the only trace left of his former life. His shirt and pants are both the same shade of brown as the monotonous brown on the walls. He is holding the hand of a woman who tries

to smile despite the sad look in her eyes. He can tell that she had tried her best to look good, just to please him. She's very pretty, in her own way, with her big lips and small intelligent eyes. Sitting on the man's lap is a girl of about five. Her blonde, shoulder-length hair is styled with blue ribbons that match her dress. The dress is patterned with blue hues and white flowers and has puffy sleeves to go with its bulgy bottom half. She

looks happy, delighted to be with her father.

He remembers the day they took that picture like it was yesterday.

They took several pictures. At first he didn't want to. He wouldn't want his daughter to look at them in a few years and realize what that strange colorless room was. Even so, one of his daughter's wide-mouthed smiles managed to convince him.

In the photo, he isn't smiling, his daughter is.

After the picture, they grew quiet. He looked at his wife and daughter lovingly, missing them already. Then the girl broke the silence.

"Daddy, why are you here?"

The question startled him and made him nervous as he froze, unsure of what to say. He looked over at his wife for some help but she looked as startled as he was. Neither had been expecting her to ask so soon, and neither was sure exactly how to explain. The girl looked at him expectantly with her big eyes so like his own, waiting for the answer.

"He wouldn't want his daughter too see them in a few years and realize what that strange colorless room was."

“Well, honey, Daddy was put in here by bad people. He was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. That’s all.”

He looked over gratefully at his wife. That was nice, what she had just done, trying to make him sound so innocent. But it sounded fake. Guilt flooded him, turning his veins cold as steel. It was his fault he was there. It was entirely his fault, in fact. He remembered those adrenaline-filled moments. Everything had to be done quickly, perfectly, so as not to leave a trace. Even though he did it almost every week, he had to watch out for the police; it would lead to his demise if they found a package. And it did. Only thinking about it made him grow weary. How could he have stooped so low in the world of those drugs? It had been his dream to have a reputable job; how drastically he had failed. It only made him hate himself.

He wanted to tell her the whole truth, but when he tried, his voice

cracked. He couldn’t get it out. He looked at her, wondering how to deal with the situation. He looked into his daughter’s eyes, expecting the curiosity to disappear from them, but it only increased.

Then there was a knock on the door. The visit was over. *See you next Sunday.* He hugged his daughter and kissed her on the forehead. *Good-bye.* They said their *I love you’s* and walked out the door. The girl left the room following her mother hesitatingly, her doubts pursuing her. It was obvious to her that something was wrong; she just didn’t understand what it was. She left the truth she had been searching for lingering behind to trouble her father.

The room was left colorless once they were gone. He was left alone with his thoughts. He looked at the floor pensively, the guilt eating him away, but at least he could postpone the explanation a little longer. He would be prepared for the fangs next time that evil question came biting at his spirit.

Cuatro en 1

Diego Hernández Díaz

¡Omar! ¿Dónde está la 15? ¡Esa ambulancia tenía que estar en Jardines Universidad hace 20 minutos! Levántate ya maldito zángano. No me importa que seas mi hermano, tú eres mi empleado. No me digas que ya estás cansado del trabajo. Te tardaste 6 años en hacer tu preparatoria ¿no? Pues ahora lo pagas huevonazo. Ya levántate.

Mónica, yo me voy a llevar la ambulancia. Súbeme un tanque Luís, dame las llaves. Dios mío, este negocio se cae sin mí.

A veces encuentro que mentirme a mí misma se vuelve cada vez más fácil.

Cada vez que me miro en el espejo me veo más vieja. No me siento más vieja y no me siento cansada pero mi cara lo delata. Las arrugas se juntan como hormigas al azúcar. Ahora uso más maquillaje. Se guarde entre mis arrugas, las mismas que trato de desaparecer con miles de cremas. Ya me cansé de inyectarme el cóctel de cochinadas en la cara y el cuerpo. Bióxido de carbono en el estómago y las nalgas. Luego viene la placenta de puerco para la cara y una micro-exfoliación de azúcar, crema y limón.

Ayer ya me pusieron hilos de oro y hoy mi cara se nota menos demacrada de lo normal. Quizás sea cierto el hilo de babosadas: el desvele, tabaco y pisto envejece. No. No lo creo.

Cada vez todo me cuelga más. Es la constante batalla entre yo y la

gravedad. Yo halo para arriba y ella vence. El cuello se me arruga y las manos se manchan con nuevas pinceladas conforme pasan los años. De esas que la gente llama "flor de andamio" o huellas de senectud. ¡Dios! Sueno anciana al decir eso.

No se si preocuparme. Antes tomaba para disfrutar. Dejar que el

suave aroma del vino, el fuerte golpe del vodka, el dulce sabor del licor o la deliciosa textura me llenaba. Ahora lo hago por tomar. Suelo

encontrar una copa a medio servir en la cocina, un caballito en la recámara y una cerveza en el consultorio. No se para que le pago a la señora de la limpieza si no es para recoger la porquería. Tendría que hacerlo yo misma...que digo, la casa es para la señoras.

Le clavo las manos en la espalda a Abraham. Hoy nos tocó en su casa de Ajijic. Me rejuvenecen nuestros años de diferencias. El vigor de uno de veinte en el cuerpo de uno de 37. Mis 47 se esconden. Ya ni siquiera comemos. Me habla para preguntarme cuando dormiremos juntos de nuevo y yo le digo - No dormimos, cogemos-

Ayer fue con Arturo. El pobre; tan culto y tan feo. Son sus palabras y sus manos las que me atraen. Su calvicie y vitíligo no le ayudan. Y todavía se dignó a dejarme una vez. ¿Por qué vuelvo con él? Será que me atrae su buen gusto por restaurantes y

El que quiera tener calor en la vejez debe conseguir la leña en su juventud.

-Proverbio Alemán

vinos, o que me da más placer el saber que tengo la opción de andar con otro.

A veces me pregunto a dónde se han ido los demás. Si me dejan por mi carácter o por otra. Los años pasan y los hombres. No me importa. Siempre habrá algún viejo dispuesto a cogerme. A pero si los hombres no fueran tan calientes no sabría que hacer con mi libido.

No mamá, me voy a ir con mi amiga la sicóloga a Puerto Vallarta. Vamos a ir a un retiro espiritual. (Mentira: Me voy con Víctor a Cajititlán). Si. Mamá. Yo le hablo, no se preocupe. Al rato viene mi hermano y se la llevan a Tepa para que vea a sus nietos.

Voy a misa. Ahí voy sobrino, dame tres minutos para bañarme (en tres minutos ni desvestirme alcanzo).

-¡Doctora! Le habla Diego en la línea dos.

Le digo que sí voy a comer con él y que nos vemos en el Tinto y Blanco o donde sea que se supone que nos vamos a ver en 15 minutos. No es como si fuera a llegar a tiempo. Eso es de viejos. Agarro unos pistaches y me tomo una copa de vino de consagrar. Me voy a la misa y me salgo temprano. Sigue una copa en el Parían y un tequila en el camino. Con mi sobrino nada más refresco. Ya piensa lo peor de mí. Mejor que sepa, hasta le invito una cerveza. Ya se que no toma pero no me importa. Hasta lo llevo al casino y ahí tomo una copita de Malbec. Al fin que estoy cruda desde hace tres días.

¡Anny! ¡Omar! ¡Es la última vez que les aguanto estas chingaderas! Si ustedes llegan a mi casa se van a comportar como buenos cristianos. Vamos a ir a misa, nos vamos a persignar y no van a salir de fiesta. ¿Quieren que los corra de la casa como a mi me corrieron a los 17? No tienen la menor idea de lo que el trabajo realmente es. No hay nadie a quien robarle la vida.

Fanny no te vas a quedar a "dormir" a la casa de tu amiga. Mientras vivas bajo mi techo no vas a poder andar de aquí para allá como una *chirota*. Todavía que te hice el favor de sacarte de la casa de mi hermana. La pinché loca, no sea que se te haya pegado algo. A palos lo sacamos de ti si es necesario.

¡Omar!

¿Quieres volver a largarte maldito? ¿Quieres volver a dormir en el hospital psiquiátrico? ¿Quieres tragar puro frijol y atole? ¿Qué demonios te pasa? ¡Estás involucrado en la

política! ¿Eres panista? ¿No puedes ni mantenerte y ahora me sales con que eres político!

Si señora. Efectivamente, por solo 1500 pesos usted puede olvidar todos los estragos de la edad. Yo misma le aplico la terapia y usted queda como nueva. La pongo en *Ki-Motion* y su estómago liso que se pone (digo esto aunque lo único que la maquina hace es una terapia de relajación. He encontrado la mina de las que su estupidez sobrepasa mi falta de conocimientos). Si quiere aquí mismo le arreglo todo



Ana Marva Fernández

desde su osteoporosis hasta las reumas, las varices, las jaquecas y la pinche celulitis. Le quitamos peso de encima con la *Korean Massage Master*.

Dios si que sé mentir. Ojala algo de lo bueno que hago contrarreste a las mentiras... A veces logro convencerme a mi misma de mis mentiras, es entonces cuando me asusto. A veces pienso que mis estrías desaparecen con cada aplicación de cremas, *menjurjes* y pociones y que mi piel se alisa y mis años desvanecen.

Bendita sea la menopausia. No hay embarazos, no hay emociones y solo existe ese contacto tan esencial entre cualquier particular que este sobre, debajo o a lado de mi. Hoy lo recibí en mi casa. Antes de su llegada seguí con la farsa de que venia a cenar. Saqué patés, galletas Saladas, ostiones y almejas. Llegó el con botellas de alcohol en mano y solo tomamos.

Es triste que ya no hablemos. Conozco su nombre, el nombre de sus familiares, su domicilio y sus comidas preferidas. Se que es dentista y le gusta el Torres.

A veces (y debo hacerlo para mantenerme cuerda) me pregunto con que bases morales me pongo a regañar a Oscar sobre su ética laboral. Luego me doy cuenta que mejor es mi falta de ética pero aparente conciencia que su desganada y valemadrista adopción de las cosas.

Ahí voy sobrino. Me visto rápido y despierto a ¿Víctor?. Ahí voy Diego, no vayas a subir que te tengo una sorpresa. (Maldita sea, ahora necesito una sorpresa antes bajar. Yo y mi gran bocota.) Ya sé, le doy dinero y ya. El dinero suele resolver mis problemas, debe de resolver los de el

también. Al fin y al cabo, la 14 está en camino y trae dinero y Fanny ya no necesita ahorita y Oscar ya me robó mil pesos en la mañana. A veces me encuentro sentada (raras son estas veces, no puedo estar en un lugar mas de quince minutos) y me pongo a pensar que será de mi cuando todos ya estén hartos de mi.

La próxima semana llega la última tecnología en embabucadas. La máquina láser de 300 mil pesos que hace todo lo que la ciencia no puede hacer. Al fin le paso la mordida al maestro, que me enseñe lo básico y listo. A extorsionar a las señoras y señores (son igual de vanidosos los cabrones pero no lo admiten).

Sólo Dios sabe cuando se me acabará la juventud que busco cargar a fuerzas. Solo Dios sabe que soy una hipócrita. Rezo la mañana del domingo y cojo por la tarde.

Temo que un día mi hermano Oscar y Fanny mi sobrina se den cuenta de lo que soy. Una casi cincuentona socialmente inadaptada. Suele suceder...

¡Maldita sea Oscar ya cállate! ¡Yo sé que me lo robaste!

Tantos...

Mentira tras mentira. Así sobrevivimos. Llego tarde para que llegue la vejez antes que yo. No vaya ser que me alcance o yo la alcance. Mejor tomo y me siento joven. Válgame madre que hieda a cruda, alcohol, cigarro y cama.

Es una mierda que no pueda regatear con el Señor frente a las puertas del edén cuando un día llegue al cielo.

Prose

Lies

Ana Marva Fernández

Smile my Jane, my pretty Jane.

My chipped tooth was filled in with a milky crack of coral that I found scuba diving in Australia. Australia is at the bottom of the world.

No, no silly girl! That's not your name, your name is Jane.

I took a potion that will make me look like this forever. You'll see. You'll keep growing tall and I will remain just as youthful. God said you shouldn't do that. God said you shouldn't do that! You feel like going to hell?

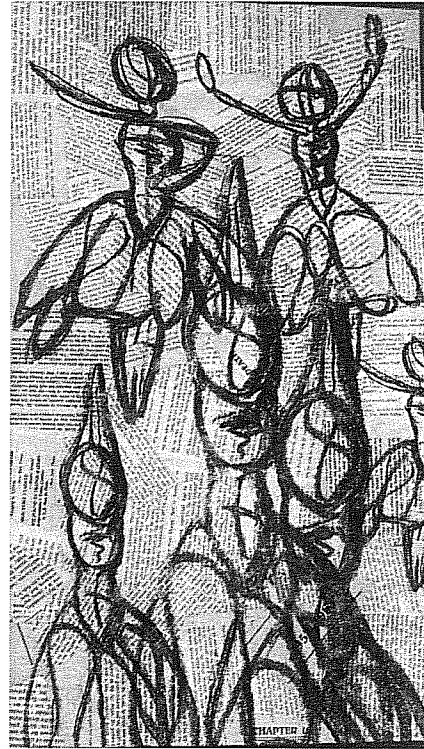
Oh, your little feet are cold. Here let me kiss your toes. With one kiss they will be nice and warm, with two they will be hot like coals. My kisses have magical powers. A crabby old lady gave them to me because I helped her up the stairs once. She said no one had offered to help her in thousands of years. Oh they are still cold! How is that possible? You are amazing. I guess I'll just have to tickle them.

Come Jane, let's go run around the beach. The sand burns. Now let's play hide and seek in grandpa's house. What a big house. This house belonged to a president once, did you know that? Look at those paintings on the wall, aren't those silly swimsuits? How do you think I would look with those stripes on? What about the bikini? All men look smashing in stripes little Jane.

I don't know what possessed them to let me take care of you, after all I'm the nut case, aren't I?

Pretty Jane, pretty Jane, your name is like day, your eyes buttered blue and mine cherry gray.

The sun is a peach. Haven't you noticed how peaches are yellow on one side, orange in the middle and red at the other side? Who said it was a great ball of fire, who told you



Benito Albarrán

that, huh? Who's to say it isn't a peach! Oh, astronauts don't know anything. It's either God or a peach, believe me.

If you don't cry too much I'll give you some Skittles. Two packs of Skittles? There's a good girl. Don't be loud, now. God said you shouldn't.

Your name is Jane, just- just stop. Stop talking.

If we go all the way to the top you can see Australia, you can see the whole world. Come with me to the window seat. What! You can't see the whole world? Just the blue sea? You ought to get your eyes checked.

Your arm is purple? Oh, that's because the fairies were bouncing on it in your sleep. They were so enthralled by your hair that they couldn't stop bouncing. Yes, I am sure that's why.

Oh, but blood isn't bad! It's pretty, it's red. It's scarlet! You should consider yourself lucky, Jane. Nonsense, it doesn't hurt. Let's dance now; remember to be graceful and point your toes. I'll hold your hand and you spin around in circles. But let your hair down.

Don't worry I won't rip your arm off.

There's that smile! The stars weren't here until the first time you smiled. No they aren't balls of fire in outer space, didn't I tell you? You shouldn't believe everything you hear. How would you know anyway, you don't remember being a baby. So there.

Don't tell anyone about our secret time Jane. Because it's tradition to keep these games a secret. If you tell, Santa will find out and you won't be getting any Christmas presents. Telling is breaking the rules. God will tell Santa if you tell.

God said you shouldn't.

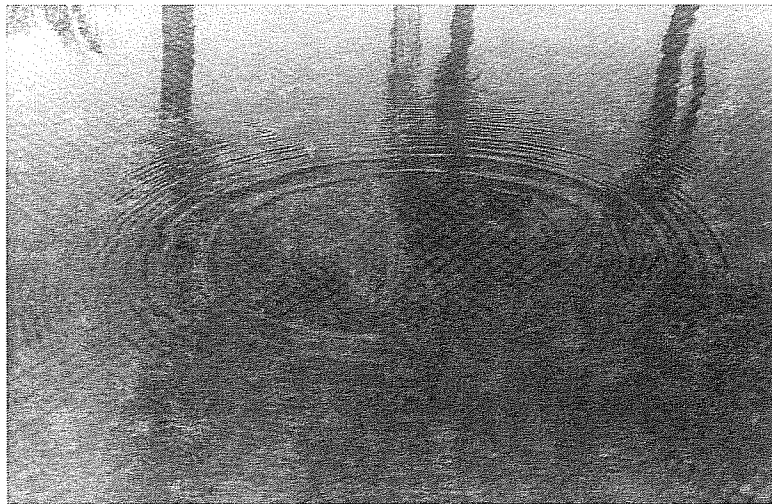
Poetry

Ode to the Garrafón *Abigail Salazar*

Sitting patiently in the corner
of the kitchen,
precious liquid you hold
in your round blue belly,
yes, that one that we need so much
the one you kindly defend.

Patiently you wait for someone
to open your mouth and let you speak
water's dulcet language,
the echoing rumors of your soul—
one you willingly give up
to keep us alive.

So giving,
badly paid for your kindness,
yet you deny yourself even
swinging (just a small pleasure)
on the metallic seat:
just like children wait for someone
to push them on the swing—
except we drag you by the throat.



Carmen O'Rourke

Non-fiction

Like All Good Things

Carmen O'Rourke

At any other time of day, the kitchen is black and white. White tile floor with large black tile squares, white cupboards with black handles, and white oven with black stove. The monotony is only broken right before the sun sets, when it flows into the kitchen, underneath the curtains like the last wave of a receding tide. I splash my feet in the glowing yellow on the tiles, admiring the pools of light rippled on the floor, and dip my hands into them.

It's more beautiful than a sunset over a beach because there is no vast ocean to darken the horizon with uncertainty – just curtains so translucent that they couldn't possibly hide an entire world behind them.

It usually smells like my mom's cooking. But at this particular hour, right before she begins to make dinner and the kitchen is completely empty, there are no smells, and no sound escapes the silent shadows between the light. The kitchen feels alive and warm even though it's empty. It is enchanted with a strange peace cast in glowing stripes on anyone who enters.

There is a glass pitcher of water on the table that is hit by a beam of yellow that enters through the long gap between the curtains. The pitcher is dark, soaking in the light, but all around it, the table cloth glitters with iridescent blues, oranges, and whites spewed out in patterns, dots, and tangles, like a dew-soaked spider's web.

The delicate white petals of my mom's tulips by the window blaze in fiery oranges and yellows around smoldering red centers. The sunlight curls around their long green leaves and engulfs their slender stems so that their shadows on the floor resemble long black flames without origin.

But as the light across the floor faints into purplish-gray, the floor grows cold, and the kitchen begins to feel empty

again. The ticking of the clock begins to resonate in the quiet disappointment of the fading sun. Sometimes I turn on the lights, but disgusted by the greenish white emitted by them, quickly turn them off. The pitcher's elaborate display is the first to vanish, followed by a darkening of the curtains. They now hang lifeless as the pale print on them begins to reappear like discolored spots on old skin.

The last to fade are the tide pools of light. Tiny specks of dust, only visible at this hour, swirl around in them like glowing plankton, looking for deeper refuge. Dusting them closer to the window is futile since even that light will soon fade.

I hear a sharp thumping. I quickly pull my feet out of the dimming light, startled by the foot steps in the hallway, and as I look around, waiting for my mom to come in, the dust is just dust again, the pitcher is just a pitcher again, and the curtains are just limp cloth again. It's inevitable, but each afternoon the disappointment is just as

In the right light, at the right time, everything is extraordinary.

-Aaron Rose

vivid. It's only as long as there's that silent hope or wish that someday it will last longer, maybe even forever, that I will keep coming back to those bright pools of light. I watch as my mom turns

the black hallway corner, and just as she is about to hit the light switch, I look down to see nothing but the tile floor, again black and white.

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Don't tell me the moon is shining;
show me the glint of light on broken glass.
~Anton Chekhov