

Perception

Ana Marva Fernández Hall

Like the world outside the borders of my spectacles, the undefined is defined through imagination.

My little brother had his face photographed for his passport the other day. He is a frightening mess of energy, loud and colorful, but in the picture he looks calm and keen, almost wise. He looks like my uncle Alvaro, the bright boy in one of the many pictures resting dustily in the hallway.

Alvaro played the guitar. He could muster up a decent version of “Dust in the Wind” in his boyish voice. He had awful taste in soccer teams; his brothers would toss him in the pool whenever the “Chivas” team lost to “America,” because he insisted on supporting the yellow enemies. He was the baby in the family. That is the way people describe him. I’ve never met him; he died when he was fourteen.

But I can imagine him. He had my brother’s face, his features, his lost stare. The Alvaro I see had my brother’s presence, his thunderous energy and his eerie calmness. He was a boy who refused to brush his hair, loved cartoons, and was in ridiculous awe of my father.

We could rely on concretion through the scientific method, since words of a slick physicist demonstrate the effects of precise digital instruments and promise to determine what is truly there, while our sweeping imaginations can only incline their flowery heads in the directions of our mindly winds.

But nothing we know is true. If the infinity of possibilities prevents every existential platform from being fully

proven, then everything falters and nothing has been proven at all. We have a license to imagine what we want as others have and will forever, unstopably.

“Nothing lasts forever but the earth and sky. It slips away and all your money won't another minute buy.” I know he sang that more than once. I know he saw this earth and sky that have indeed dwarfed the span of his own life.

I love the sharp leaves I have seen on those times I have walked away from Costco with fresh specs. Leaves that slice the wind into whispers. The thickness of the glass in front of my eyes showcases their magic for me: it seems to last about five and a half minutes before my pupils tire and the leafy varnish recedes.

When my eyes wander outside the edges of my lenses I pretend I still see those wonderful lines.

And I speculate; perhaps there are presences in the fogginess I do not know about, waiting for a chance to be conjured into music in my head.

The piano has teeth. It is a baby-grand Mason and Hamlin in a light shade of brown. It has squeaky pedals. Its teeth nibble out sound, any sound the player pleases. My brave fingers turn Debussy into jazz and Mozart into fierceness and Bach into suspense. And my piano teacher thinks it blasphemous. But the strings in the piano’s spine shiver and sing without regard to her doctrine. My imagined glory lasts until I see the exhausted expression on her face –the purple stains of stress ensconcing her eyes.

Warren Summit is a remote and insignificant summit nestled quietly somewhere in an Idaho winter. It is the resting place of bears sweetly slumbering beneath layers of snow. The wolves prance about teasing the hares and occasionally swallowing their heads. The snow rivets about quite hormonally. One time I was stranded in lonely Warren Summit.

The bare trees mocked me. My pleading echoes tumbled amongst the upright twigs without causing a stir. I was in a frail high-pitched panic.

So I took off my glasses and I forced myself to see leaves on those prickly twigs. Floating and forgiving leaves, sharp and pale gold-green, drifting into space.

When I was frightened as a child (my curtains scared me in the dark), the boy in the picture that rests in the hallway would wear a purple tux in my head and pretend he was the host of a magic show. He would replay little incidents in my life and modify them into funny things. Alvaro was my comforter.

The sharp leaves I conjure in the blur are a product of the same inventive spot in my brain, which gives me license to define things through it.

I imagine him, stirred into tears by my fumbling piano as he accompanies me with his guitar, gluing leaves onto the bare trees with my brother's careful hands, forcing fragile nerves to feel comfort in all that is indefinite.

Historieta a cuadros

Ana Lucia Bonilla Orellana

Sobre un cuadro transparente de vidrio como marco he puesto mi corazón.
Se ve latir, desde la arteria de mi memoria que aorta,
casi aborta la conclusión de mis ideales;
hasta la vena que cava heridas profundas en la piel como surcos de amoniaco.
Bajo la lupa como periscopio he visto mi vida a cuadros.
Son cuadros de colores volátiles, sin razón de un porqué o si sigo aquí.
No hay ciencia que acierte los detalles
minúsculos, microscópicos
de la cordura.
No hay realismo sin la magia de un sueño
escrito a papel carbón.
Bajo las uñas llevo la piel de un diploma
que una vez estuvo enmarcado
ahí. Junto
al corazón sobre un cuadro transparente.
Transparente como la brisa del pincel que tiñe
de negro mi pelo
de aquella fotografía tangible de una historia.



Debacle

Eunbi Lee

Debacle. One.

Sun-Il Kim, a Seoul University graduate, forty-two-year-old CEO, turned off the television in his hotel room. The news anchorwoman's words continued ringing in his head. *Ai-em-eff-co-llap-se-ai-em-eff-KOS-DAQ*. The shirt ironed that same morning by his loving wife was soaking wet. The neck-tie picked out by his ten-year-old daughter was undone, dangling. None of that mattered. In a matter of seconds, his life-time achievements and fruits of sleepless nights had been destroyed. Complete demolition. A once farfetched imagination became an obstinate reality.

1999. By far, the severest economic crisis in history of Korea arose as the Korean economy finally displayed its deceitful face. Too many of us had been fooled and blinded by superficial luxury, and short-sighted economists. The collapse swooshed into our lives, unexpectedly occupied our An-Bang¹, and aggravated the turmoil that disturbed every essential facet of Korea.

Weren't vacationing in Hawaii and in Hong Kong, driving BMW's, and drinking Merlot while having Blanquette de veau at Chez Damien patriotic contributions towards building a stronger Korean economy?

Kim was just one of scores of businessmen profoundly affected by such sudden devaluation of the Korean Won. Many lost their jobs and their houses and their family and their everything. Some lost Hope, and some Hope lost Life. Korean fathers, the heads of the family, were imprisoned by the International Monetary Fund and lived miserable moments. Suicide rates doubled within instants. Every verandah of every apartment building received unpleasant visits; some visitors reconsidered, others didn't. Subway benches filled. Wives, daughters and sons went out looking for their fathers.

The alarming instability of the economy tightened the Korean society- like the Gold Donation, remember?

Luckily enough, Korean fathers' stay in the prison of IMF was not prolonged. We were all back on our feet, feeling proud as a nation. Soon, exports flourished- recently breaking the three billion dollar barrier.

Debacle. Almost. Two.

Eh-li Lee, a Yoon-Seun-Saeng Early Childhood program graduate, three-year-old tiny little girl. Barely knows how to read and write in Korean, but has already mastered the simplified version of Cinderella in English. Her parents named her Eh-li so she wouldn't have a hard time making foreign friends when they send her off to Choate, the top private high school in the United States- popular among Korean moms as the high school John F. Kennedy graduated from. Eh-li prefers Gerber to rice and Kimchi.

2006. The most devastating cultural crisis in the history of Korea, by far, reaches its peak as Korean parents and students aim for American Ivy League Universities instead of Korean universities. Too many of us are fooled and blinded by superficial elegance, and short-

¹ The main room of a household occupied by the eldest and most respected member of the family. It is considered the family's sanctuary.

sighted educators. The collapse could happen any day now. When did brain drain and deprecation of our own culture become an international boast?

Lee is just one of, literally, hundreds of thousands of students preparing to escape from the Korean culture and educational system. Only a small percentage work hard to gain knowledge and a wider view of the world; the majority work to secure a better resume and a bigger paycheck. Korean women are addicted to the New Yorker lifestyle, with Starbucks and Prada, like in *Sex and the City*, Korean children spend the better part of their free time insulting and writing hurtful comments on internet debating rooms, or on a personal blog.

Debate. Approaching.

Don't cry over spilt water², our ancestors used to say. Let us respect and embrace the wise words of our Cho-Sang³. We must remind ourselves of Kim's struggle inside a monetary penitentiary; we cannot overlook the scars left behind from the brutal, excruciating lashes.

We once neglected the candid face of our economy; are we truly to ignore this newly approximating cultural debacle? Until when shall de-Koreanization be admired, be imitated?

Certainly, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. For the next meal, the upcoming Chom-sim⁴, let Eh-li have Doenjang soup with a bowl of steamed rice. Let her learn to use chopsticks rather than forks. Let her read Heung-Boo and Neol-Boo⁵, and put aside the Grimm brothers. Then, Eh-li shall lead *us* to the next step.

² A Korean expression.

³ Ancestors in Korean

⁴ Lunch in Korean

⁵ Korean traditional fairy tale.

Green with Envy

Marco Antonio Sánchez Junco

As we consume what remains of the world's coal and oil supplies, we get one step closer to the end. Not just our end, but that of nature as well. In *Biomimicry*, Janine M. Benyus states that in order to ensure our survival we must start to look towards someone who has had billions of years of experience and has managed to perfect processes that we cannot even fathom. By seeing nature as a model, a measure and most importantly, a mentor, we will be able to learn how to deal with humanity's problems without killing all humans on the way.

But why should we look to learn from nature? Why now if resources are not depleted yet? To put it simply in the words of Charles Darwin, the most influential biologist of all times: "Nature does nothing useless." Every drop of water and every ray of sunlight is employed to its fullest potential, and while you rarely hear of poverty, hunger or vicious diseases in Nature's domain, we as humans cannot say the same. As Janine M. Benyus sees it, we are going to have to do this sooner or later, so why not start today before our retinas melt under the unbearable heat caused by the ozone hole twice the size of Europe and before we start to choke on the immense amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Much to Benyus' surprise biomimicry has already been going on for a while. As she follows the tracks of all sorts of biomimics, who have employed nature-inspired ideas in every field from politics to the economy, she realizes that we must covet nature's knowledge and admire its great skill, and if this means turning green with envy, so be it. At least then we will be green.

As Benyus points out, the economy needs to mirror nature as closely as it can. With the question: *How will we feed ourselves?* Benyus presents a new, or rather, a long-forgotten approach to agriculture that is simple, fruitful and beneficial for the land. Today, agriculture has become the most polluting economic activity of them all. What began as a simple activity of planting and watering has transformed into an industrial, oil-dependent machine that cannot function properly without herbicides and pesticides. Benyus suggest *nature-based agriculture*. Even though this might sound extremely redundant, the truth is that the agriculture of the 21st century is not reminiscent of nature in any way.

Instead of robbing the land of its nutrients, killing all but a single crop and showering the Earth with chemicals, "agriculture would imitate as closely as possible the structure and function of a mature natural ecosystem" (Benyus 13). By not planting a single crop repeatedly, we avoid erosion; by planting a wide variety of different food crops in the same place (polycultures), plagues will find it impossible to spread; and by growing different "stories" of plants, the taller, "stronger" plants will provide shade and protection from rain for the smaller plants. Thus, this activity that had become fully dependent on human intervention can find its way back to self-sufficiency.

In this *nature-based agricultural system* almost all costs are reduced to nothing. There is no need to buy new seeds every season, spend money on tractors and fuel, or acquire stronger—more poisonous—chemicals every year because the system becomes self-sufficient. Hence not only the crops, which will be more abundant

since polycultures are proven to yield more than the currently-in-vogue one crop agriculture, but also part of the large sum of money that will now be left over can go towards ending world hunger, not impossible by any means.

Our allegedly successful industry has much to be ashamed of: “the cows of Chernobyl sickening, rivers in the Ukraine catching on fire, the smothering oil fires of the Persian Gulf, a ship leaking into Prince William Sound...” (Benyus 245). For too long now we have ignored the long-term dangers of our faulty economy, and eventually they are bound to catch up to us. “Economies are like ecosystems...both systems take in energy and materials and transform them into products. The problem is that our economy performs a linear transformation, whereas nature’s is cyclic.” (Benyus 242) Benyus highlights the idea that in order to perfect the ways of commerce, we must learn to conduct business “like a redwood forest” (Benyus 238). In other words, business should work like a complex ecosystem that has developed over time and thrived with perfect balance. She then goes on to explain complex ecosystems’ “ten winning strategies” and how to apply them to our business.

One of the most important “strategies” calls for the need to use waste as a resource. “Instead of a linear production system, which binges on virgin raw materials and spews out unusable waste, they [biomimics] envision a web of closed loops in which a minimum of raw materials comes in the door, and very little waste escapes” (Benyus 255). By closing the holes in the cycle and becoming a no-waste economy, all the energy and materials that a factory needs will come from itself. In order to achieve this goal, governments at all levels and international organizations such as the United Nations must encourage companies to implement take-back laws, meaning that after a period of use,

companies recollect their old products, which can then go into making new ones. Hoping to reduce contamination and with the help of environmentalist organizations, Canada, the United States and several European countries have already started to work this plan, by having manufacturing companies within their borders retake products after a certain number of years.

Other strategies examine optimization, extracting only the resources that are needed, and maintaining a delicate balance. One rule that stands out, however, hopefully as a warning, is the very last strategy, which simply says to *Shop locally*. In nature, plants and animals survive with only whatever resources they can find around them. There are no such things as free trade agreements between multiple ecosystems, or animals in Europe getting their food from free ports in East Asia, so why must we try to defy the very nature of nature (excuse the redundancy) and implement the completely opposing strategy of globalization? Globalization causes unbalance and an exaggerated dependency on certain areas of the world to feed the population, not to mention unfair working opportunities and inhumane living environments. This “borderless economy where a single product is assembled in a dozen different countries” (Benyus 276) clearly will not bring success.

Finally in order to improve the economy, we must change the way we look at it. Our GNP measuring system, that rises whenever there are oil spills or viral outbreaks, is clearly not doing a good job at rating the economy. Some countries are beginning to use a *Green GNP*, which takes into consideration everything from water quality to recreational opportunities and income distribution to come up with a truly accurate measure of our current condition. This is a good example of this new way of measuring economic well-being. A big part of the responsibility of the change of mind will fall on the shoulders of governments,

who “instead of taxing *good* things like income ... [should] tax *bad* things like pollution or excessive use of energy or virgin materials” (Benyus 280).

Among other subjects, Janine M. Benyus discusses the importance of finding alternative energy sources. This time her inspiration comes from plants as she looks at the way leaves photosynthesize sunlight to acquire energy. Benyus explains the steps that scientists around the world have already taken to tap into this powerful energy source, and although at this point everything is mostly theoretical, we might be powering our lives with sunlight in a few years. It is important to realize that at times these experiments might seem farfetched, but there is a big chance that they will work. When they do work, they often change everything: “The last really famous biomimetic invention was the airplane (the Wright brothers watched vultures to learn the nuances of drag and lift). We flew like birds for the first time in 1903, and by 1914, we were dropping bombs from the sky” (Benyus 8).

This leads to the most important question: Once we understand all of nature’s tricks, will we use them for the betterment of humanity? Or will we feed

this knowledge to the arms race and bring and end to nature itself? Benyus’ dreams include finding a cure for cancer by exploring and researching the Earth’s flora; making sturdy, long-lasting materials without the need of “high temperatures, high pressure and strong chemical treatments” (Benyus 97), and powering our Christmas trees by learning from trees themselves. But at the same time, we must be careful that, like the airplane, these new biomimetic inventions should not become belligerent creations that go into slaughtering each other and creating stronger mineral armors for tanks.

Will we focus on protecting our fellow species and finding new cures to heal ourselves, or will we have cheated nature into handing over its secrets only to be corrupted by us? Rather than asking ourselves whether this “Biomimicry Revolution” will happen or not, we must ask what we will do when it comes. With *Biomimicry* Janine M. Benyus hopes to make us come full circle and realize that we are learning from nature not to help ourselves but to help nature.

Works Cited:
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New York: Perennial, 2002.



Tango Mío

Fabio Rocha

Translation by Juliana Haddad Barbosa

Lost my pace.
With no equilibrium,
stepped on toes of chaos.

My ancient monotony
Inebriated in the bar,
enemy bordered.

The unfinished dream
smoked itself, head down,
in a lower step.

Gathered my entire hope,
found it outside, beside the flag,
a beggar.

Oh, if only my soul played funk...



Flush

Maria Cristina Fernández Hall

“The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sitting upon paper-white porcelain I noticed the incredible acoustic of the basin below. The ancient contraption was a concert hall where the long notes of the oboe and blasts of trumpets resonated, yet the tinkle of the triangle overpowered it all. At times the melodies were painful, on other occasions they were anthems of relief.

Regardless of the mood, my hymns have always brought me reassurance. They are a sign of survival. Like inhaling. Exhaling. Out.

Out sometimes means spilt success. Like vomiting after being seemingly soaked in the flying sensation of drunkenness. The suppression of sensation. In quick jolts and pushes I might purge and then be invaded with contrition of an unwanted cascade. It is the craving to be numbed that impulses it all. Is it purposeless desire or desire for purpose? I stare into the water looking for a mirrored image, but sometimes all I find is a distorted wave wrinkling my sanity and I spill my life into it. Then I flush it down.

Through drains and tubes it goes. Sometimes it infests the ocean waters with germs, but other times it is filtered and cleaned. It is poured into the ocean and it drifts to the beach where the salty scent invades my lungs and the water sifts through the sand, and the shore licks my feet like a friendly cat, welcoming me back home. Slippers of water ensconcing my toes like a cool bare sock, yet insulating- a wrapping wave that quickly hangs onto me, and is then sucked back in.

When waves are transmitted in shallow water in which the depth is less than half of the wavelength, their particle trajectories are compacted into ellipses. As the height increases, these particle lanes cannot make closed circles. Instead, they are displaced forward in a process called Stokes drift. The waves keep going forward with this course and eventually run into shallow water. The wave’s base undergoes friction with the ocean floor, rendering the base unable to support its top and it collapses- a “breaking wave” (Woods).

A million drops will clench each other, join like a nation with an upholding cause and will land in a breaker. The wave is fragmented with the shock that disrupts its elliptical cycle. It crashes and it splashes in its prodigious coda.

Drops tap dance on my left shoulder. They are the sweet ecstatic hum of summer rain. Craving your presence. Soft kisses on my left shoulder. There is no lift like that of desire satisfied.

But there is no agony like that of desire unsatisfied. Glaciers will hold steady. They will not flush. Cold sinks down to the bottom of the Earth, a steady note of deadly depressions. From the poles the freezing currents squirm underneath the heated tide like slithering snakes. It is a slow race to invade the equator’s warmth. Its venomous sway will bite the faces off the hot blooming flowers- and the red poinsettia will be brought in.

There are those who choose to live away from the water. It is too moody, too bipolar, they say. It is the desiccant distance that creates them. Loneliness will sting their eyes with sand blown in by dry whisks. Their ears deafened with noiselessness, isolated and beaten, defeated by all winds and waters. Despondent thoughts have flashed through my head with no companions to take me back to my elliptical friends. I am an un-rooted cactus lacking support and falling. The zephyrs will cover me once with sand, and I will be gone.

They say the desert was once covered by the ocean. There are shells that have left their legacy. They tell a story of the past, like the many books that fill my brain. My brain will soak up the strayed drops. My brain will be drenched with information. Satisfaction of intellect can be the most beautiful music, like the patter of the rain upon windows, or the crashing of the waves, or the soft trickle of a stream. My rivers will bend and break to find more components, more notes with which I will write my praise.

There is praise when I know that my saliva will no longer be exchanged with that of a heart-breaking bastard. It is not a matter of sorrow. One should rejoice at endings. It is not loneliness, it is solitude. Solitude is the marvel of being a single drop with one free will amongst a mass of immense deluge.

Flooding rivers will be damned, but it is only so that all the miniscule drops will not only join in waves but also in the rivers, the currents, the vaporized souls, the snow and the rain and push it and force it away. Through the commotion, there will always be a little tinkling bell of victory. It is the bell of the molding rivers that can run and escape and go slow and enjoy onward in an eternal life. The shell will pour water upon my head, and it will drip down and bounce off a silver basin chime in my concert hall.

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The Drive to Drive

Lauren Henry

You will get where you need to go if you were meant to be there. For those of you awaiting a poetic piece, let that first sentence demonstrate the extensive depths of my current poetic ability.

By all stretches of the imagination, my relatives are okay drivers. My grandmother sometimes drives like hell on wheels in a bright yellow mini-something, and my mother occasionally gets pestered by a lead foot but in general they seem like *good* drivers.

I do not get embarrassed easily, so I don't need to lie. I first learned to drive in my dad's old Escape in our housing estate. After a few trips we decided to put me in a driving school. I went willingly, although I felt no true desire to drive like my brother had. After sitting in theory classes for four hours I had decided that as leading copilot it would be my brother's responsibility to know to change my tires. I then began learning using stick shift. After teaching me the gears, the driving teacher confidently used his portion of dashboard to better accommodate his newspaper. He would occasionally take a break from his reading to tell me stories of previous driving students and random news updates. Toward the end of the class, we would drive to my dad's office and he would leave to enlighten the next student.

He once told me about teaching a nervous nun to drive. During an event with a bus, he braked (with the hidden master brake), she accelerated and together they took out a headlight. I glanced at him sideways, raised my eyebrow and let the clutch out slowly wondering why he thought to tell me that.

After I graduated from the 'intensive' driving course, my dad brought home my car. He would sit in the passenger seat and I would drive to school. It had definite adventures: potholes, other drivers and window wipers seemed beyond my level of understanding. I remember a specific incident at a *glorieta* where I sailed around without really thinking. As another car beeped at me I did a mental head slap, and I think my dad did a mental-something else, maybe a sob or probably a Hail Mary.

Other issues popped up: once I swerved to avoid a pothole and ended up cutting off the lady (who lacked a lot of consideration to the fact that I still needed practice) one lane over. My dad snapped a quick reminder at me; you cannot just merge into another lane without signaling. I believe that was when I dropped all desire to drive; theory classes fail to remind you of the dangers of potholes.

Driving was not my thing. I briefly considered riding a bike, and remembered that since I turned ten I had given up on the whole bike idea. My biking experience remained limited after I decided that I could do more with the money earned from selling it than I could from riding it. Plus, it rains in Mexico and the last vehicle standing after a collision would not likely have two wheels and a handlebar. One morning I remember waking up in a very bad mood, and in a passing moment of stress I begged to be driven to school. My mum smiled and told me that I would not get pushed into driving if I did not want to. I already had the car and the license, so push, by now, had come to shove.

The license process, a true experience, gives a valid answer as to why

so many questionable drivers dash down the streets. I lined up with a driver from my dad's office in *Transito*. Mexico's true dangers come to life in transit. After six or seven 'salesmen' called me "*gijerita*", and offered a book complete with the answers to the exam, I arrived at the front. I felt rattled; the honorable salesmen had enforced the necessity of a good pen, a coffee to keep you awake, a notebook to record things, and I had respectfully denied all of them.

Four stamps stood between me and my license: 1) Organized paperwork, 2) Actual driving test, 3) Vision test, and 4) A certificate that said you had attended the obligatory theory class. Paperwork grew tough, and FM3s, passports, and authorized letters seemed further past my understanding than window wipers.

The driving test seemed comical; I drove around the block and stopped at the first stop sign (as you do). The man asked me to wind my window down, and when I did he muttered something and ended casually with *gringa*. I smiled, kind of annoyed, (white foreigner does not always equal American) and told him no, I come from New Zealand. He chuckled, saying no Mexicans stop at the signs. I moved on, pausing at the pedestrian crossing, ignored what he had said and stopped at the next stop sign. The next man, equally friendly, laughed and pointed at the exit. When I pulled around the corner, two freshly certified drivers ran into each other—ripping of one bumper and taking out a left headlight. After that, I felt pretty proud of myself.

After I went into the small room and bubbled in 30 questions (with answers like: Stick your head out the window if steam fogs up your window and you cannot figure out why) I got the passing stamp. I have always had a thing for lying, so I will say I studied hard and the answers came to me naturally.

The vision test, ironically comes after you take the written exam and the driving test. The lady looked like she had grown up in the Transit offices and mumbled to me to read a line. Since she did not specify which line, I chose one close to the bottom and read the letters.

When my oldest brother came at Christmas, he seemed thrilled with the car. After shooting down Patria outside our house, (that's a speed limit of 40km/hr) doing 80km/hr he got a ticket. Secretly I felt relieved; the first ticket issued to the car would not come under my name.

My best friend drove the bumper of her dad's car into a Cadillac during the first few months that she had it; needless to say, it equaled a very expensive repair. Another friend, proud to remain nameless, hopped out of the car to leave it with the parking man, and forgot to put it in park. Recently, Leon (some people nickname their cars and I wanted the entire car-owning experience) and I ate some curbs on the way to school, but other than that I have driven nicely.

Everyone has his or her own car stories; my cousin for example, opens his door with a fork. To each their own. With every story I feel a little better about my driving abilities. It seems like an unfair excuse, but driving in Mexico can get difficult. Parallel parking may never get listed as one of my talents, and I leave my car every morning with a dubiously talented man out the front of the school who does it for me.

I once let my younger brother drive down the road on the way home. He had just turned fifteen, but it felt like a huge confidence boost when he did not drive very well. My only advice: not to follow that white line down the middle of the road, but stay on one side of it. Being my father's daughter I tried and failed to maintain my patience. The street seemed deserted and he only drove for a total of

two minutes before we switched back. It was a good two minutes.

Learning to drive, I will not lie, got painful. I never wanted to do it, and would have generously enjoyed my parents still driving me to school. My advice would be: develop your own secret vocabulary of driver phrases, personalize your gestures and, between you and me, sometimes you can feel easily distracted. Don't be afraid of the horn; it's there for a

reason and with busses, taxis and soccer-mom vans you *will* need it. My friends say that while I know how to drive well, I seem very badly oriented. But I indicate before turning, do not speed up at an orange light very often, and have never gone the wrong way down a one way street. I really believe that driving is a thing of fate; you'll get there if you were meant to.



Colección de Poemas

Patricio Suárez

Me hiciste muerto

En el suelo, piso y no logro comprender
como:
al ver tus ojos deo de sentir,
ese inconciente sentimiento que se
acalambra en los pies
al exponerme y desnudar mi voz,
para que hagas de mi lo que fríamente
hiciste: un misterio de un hecho
un muerto de un mortal.

No Olvidar Recordar

Se desprende del silencio,
Vaciamente se acuesta
para olvidar momentariamente.

Recordar en la mañana:

que lo que crees no existe
y en lo que no existe
no estamos
y en lo que no estamos
nada pasa

descansa,
nada pasa.

Duerme y recuerda no olvidar recordar.



Through the Luminosity of a Window

Alexia Halteman

Maybe two hundred years ago she would have been considered a witch, burned at the stake, crazy at least, but we have broadened our minds a bit. In the infinity of possible knowledge we have gone a few steps ahead. And so her problem was a mental problem, bipolarity, but nothing to do with her person; it's like a side dish, it comes with her, compliments her, and inevitably alters her taste, but it is not her. No one really knew that her funny way of being could be accredited to this state of hers until she was 22. Then she started taking pills. She was controlled, and her extremist emotions were controlled as well. Just as she did not experience those gruesome downs, she did not have any more of her moments of euphoria: the good moments did not seem so good without the bad ones. But it was better this way, for everyone, she was told.

The little pills were controlling devices. She felt she was doing fine; everything was under her control, or under her control with the help of the pills. We think we have things under our control most of the time, when in reality things are never under our control; just as we think we are deciding something significant, but it had already been decided for us with the two options set in front of us. She began unconsciously not taking some of her pills, hopeful that her situation would have changed. It hadn't. And by the time she realized it she had begun hallucinating: paranoia chased her in the form of whispering voices and supernatural beings out to get her.

During one of those hallucinations when she could almost feel the aliens crawling up her skin, her mother was home with her, trying to keep her calm. Chilling

to the bone, they were swarming the apartment, behind the sofas, under the table, in between the curtains. In her hysteria, scared and screaming, she turned to the window, when it seemed like a savior (the blue skies outside) at the moment, and she jumped out, barely slipping her mother's reach.

(Up to now it has been a true story, she was the best friend of a friend, that kind of thing. Now, the rest is pure fiction.)

A sad death, anyone would say. Those who listen feel slightly bad for the mother, poor lady, what a trauma. But they quickly move on to another topic of conversation at the dinner table, how wonderful the food is, or whatever other one surfaces. After so many terrible things we hear about that happen on a daily basis, on an hourly basis, we find it easy to move ahead and forget what might trouble us. We don't want to live in a world of depression.

So the conversation moved on to a funny tone. I watched as the other six people at the dinner table laughed, stupidly it seemed to me because I was not in on the joke. They kept on enjoying themselves and refilling their already tainted glasses of wine. Pouring the liquid down their throats they began to slur their words, tripping over them as if they were little pebbles. Their drunkenness could be seen in their mouths, which had begun to attain a purple tint, their lips, their teeth, their tongue. All I could see was their mouths moving; I could not hear the words they disgraced themselves with because the noise of the restaurant was overwhelming. Everywhere, it seemed, people were coming to the same

forgetful state they were in. The room filled with noise just as the smoke started slithering to every corner, caressing every inch with its odor.

I was not even tired, but only disgusted at the way everyone was falling into a delirious oblivion. No one cared anymore about the saddening things happening in the world; they did not even care to feel slightly bad. People pushed at my chair as the place started to get packed. It was early in the morning, I was sure. The place was dark, partly because of the dim light and partly because of all the smoke

that weakened my eyes.

In the middle of my desperation I looked over at the only window of the place: outside you could see how in between some buildings, on the horizon line, the sun was slowly coming out to greet this side of the world. The sky was beginning to paint itself with a light blue. The color of bliss, I thought in that moment. The window seemed like a savior that would lead me to the beautiful part of our world: the perfect sunrise. And so it was the only exit from insanity.



It Wasn't There Again Today

Michael Hogan

He always left a room thinking there was more to say
but left anyway rising as if from a meal before he felt too full
as if to embellish or add one thing more would dull what had gone before.
It was what poets did of course: never telling the whole story
only these hints like bridges to nowhere rising over rivers and blasted landscapes
or highway overpasses ending in concrete launches to space

or stairs with no room at the end.

Imagine a house like that
or a city built of bridges and by-passes and yet
reality is no more real because bridges predictably
end on the other side where life is equally dull
or stairs reach to the room where a suicide waits.
Here at least on this bridge you have time to think
about the pattern the arch makes in the air

or if a stair
how you would furnish the room that isn't there.



Aún Respiro

Cristóbal González Camarena

Sé que estoy a un respiro de mi muerte. Pero todavía no. Aún respiro. La verdadera historia ha sido cambiada y torcida tantas veces que narrar los hechos como realmente pasaron ya no servirá. Estoy cansado de luchar por mi inocencia, es inútil. Inútil es el explicar mi historia frente a un jurado que seguramente ha sido comprado, y saber que no les importa lo que yo tenga que decir y lo que realmente haya pasado. A veces incluso yo llego a dudar de mi inocencia; he oído tantas versiones de lo que pasó, que ya no estoy seguro de nada. Sólo sé que mi sentencia de muerte me esperaba en pocos segundos, pero no me esperaba ella a mí, como yo a ella.

Pienso en mi familia: mi hija y mi bella esposa. Extraño estar con ellas, extraño hacerlas reír un domingo por la mañana y sentir que no preferiría estar en ningún otro lugar que no fuera allí. Extraño ver la sonrisa de mi hija. Esa sonrisa que tiene el poder de iluminar hasta el más oscuro de los días, esa sonrisa que me mantuvo vivo y con esperanza durante tanto tiempo. Una sonrisa que fue capaz de iluminar mi vida entera. Tengo miedo de que se hayan olvidado de mí, pues sus visitas escasean cada vez más. Cada día en este lugar es una eternidad, estoy cansado de las constantes peleas con otros reos y de las brutales visitas de los guardias a mi celda. Yo no me merecía todo eso, yo soy un hombre bueno, al menos eso creo. No sé cómo llegué a la escena del crimen ni cómo acabó el arma homicida en mi mano. Me culpan de un crimen del que no soy capaz de cometer. Desde que era chico tuve ataques epilépticos: momentos en los que todo se torna oscuro y pierdo el control de mis pensamientos y mi cuerpo.

Dicen que yo la maté, pero no creo que ese haya sido el caso, yo no podría matar a una niña. No tenía ningún motivo para hacer tal brutalidad, yo soy feliz, o al menos lo era antes de que me condenaran a este infierno. ¿Por qué querría cambiar la vida que tenía con mi esposa y mi hija por un calabozo de sueños rotos y almas condenadas? Me tendieron una trampa, eso debió de haber sido, alguien me incriminó. Por qué y con qué fin no sé, pero espero que algún día se haga verdadera justicia y que atrapen a la persona que fue capaz de matar a una niña y que, así, mi inocencia pueda ser comprobada. Para ese entonces, mi cuerpo yacerá inmóvil y mi alma estará lejos de aquí, pero eso no importa; lo único que me importa es que mi hija sepa que su padre no era un monstruo y me recuerde como verdaderamente fui. Al final, la muerte nos encontrará a todos, esa es la única verdad en esta vida, todos estamos condenados a morir. Estamos en una carrera que no podemos ganar de ninguna manera y cuando la muerte nos alcanza, no importa lo que hayas logrado en tu vida; todos acabamos desvaneciéndonos hasta que lo único que queda de nosotros es polvo.

No recuerdo haber matado a una niña, no creo que pudiera aunque quisiera; nunca hice daño a nadie en mi vida. Ahora que lo pienso, yo siempre estuve a favor de la pena capital. Qué ironía. Podría ser que la vida se esté burlando mí. Alguien que siempre estuvo a favor de la pena capital ahora esta a pocos segundos de ser acabado por ella. Aprendí de la manera difícil, pero espero poder servir de ejemplo para que todos aquellos que todavía están a favor de la pena capital vean que es una brutalidad y que no debería existir. ¿Qué es lo que

diferencia al hombre que jalará la palanca o el que dará la orden o el que hizo esta ley o los que apoyan esta ley o incluso a los que detrás del espejo esperan ansiosamente mi muerte con el hombre que jala un gatillo y mata a alguien? ¿Qué no tienen el mismo objetivo de acabar la vida de un ser humano?

Llega el guardia y me da la señal. Me levanto de mi celda y camino. Al salir volteo y me doy cuenta de la falta de luz que hay en mi celda. Estuve tanto tiempo ahí sin luz que me acostumbré a la oscuridad. Qué tristeza, mi vida apunto de acabar y lo último que veo y siento es la oscuridad y el frío del pasillo por donde ahora camino, los guardias siempre junto a mí como ángeles llevándome al cielo o demonios arrastrándome al infierno. Llego al cuarto y un sentimiento de nostalgia se apodera de mí.

El cuarto que me ocasionó tantas pesadillas no es como lo imaginaba. No hay demonios, no hay gente llorando, no están ni mi hija ni mi esposa para decirme que todo va a estar bien, ni Dios tratando de detenerlo todo. No hay nadie más que yo, una silla de madera, corrientes masivas de electricidad, un vidrio gigantesco, un padre, una esponja mojada y un verdugo. En el aire flotando alrededor de mí hay millones de partículas de ilusiones destruidas y del otro lado del cristal están el rencor y la venganza. Me pongo a pensar en lo interesantes y complejos que son los pensamientos de un hombre apunto de morir. Durante todo el tiempo que estuve esperando el día de mi ejecución siempre pensé en cuáles serían mis últimos pensamientos. Ahora que estoy aquí sentado los nervios se han apoderado de mí, convirtiendo mis pensamientos en fugaces reflexiones sobre la vida y el sistema trivial que maneja a nuestra sociedad.

Todos se quedan en silencio y esperan a que diga mis últimas palabras. ¿Qué estarán esperando que diga? ¿Acaso

quieren una disculpa por algo que no hice? Al disculparme, ¿no estaría admitiendo que yo cometí ese crimen? Todo lo que tenía que decir ya lo dije enfrente del jurado incompetente y corrupto. No hay nada que pueda decir que cambie las cosas. El daño ya está hecho, así que prefiero quedarme callado.

Siento un alivio. (El calor que estos pensamientos habían ocasionado en mi cabeza han sido congelados por una esponja mojada que ahora colocan sobre mi cabeza.) Miro al guardia parado junto a mí. Veo en él una sonrisa, como si estuviera feliz de estar en la primera fila de algún espectáculo de Broadway. A mi izquierda un padre vestido de negro me pregunta que si quiero confesarme. Me quedo en silencio. Si habría de confesarme, me confesaría de alguna vez haber apoyado esta ley que ahora me parece absurda y primitiva. Ha llegado la hora. Todo se torna oscuro y mi corazón palpita a una gran velocidad quizá porque sabe que está a punto de no volver a palpitar jamás.

Mis brazos son colocados en la silla y amarrados de tal manera para que cuando esté convulsionándome mis movimientos estén limitados y el espectáculo sea menos terrorífico para los que están viendo. Dentro de un par de segundos. En cuanto el guardia dé la señal. Más de cien mil voltios de electricidad pasarán por los cables de esta silla de madera fría. Me convulsionaré bruscamente de diez a quince segundos. Cuando deje de moverme, será porque mi cerebro estará frito, y yo muerto. Sólo ahora me doy cuenta de que aún me quedan muchas ganas de vivir. Nunca pensé en lo bella que es la vida hasta este instante. Nunca pensé en todas las cosas que nunca volveré a hacer jamás. Daría cualquier cosa por volver a sonreír, soñar, jugar, bailar o el simple hecho de volver a respirar. Cada respiro confirma que sigo con vida, que aun tengo la oportunidad de cambiar mi vida y de apreciar todos esos pequeños

milagros que están a mi alrededor. Mientras siga respirando mi corazón seguirá latiendo. La vida es algo frágil que puede acabarse en cualquier instante por cualquier determinante por mas pequeño e insignificante que sea. Solo ahora estando a un respiro de mi muerte me doy cuenta de todo esto. El miedo y la angustia se apoderan completamente de mi cuerpo y solo ahora me doy cuenta de que no estoy

listo para irme, no estoy listo para renunciar a tanta belleza.

Estoy nervioso. Quiero vivir. No quiero morir. No lo merezco. Soy inocente. Tengo miedo. Quiero salir de aquí. Quiero ver a mi hija. Volver a mi vida de antes. Olvidar esta pesadilla. Despertar y estar en otro lugar. Abro los ojos y confronto la realidad:

Ésta. Para mí.

Quizá sea mi último respiro.

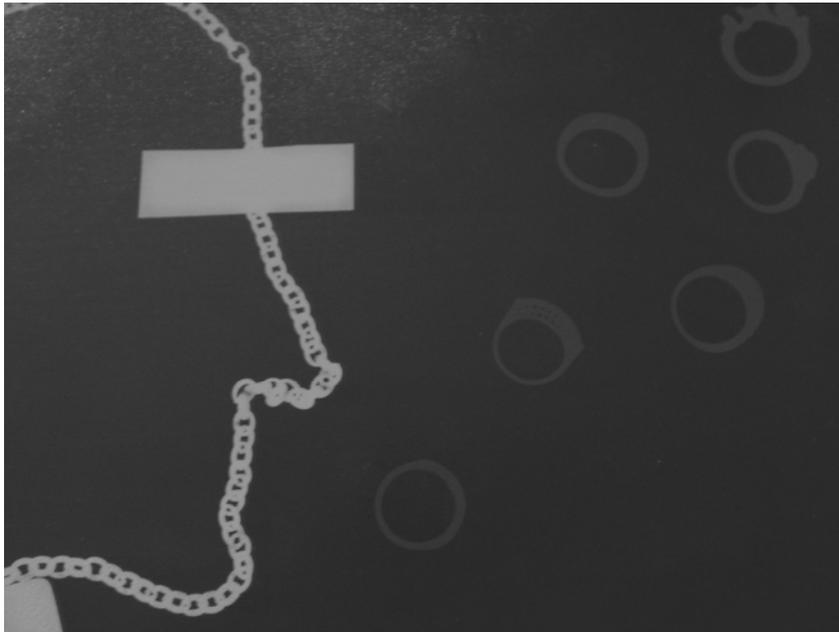


Desiring Absence

Jan Hendrik Van Zoelen

“The rabbis, in exile, were forced to reinvent their homeland on paper, only to find, perhaps, that they worshipped the paper more than the homeland or the way prisoners who express their love for the free world by painting its portrait on their cell wall come to worship the walls and not the world.”

-Andre Aciman



Aciman presents the possibility that the concept of absence is more desirable by our human nature than the act of possessing. An absence speaks more strongly than a presence and overshadows the latter. Marita Sturken explores this idea in her essay, “Memorializing Absence”, as she inquires into the meaning that the World Trade Center Towers had during their existence. These buildings, according to her essay, represented concepts such as “oversized public building projects, the banal glass towers of modernity’s fading years, the symbol of New York tourism, and, later, the arrogance of American capital.” Nevertheless, it seems to Sturken that their destruction created a more

profound and common meaning in people’s minds: one of an infamous event, which is deeply associated with destruction and suffering. She concludes that the absence of these towers is felt more profoundly today than their presence ever was in the past.

The feeling of absence is not necessarily related to the aftermath of destruction or loss, but can also be extended to the future and its possibilities. “I just wish I could go home. I can imagine myself just eating at the table with my family or driving my car with country music playing as I go to a friend’s house.” Benjamin, my roommate at Columbia University’s High School Program,

expressed his longing for home several times in the last two weeks. He feels very homesick and incessantly remarks how he dislikes New York City and would fly back home immediately if he could. In the beginning of the program, Ben was very happy and enthusiastic but with time his longing for home grew and has made it difficult for him to enjoy his present stay in the city. I am not sure whether he dislikes New York City for the way it is or because he simply wants to be home and this city has become a prison. When I first heard those words, I thought Ben was overreacting to his new situation as he knew all along that he would stay for less than a month. Nonetheless, as I have come to realize about my own feelings, I concluded that I basically feel the same way only in a less fervid, explicit manner. Certainly, instead of being in this room at 114th Street in New York, NY, I would rather be in my own bedroom at Privada de los Aguacates #433 in Guadalajara, Mexico. I miss home and wish to be there. Home seems to be more enjoyable and desired when it is absent, and this desire affects Ben's and my view on our current location.

A couple of months ago, I was very excited and looking forward to come to Columbia University's High School Program. I was imagining the great time I could have, and how it would help me to choose Columbia University as my top choice for my undergraduate education. At the same time, I was wishing for my last High School year to end as quickly as possible so I could enjoy college life and do so in New York City. Surely, High School was enjoyable but I was already looking into the future, looking forward to great times and experiences in college, those moments I would remember for the rest of my life. I was observing a future that only existed in my mind and would not necessarily end as planned or thought ahead. It is very peculiar in the human

mind to see the future in such a high regard when the future is nonexistent, absent.

Humans tend to desire what they do not have. It is as if the farther away it is, the more valuable it becomes and the more they want it. Yet, it is ironic that this desire is also ever increasing as it becomes more difficult to attain. Javier, an older friend, told me one night as we were dining in a Latin American restaurant in Lower Manhattan: "Everyday I say to myself that I will eventually go back to Paraguay and everyday my desire to return becomes stronger. Technically, it is still my home country. I feel like I should be *there* and not *here* in the United States. But everyday I realize how Asuncion gets farther and farther away from me. The most disturbing conclusion is not only the fact that everyday it becomes more difficult for me to return to Paraguay but also that everyday Paraguay becomes less of my home. The problem for me, and I think for all foreigners in this country, is that I will never consider this place to be my real home, and I fear dying without a home." Javier was the exiled rabbi; his desire toward the concept of home grew while his real home gradually faded from his memories.

My father, Everard, lived the first 23 years of his life in the Netherlands. He chose to escape from the draft his country demanded from all young men at the time, and to do so, he had to leave the country. He briefly stayed in Peru and eventually moved to Guadalajara, Mexico. He has spent his last 23 years in Mexico. Once, I asked him where he would like to live and be buried when he became older. He explained to me that he hoped to die in Mexico since he did not see any point in living his last years in the Netherlands for his life had developed and blossomed in Mexico. His life had started in the Netherlands, but his life was more attached to Mexico. From his comments, I concluded he would also want to be buried

in Mexico, where he had two wives, three children and his company. I was wrong. “When I die, however, you have to bury me with my parents and sister in the Netherlands,” he told me without hesitation. In one corner of his heart, he was still living with the desire of eventually returning to his original home, though it may only be for final rest.

Before coming to New York, I had my future somewhat planned. I was going to obtain my higher education in a foreign country and probably stay there or in any other developed country, for Mexico was definitely a place I did not want to live. I disliked the corruption, the insecurity, the lack of opportunities, the stalled progress and what I considered the primitive culture that I felt my city and my country were handicapped by. I was displeased by the conservative Catholic community and the closed-minded people. I have always known that I have the opportunity to experience, live, and to take advantage of the world thanks to my favorable economic situation and liberal parents. I knew I could receive a great education outside Mexico, have a very high living standard in another country afterwards. I could use the

possibilities that have been given to me and decide to become a part of the exodus of Mexicans into foreign countries for what we consider a better life.

Yet, as I’ve been away from home for over a month, I ask myself whether I should be part of my country’s continuous brain drain. I ask myself whether home is so bad, since I seem to desire to go back there. Should I leave for what I consider a better life or should I stay and do my best to improve the home I seem to actually yearn for? It is always difficult to put one’s life in perspective. However, it is ironic that all these changing thoughts come to me as I sit in a room thousands of miles away from home. From here, home does not seem so bad after all.

Nevertheless, I wonder whether I would still feel the same way when I go back. Is it my innate behavior –or human behavior- to desire what is absent? When I return to Mexico, I could feel again the desire to move to a foreign country and not to return again. I might even plan a future for myself again. Longing absence, and perhaps desiring it more than presence, is not an exclusive trait that only rabbis and prisoners possess.

Unconvincing Milk Substitute

Eunbi Lee

Sometimes you will find me overlooking someone else's life: admiring, observing, scrutinizing. Not in a pathetic stalking way, though. I've always felt this dissatisfaction- like having a homeless person inside me asking for more and more food stamps, or like feeling a chocolate bar pass through my throat but sensing no caffeine conquer my senses. Vicarious fulfillment, empty aftertaste- like pouring milk substitute in your coffee, despite its unconvincing taste.

Sitting on the couch every morning, I pretend to be staring at the other side of the office- it's a wall, with two doors, a whiteboard, two banners. A door that leads you to a bureaucratic hell where words mysteriously get lost, another to a fully guarded bird cage attached to a liberating anchor. A whiteboard with phony encouragements and sarcastic remarks ensconced underneath deceitful words of impetus. A banner promoting a false statement, another applauding a fallacy.

While I mask my eyes with clouded glasses, I eavesdrop on a random conversation- this and that, yesterday somebody broke into my apartment, really, they took everything and now I don't know how I'm going to pay the rent, really, well yesterday I celebrated my birthday at Bistro Lulu with a few friends, you should have come, oh- sorry. Then, he walks in. With his pompous and pretentious walk, strutting down a hallway that is never spacious enough. Then, his children walk in. With their yet untainted walks, tailing their father like a clan of ducks. I greet them as I have done for the last two years. Good morning, hi good morning, how are you doing, morning girls. Say hi girls, hi.

There ends the brief interaction for the day; no more, no less. Then, I observe.

While he prepares his morning coffee with Meyenberg Ultra-Pasteurized 1% Low Fat Goat Milk for another exciting Monday, his children play hide and seek. Incapable of staying quiet for a second, they seize the few minutes they have left until their mom arrives to deliver them to kindergarten. There. She is always on time, not five minutes early, not five minutes late. Then, I smile. Just quietly so I wouldn't distract them. Their routine is well defined and followed, robotic; I wonder, perhaps too much? Too much like a set of rotating wheels inside a wristwatch, whose teeth fall in place exactly on time as preordained by the designer, probably a Swiss.

Mothers tend to employ rules excessively. Girls, we have to go now, say bye to daddy, girls girls, stop fooling around and let's go. His children wander around the office for a couple of minutes, insinuating their desire to miss school, for a change. They cling onto his legs, hold his hands tightly, almost make him fall, but he doesn't- his footsteps, his legs are strong enough to absorb their weight and impact, at least for now. After his wife's final words, *vamonos ninas*, he says, have a good day girls okay? I'll see you at home, though he knows he will end up walking them out of the office- because he can't possibly let go of their hands. Outside, he kisses them and they kiss him back; it's like a marathon of kisses. Then, I leave the couch. I stand between the two doors facing a decision to make- the bureaucratic hell or a liberating bird cage. Glancing quickly at both, attempting to look beyond the alluring horizons, I walk. I choose the bureaucratic

hell- hell, maybe I'll get lost within my daunting words and my haunting thoughts.

Then, I wonder. Is the existence of such affection, such love, possible in an office like this? Where the last bits of sincerity have deserted a long time ago, and only expressions devoid of sentiments have remained? Yet, I see hope. A momentary satisfaction. Then, I perceive a wave of bitter aftertaste- aching neurons call for, demand, press for a response to their questions. The explosive tree-like nervous system tumultuously rebels against my wishes. They torment me. How far will such contrasting forces go without clashing? How far will his feet and legs walk, still remaining strong? To what extent should I blame myself for not being able to impersonate them?

The hope I'd seen fades away, or at least the hope I thought I'd seen. The next day, despite the violent reaction from my nerve cells, I go back, I sit on the couch, I eavesdrop, I greet.

Life is not fair; what a cliché. Not everyone gets to live the life she wants, to give all that her hearts scream out for.

When I was seven, I participated in a drawing competition at school. I was awarded a bronze medal: the third place. Everyone- my mom, my teachers, my sisters- complimented me, and I liked it. But while I was savoring the moment, my father told me- *do not be satisfied with what you have, seek for more; do not settle for instantaneous pleasures.*

Yesterday and today, I chose to ignore it. I followed my own piece of advice- if not satisfied, turn to vicarious and momentary fulfillment for it is better than yearning for what will not come, what will never belong to me.

Lately, though I've asked myself- not the annoying neurons- a long-avoided question. What if such satisfaction isn't good enough, what if such aftertaste

provokes unpleasant side-effects, nausea, vomiting, hallucination, depression?

Sitting on the couch, I turn on the television. After flipping through a few channels, I put in the DVD, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, and press Play.

Chris Gardner, the main character, runs. He always runs- in pursuit of his stolen medical bone density scanners, in pursuit of a stockbroker internship, and in pursuit of his son's "happyness." He runs because despite his personal bankruptcy, and despite the obstacles and tests that life has placed on his road, he could not part from one thing that keeps him alive- his son.

Gardner's life hits the bottom when his wife leaves him, his landlord kicks him and his son out of the building, the government seizes his assets. No money even for a night at a cheap motel, he wanders around San Francisco, scrutinizing his options. Realizing that his son and he are completely alone in the world, with no shoulder to rely on, Gardner takes his son to the only place he could afford, the bathroom in the subway station. Inside the bathroom, his leg pushes the door so the janitor won't enter and his hands cover his son's ears so he won't listen to the janitor outside.

Fortunately, his legs are strong enough to absorb the weight and force of the janitor, strong enough to protect his defenseless son from deviating from the pursuit of happyness, and to protect himself from ceaseless outside-world attacks belittling his very existence. His strength, fed with his love toward his son, eventually allows him to succeed as a stockbroker and to become a respected millionaire.

The movie is over. Credits, Will Smith, Chris Gardner, Jaden Smith, Christopher Gardner. I press Stop, take out the DVD, and turn off the television.

For Gardner, vicariously living the life of the World's Perfect Father- his boss, a successful millionaire, taking his son to football games in VIP seats, providing a three-story house with a spacious backyard for his son to play baseball, driving a convertible Porche- was not enough. Rather his limited, instantaneous experience motivated him to build a real life, with no nauseating aftertastes.

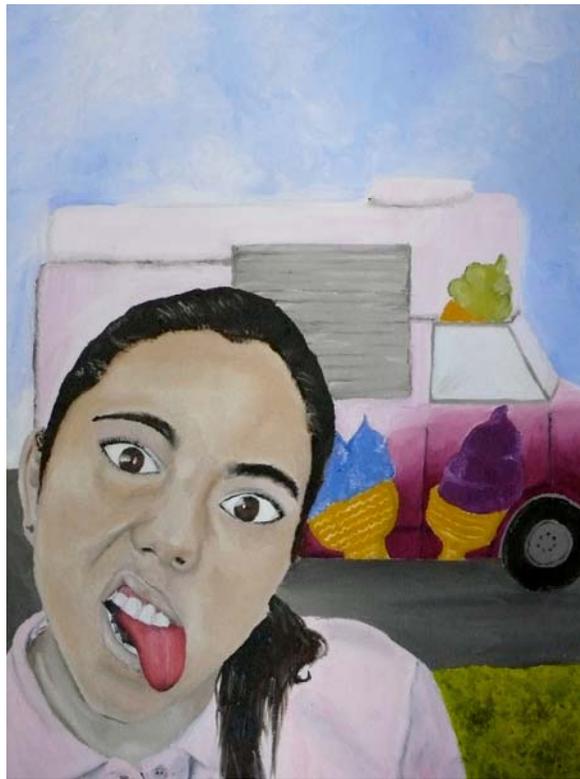
Gardner reminds me of the novel *Ga-si-go-gi* by Chang-in Jo. The protagonist, who is simply referred to as the father, is a poor poet willing to sacrifice everything for the welfare of his son who suffers from leukemia. He did. He even sold himself, abandoned the profession that hindered him from earning enough money to support his child, and wrote biographies of ignorant millionaires

pretending to be someone in exchange for quick and tangible compensation.

Ga-si-go-gi is a Chinese ninespine stickelback.

My father was a *Ga-si-go-gi*. I wanted to be one, I tried. But I feared I would fail. I chose vicarious fulfillment.

Day by day, the side-effects intensify. I believe the homeless person inside me is now asking for tangible food; I believe my stomach is in need of an even stronger source of energy than a sugar-coated chocolate bar. I want real, authentic milk from intoxicated cows, pasteurized, and merchandized by Sello Rojo, for my daily cup of coffee. No substitutes. I can no longer tolerate the unconvincing, fake taste of milk substitute.

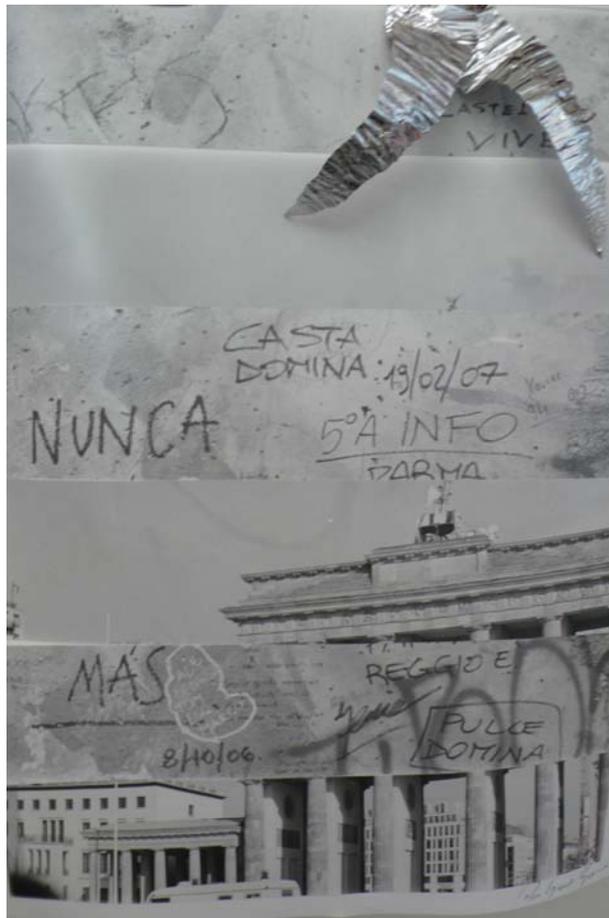


Motel 6

María Cristina Fernández Hall

Incandescent sign
a cheap motel
Plumped with collagen,
crimson lipstick,
Mascara;
Unreal, trashy joke
You flicker.

You buzz...
like a fly in the corner
of my eye
electricity runs out
and you're gone.



Veintiún Días

María Inés Vallejo Vigil

Rutina: Hábito adquirido de hacer las cosas por mera práctica y sin razonarlas.

Te diré, en este lugar he oído de todo: que las manchas de tinta en la ropa se quitan con leche de magnesia, que la artritis de los dedos es porque te los tronaste en la juventud, que la manera en la que doblas la ropa refleja tu personalidad, que una aspirina disuelta en el agua de un florero hace que las flores marchitas florezcan. Hasta he oído decir que cuando haces algo veintiún veces, se convierte en rutina.

Llevo tres años, dos meses y doce días aquí. Mis días se escurren por un resumidero invadido de sarro, y el tiempo, mi silente enemigo, cada amanecer más visible, me exige contar los días. Mil ciento setenta y seis días llevo aquí (todavía conservo la rutina de sumar) tratando de desmentir cada palabra que me dicen.

Te diré, para adquirir la rutina de mentir sólo se necesita decir una:

-Espero que haya dormido bien, señor.

-¿En verdad “esperas”, Ana, o es mera rutina?

-Decidimos hacer huevos revueltos con queso hoy, sólo porque sabemos que le gustan.

-No seas mentirosa, Ana, sé que sobró el queso de la sopa de maicena de ayer.

-Papá, prometo que vengo a visitarte la próxima semana.

- Eso dijiste hace 6 semanas y mira cuánto te has tardado en venir.

- Tiene cataratas, tendremos que operarle.

- ¡A mí, nadie me hace nada, estoy perfecto!

- Por favor papá, necesito el dinero.

- Piensa en tus palabras antes de decirlas, no *necesitas* dinero. ¿Acaso estás agonizando de hambre?

-Con las nuevas medicinas te vas a poner de maravilla.

-Placebos.

-¡Te extraño tanto!

- Entonces, ¿porqué me metiste aquí!

Te preguntarás en dónde estoy, ya que también se te hizo rutina preguntar, cuando ni siquiera conoces a alguien. Me encuentro en el asilo Santa Catarina de la Trinidad y Ana es mi enfermera. Mis tres hijos decidieron deliberadamente meterme aquí porque yo les metí un susto: me caí de la escalera de mi casa y estuve muy cerca de romperme la cadera. Dicen que es falta de calcio. El asilo se paga con el dinero de mi jubilación, también la universidad de mis nietos y las tristes mentiras de mis hijos (para ellos es rutina desde el primer favorcito).

Ayer, Ana me trajo una revista. Leí un artículo de “cómo mejorar tu vida sexual” (no porque fuera de mi interés particular, sino porque fue el primer artículo de la revista y no soy fanático de ir de atrás para adelante. Te lo juro). El artículo decía algo como: “La clave es romper con la rutina, sorpréndelo con...”. Te diré, al terminar de leer ese artículo mi teoría de que la rutina es para excusar el aburrimiento y la falta de ingenio se ratificó. Juro que la rutina es una justificación para la falta de creatividad del ser humano. ¿Cuántas veces no has escuchado decir a alguien: “Cortamos

porque caímos en la rutina”? Esta persona dice que dejó de razonar su relación, empezó a actuar por “mera práctica” y gracias a eso falló. ¡Dios, qué patético! Yo, metido en un asilo no tengo mucho más que hacer que analizar y leer lo que me rodea. Como ya te dije, llevo mil ciento setenta y seis días aquí: suficientes para haber adquirido cincuenta y seis rutinas diferentes (claro, si la teoría de los veintiún días fuera verídica). Te diré, la única rutina que hubiera adquirido sería contradecir cada cosa que me afirman. Habría dejado de ejecutar las tantas rutinas que hacía antes de llegar aquí: ponerme el traje, anudarme la corbata, besar a Julia mientras dormía, hacerme dos huevos revueltos con queso, tomarme mi café negro... y éstas sólo eran antes de salir de mi casa. ¡Estaría yo en números rojos! Te aseguro que mis dolores de espalda llevan más de veintiún días y es hora que no me acostumbro. Nunca he adquirido rutinas ya que no suelo actuar por mera práctica y, por lo tanto, nunca he dejado de razonar.

Te diré, nadie cuerdo lo haría.

Que no tenga rutinas no quiere decir que no me fastidie en este lugar. Los miércoles vienen unas niñas que ya tienen la rutina de venir a jugar dominó. Siempre

les gano. He llegado a pensar que ni se preocupan por las jugadas, siempre están al tanto del reloj para verificar si ya se cumplieron las horas de servicio.

Todos los días sueño con no despertar aquí, tarde o temprano me levanto de la cama, me enjuago las lagañas de mis ojos fatigados, limpio mis lentes, me los pongo, me siento unos quince minutos sobre la cama tratando de recordar mis sueños alejados, exijo mi “café bien cargado”, me pongo la bata que me regaló Julia cuando nos casamos, Ana me ayuda a bañarme, me visto sin su ayuda, doblo mi bata simétricamente perfecta, desayuno lo que buenamente haya, salgo al solecito del jardín por unas horas de vitamina D, a veces leo, observo las flores perfumadas que tienen un olor que ya no distingo, pienso en cómo me gustaría regalárselas a Julia (le hubieran encantado), entro a comer lo que buenamente haya, pido mis conchas bajas en azúcar, mi descafeinado, espero a que venga alguno de mis hijos o, en caso de ser miércoles, las niñas a visitarme, mis vitaminas y el calcio y hasta mañana.

Te diré, nada de rutina por aquí.



Deep Play

Doug Parker

“Every element of the human saga requires play. We evolved through play. Our culture thrives on play. Courtship includes high theatre, rituals, and ceremonies of play. Ideas are playful reverberations of the mind. Language is a playing with words until they can impersonate physical objects and abstract ideas.” Dianne Ackerman (Vintage Books, 1999)

A few years ago I visited my hometown after many years away. On a beautiful Saskatchewan night, as the long shadows of early evening absorbed the heat of the day, I went for a walk to show my wife the places where my child self passed so many playful hours. The schoolyard, where we played baseball or “500”¹ until the darkness swallowed more fly balls than our Black Diamond gloves, was empty. In the community park, where we used to play “catch” with a scuffed CFL Official League football or engage in the proto-sado-masochism that was murderball,² no one was throwing footballs. The empty lot beside my neighbor’s house, where we shot marbles as soon as the snow melted, where we played a deliciously cruel game called

¹ “500”: a game played with three or more participants. One of the players hits fly balls into the air. The others try to catch those fly balls. Catching a ball before it hits the ground is worth 100 points. Catching it on one bounce is 50. Two or more bounces is worth 25. A lowly grounder is worth 10. If you miss the catch, i.e. the ball hangs forever in the air like a horsehide balloon, and it comes down right to your glove like a graceful meadowlark nesting, and you open your glove and it hits it and bounces away like an epileptic snake, as usually happened to me, you lose the points you could so desperately easily have accumulated. First one to 500 wins. Pushing an opponent just as the ball gets to him is considered fair play, as is throwing your glove at him, calling him gender specific profanities, or pulling his pants down around his ankles.

² Adolescent boys always stand at least five feet further apart than the distance they are actually capable of throwing a football, so calling the game “catch” was rather a misnomer. Murderball? You don’t want to know.

“assburn” and came home with grass stains on our knees and bruises on our backsides³ was empty of everything except dandelions. Where had all the players gone?

³ “Assburn”: a game played exclusively by young boys. A circle is drawn in the dirt, and each player digs a small hole inside the circle. The boy who is IT rolls a tennis ball (but see below about other, mythical balls used) into the circle. The person who has dug the hole into which the tennis ball falls must retrieve the ball and throw (or “huck” or “chuck,”) the ball at any of the other players, who have vacated the circle as soon as they determined the ball was not going to fall into their hole. If the hucker hits one of the fleeing contestants, the flier must put a small stone inside his hole. If the throw is errant, the unlucky chucker must put a small stone in his own hole. The game continues until one of the combatants has accumulated five stones. The loser must then put himself into a submissive position on all fours, with just his rear end in the air. The other sadists in the match then have the right to huck the ball at the exposed rump of the loser, 5 minus x times, where x stands for the number of stones in the hurler’s hole. Luckily, adolescent boys, in their boyish enchantment with the possibility of inflicting pain on living things, almost always choose velocity over aim, so, while I remember losing many games of assburn, I recall few direct hits on my posterior, the ball usually screaming by at a major-league-relief-pitcher speed and crashing into the aluminium siding of our parents’ homes. Stories abounded about legendary games played, not with tennis balls, but India rubber balls or even, shudder, real baseballs. I never witnessed such a feat of bravery myself. Nor, now that I think of it, did I ever participate in a game where the ground rules required a naked bottom to be exposed, although I suspect such may have occurred, adolescent boys being adolescent boys.

All my old haunts had become ghost parks. On those fields I learned the best lessons of my life: to curse and hit a curveball, to fart loudly but without laundry type consequences, to always support a team mate and only conjugate the words that most needed them, to speak with the rhythm of my generation, man. On summer grass and winter ice, away from parents and coaches and whistles, we were free to seed our dreams, few of which I have ever harvested, but all of which I still dream of reaping when the season finally is right. We learned from the pedophilic rink attendant who tightened out skates and checked for our jockstraps, and from Johnny Sujak, who had Lateral Sclerosis but was always chosen first for shinny games because he was the best goalie we had ever seen,⁴ and from Gary Whittles, the best athlete of us all, who only had one arm and a stump on the other to tuck the hockey stick under. The hours sepiad into dusk, porch lights came on, and our mothers' calls from the porches were all that pulled us away.

Those hours were our first exposure to what Diane Ackerman has labeled Deep Play:” Moments may sprawl for hours or race by in a panic, split into separate photographic stills presenting themselves one by one, or pile up, or whirl breathlessly like a beautiful tornado. In deep play one’s sense of time no longer originates within oneself.”

Perhaps the children I did not see on my walk that evening were playing, too, but I have become enough of a curmudgeon to assert that play is not engendered by PlayStation. When I was young Jim Stevens and I tried to dig a hole to China. Now I read that China boasts 130 million “Netizens,” or online network citizens, and that the number is growing by

30 percent per year. I read about a young man from Shanghai who, after six year of playing online games, would forever be stuck in a sitting position, his neck fused at a 90 degree angle.⁵ Play may be play, or it may be, as Ackerman defines, deep play, but I still cannot understand virtual play. Sure, when I spent hours by myself in the back alley with yet another of my mother’s broomsticks, practicing the batting stance of Carl Yazstremski or Harmon Killebrew, when I tossed stones into the air and swatted them (to the big rock a single, to the fence a double, over the fence and hitting a cow a grand slam) I heard voices in my head, cheering and huzzaing, but there were real stones, real fences, real cows. Ackerman, to her credit, does not address virtual, online, role-playing, shooter, computer or video games directly, although she does write of how we “flinch from the zealous assaults of technology, which have turned daily life into an obstacle course of billboards, and upped the ante so high that kindergarten children now use word processors.” What worries me, after reading her magnificent book on the crucial importance of play to any society, is what happens to us when we must pay for our play, when imagination and reality have become yet more consumer products, like acne strips or SUVs.

Deep Play is a wonderfully written celebration of the human need for play. Whether she is examining the fundamental significance of the Lascaux cave paintings, or recording the playfulness of emperor penguins, or ruminating on her efforts to be the first “Poet in Space”⁶ or reflecting on her passion for bike riding, or nature, or poetry, she exemplifies in her words those of Plato, who said “...man is made God’s

⁴ I preferred shinny, played on ice in winter boots, to actual hockey, cursed as I was with supermodel ankles on a sumo-wrestler’s body.

⁵ Mackenzie Funk, “I Was A Chinese Internet Addict.” *Harper’s* March 2007, 66-67

⁶ She was turned down because it was felt she might be too literary for truck drivers.

plaything, and that is the best part of him. Therefore every man and woman should live life accordingly, and play the noblest games... What, then is the right way of living? Life must be lived as play.” Ackerman celebrates how the crucial possibilities of play, in evolution and space travel, courting ceremonies and stamp collecting, are vital forms of the human experience.

Ackerman delineates play itself from “deep” play, which is “the ecstatic form of play. In its thrall, all the play elements are visible, but they’re taken to intense and transcendent heights.” Deep play attracts shamans and extreme athletes, artists and gardeners, and Ackerman states that “when it starts focusing one’s life and offering ecstatic moments,” play becomes deep play, which is often connected with the sacred, the transcendent, the pure.

While not denying the power of religious feeling as a form of deep play, Ackerman reveals her personal, secularist religious views clearly: “I believe in the sanctity of life and the perfectibility of people. All life is sacred, life loves life, and we are capable of improving our behavior towards others.” At the same time, she describes herself as an agnostic who believes that “the biggest threat to the religious experience may well come from organized religion itself.” Or, more playfully, “you can’t teach an old dogma new tricks.” What she describes as the transcendence of deep play often reminded me of Taoism, which says that one’s activities can lead one to a sense of connectedness to a universal spirit, of feeling oneself joined to the universe in a way that goes beyond intellectualization or explanation.

I think that I have experienced the moments of deep play that Ackerman so breathlessly evokes. I have had an overwhelming sensation of connectedness and spirit sitting on mountaintops in Indonesia. (But never in front of a

television.) On long, solitary hikes. (But never in front of a computer – no matter how fast my connection speed, computers never really make me feel connected.) In fleeting flashes after long meditation. (But never with medication.) Often when wrestling with words to write a poem. (But never writing lesson plans.)

Ackerman is a poet herself, and her poetic sensibility permeates her extended essay. She writes with a poet’s sense of rhythm and movement and passion for the power of words. For me, the most enjoyable chapter in the book is the one where she looks at the deep play of poetry. What, after all, is metaphor but a form of linguistic playfulness? “Every poem is a game,” she reminds us, “a ritual dance with words.” “Words are small shapes in the gorgeous chaos of the world.” She displays an unabashed joy in language, at the games embedded in it, dug up from her incredible etymological knowledge. The word “play” itself, for example, comes from the Indo-European word “plegan,” which meant to “risk, chance, expose oneself to hazard⁷...Play’s original purpose was to make a pledge to something or someone by risking one’s life.” A scrupulous writer, she informs us that the word “scrupulous” comes from the Latin *scrupulous*, which was the name of the tiny stone that was the smallest unit of weight. A scrupulous person, then, was one who was so sensitive that she would be irritated by the smallest stone in her shoe.

Deep Play is an inspiring read. In the section on poetry, I ran across a brief paragraph about a poetic form that I had seldom encountered.

Poetry offers truths based on intuition, a keen eye, and the tumultuous experiences of the poet. Long ago in India, for example, Urdu poets writing in the verse form known as *ghazal* were also trying to figure out the universe. A *ghazal* was the

⁷ See footnote 3 on the hazards of assburn.

technology they used to make sense of their world, and no doubt they felt as sonneteers and composers of villanelles do, that there are truths that can only be learned when you're dancing in chains.

Ackerman reminds us throughout the book that most play takes place within a set of agreed upon rules.⁸ Inspired by this paragraph, I decided to find out the chains, the rules of the *ghazal* and to engage in what I hoped would be the deep play of actually writing one.

One of the agreed upon rules of the *ghazal* is that be about unrequited love. This discombobulated me at the very outset. I have not been in love often, and when I have, it has always been gloriously requited.⁹ Reading further, however, I discovered that the love need not be carnal, but that it could refer to a higher, spiritual entity. Mine ended up being about poetry, a love I have pursued throughout my life, but one that keeps giving me false phone numbers when I wish to pursue her.

The rules of the *ghazal* are very precise, although later poets do not always follow them scrupulously.¹⁰ As I began to write, it felt very little like play. I couldn't make any idea conform to the rules of the game. My first couplet was abysmal:

⁸ Most of my schoolyard baseball games, though, seem to me now to be largely about invention of rules, and endless strident adolescent debate about their enforcement.

⁹ There is, however, that girl who sat beside me in Grade 11 History class. I thought that the fact I let her cheat off of my paper on every test was a sure sign of my love, but it was never requited. On the off chance that she is reading this review, my email is doug.parker@asfg.mx.

¹⁰ The *ghazal* is made up of five to fifteen couplets, each line having the same number of syllables and the same rhythmic pattern. The first couplet must have a rhyme, though not an end rhyme, and both lines must end with the same word. That word is used at the end of every subsequent second line. Finally, in the last couplet the poet "signs" the poem by including his name, or nickname. Each couplet must be complete in and of itself, so there is no enjambment between couplets.

As I sit down a *ghazal* to write
Am I putting on or taking off a
muzzle to write?

First of all, while I have the rhyme (*ghazal*/muzzle) and the repetition of the final word "write," I have nine syllables in the first line, and fourteen in the second. Not only that, I absolutely hated the anastrophe, the inversion of the normal word order, in the first line. Instead of deep play, I was experiencing deep frustration, feeling as if I were writing with my right hand while my left hand erased.¹¹ If I wanted to feel like I was playing at all, I knew I had to leave the first couplet and move on with the rest of the poem. Creation must precede revision.

I was writing the first draft in my yard in Zapopan, Mexico. Remembering how important nature was in Ackerman's book, I tried to open my awareness to what was going on around me. I began a line "The birds are singing in the *tabachines*" which I thought was the name of the tree on which I was just able to see the first bright orange-red blossoms that would eventually fill the tree with flame I remembered talking to Michael Hogan, probably my favorite poet not named Michael Ondaatje, and one of the greatest players of poetry I have ever read, about one of his poems, which had a line "A sea of yellow flowers/pollen-capped and heavy/rose and drifted to Nogales through the foothills and beyond." When he showed the poem to Richard Shelton, his teacher, Shelton asked "What kind of yellow flowers?" Hogan said he didn't know. Shelton said there were more than 200 varieties of yellow flowers in the local ecosystem. In true poet fashion, Hogan enrolled in a course on desert flora and fauna. A poet must name it what it is. In my case, they were not *tabachines*, but *flamboyan*. Even deep play must be

¹¹ Put another way, my left hand knew what my right hand was doing, and was deeply chagrined..

scrupulous. And the birds were not singing, they were larking.

As I continued playing the *ghazal*, crossing out and manipulating and counting syllables and stresses, smiling when the perfect word fell into the necessity of rhythm like a lazy fly ball nestling into my Black Diamond, the rest of the world seemed somehow to slip into the background. Time evaporated. What had been frustration and hard work had become play, and play had become deep play, refreshing and exhausting and exhilarating. I remembered climbing those mountains, seeing the sunrise over Bali's terraced landscape, and recognized that deep play is often damn hard work. I also remembered the mountains that I was never able to conquer, that I abandoned from fatigue or weakness of will. I am still not sure, as I read my *ghazal*, just what part of the mountain it represents my having scaled.

I only know that after hours of

deep and tiring play, I seemed to hear my mother's voice calling me from the porch, and it was time for the child to go to bed.

Play

How should I play with this *ghazal* I write?
Do I need a net or muzzle to write?

Will words giggle to the dance, fill my card
Or limp on broken feet because I write?

Sitting in the shade, I conjure a sun
Where is the flash of words I need to write?

Do I gasp at the source that can't be named
Or is it with simple breath I write?

The birds are larking in the *flamobyan*
And my soft, wordless bed bids me not write.

Does my pen mine gems of lucent light?
When my grave is dug, may then I write?



Irrelevant Circuses

Marco Antonio Sánchez Junco

In Brazil, there are more Avon saleswomen than people in the army. Sinterklaas, the Dutch version of Santa Claus, is said to live in Madrid, not the North Pole. The static electricity produced by the unzipping of Velcro contributes to global warming. In today's contemporary society of blogs, scrap booking workshops and tabloids it is very easy to be whisked away in a whirlwind of distraction. As long as we keep our minds on the Superbowl, Anna Nicole Smith's baby daddy and Anakin Skywalker's turn to the dark side, we are able to ignore the sweatshop workers in Tiripur, India making Louis Vuitton bags at eight cents an hour, the thousands of internally displaced citizens from the massacred region of Darfur and the world's growing dependence on oil. How far can we continue in this state of apathy? Aldous Huxley gave us a glimpse of what sort of future would await us in this one-way journey. But are we really ready for this Brave New World?

If you could only invite three Teletubbies to your wedding, which of the four would not receive an invitation? (Hmm...which of these colorful beings would not be there on my special day?) Po wouldn't be invited, for sure. The bright red terrycloth wouldn't exactly go with the tulip centerpieces, and I wouldn't want that rebellious teletubby careening around on its scooter bumping into other guests.

Today there is no need to retain any sort of information (other than our twenty-three email account passwords, that is), because we can just go to Wikipedia on our wafer-thin cell-phones and look everything

up. Math tests have become nothing more than competitions to see who can punch numbers into a calculator the fastest, and, thanks to online dating and massive-multi-player internet games, technology has even eliminated the need to interact physically with others. It's like, why would I want to go outside, when I can look at every single place on the planet through Google Earth? An unexpected power shortage seems like the worst punishment that the Olympian Gods could muster. The computer goes off while you're reading a great article about the "Top 25 websites of 2006", you can't recharge your cell-phone, your alarm clock has to be re-set, the left-over Chinese and the tin foil swan in the fridge slowly drift towards a state of stygian, room-temperature decomposition, and with regard to the TV you might as well be staring at a shoebox. A thin, very expensive shoebox.

Britney-Paris-Brangelina-Britney-Tomkat-Lindsay-Paris and repeat: that's the way it goes. Sure, the Bible might have sixty-six books, but Hollywood's got Us Weekly. With edifying articles on the importance of a well moisturized T-zone and paparazzi mayhem at three o'clock in the morning, how could one say no to tabloids? Over the past four years, Jessica Simpson has appeared in over three-hundred articles of the magazine. That's more than the number of tons of methamphetamines that are smuggled into Mexico every year. How is that for scandalous?

The average American reads one book per year. "It's better than none," one might think, but that's not really the case here since that one book is probably about

a school of wizardry or some ersatz Nancy Drew novel set at the Louvre. It bothers me so that even reading, the mainstay of knowledge and civilization, has been corrupted into a vacuous activity. Some will say that you should read for pleasure and not just to amass knowledge, but there's a fine line that we mustn't cross. Most people couldn't point out Burkina Faso on a map if their life depended on it, and kids these days have the wrong impression that sea sponges (phylum *porifera*) live in pineapples under the sea. These kids will eventually grow up and become members of society that will be misinformed, misadjusted and unable to function without proper supervision — like children—, so in a way it's like going through puberty in vain.

Atomic tangerine, prussian blue and purple mountain's majesty. Don't you just love crayons? In 1903 Crayola introduced a set of eight crayons, and ever since there has been a steady flow of polychromatic glee. I especially like how they have the name in different languages printed on the little paper so that you can learn while you color. It's such a great idea: say you're in Portugal and you are in desperate need of a lemon yellow sweater,

you just go: "Amarelo limão", and then you get it. Just like that.

To create his vision of the future Huxley only needed to take a look into the past. The idea of losing ourselves in the esophagus of irrelevance is not new by any means. The people of Ancient Rome were too busy watching a bleeding hippopotamus crush a man's severed skull, or cheering on as a starving bear mauled a company of famished warriors to notice that their empire was crumbling to pieces. The government quickly realized that as long as the people were well-fed and, most importantly, entertained then there would be no complaints. This aloof and indifferent stance led to their social downfall. Soon thereafter they were swallowed into a period of ignorance and darkness. "Two things only the people anxiously desire — bread and circuses." Judging by the photoshopped looks of it, things haven't changed much. So while we shuffle through out iPods, click our way through the world wide web and enjoy a re-run or two, we await our collapse.



Beijing March

Ana Marva Fernández Hall

Listen to the bare tree
fingers threaded with bicycles,
wet mops, fog. Where
the knotted narrow alleys
have no toilets. Where everything
forbidden unravels in
a cup of etiquette-less jasmine
tea- Beijing March: a girl
Who isn't beautiful until you
Hear her sigh.



The Rise of Civilizations

Eunbi Lee



What should nation states be preparing for, the end of History or the clash of civilizations? Francis Fukuyama upholds the idea of the end of History in his essay, “By Way of an Introduction,” claiming that currently practiced liberal democracy is the “end point of mankind’s ideological evolution... and the final form of human government” (Fukuyama). On the other hand, Huntington claims that the next source of conflict will no longer be ideological nor economic, but cultural as “the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics” (Huntington). Both historicists make plausible arguments with sufficient evidence. Nevertheless, placing current events as judges, Huntington’s idea is the more plausible and applicable. South Korea’s modernization, North Korean test-bombing and straining relationship with the United States, and the troublesome relationship between Confucian and Japanese civilizations vouch for Huntington’s clash of civilizations.

In the essay, “Clash of Civilizations,” Huntington sorts non-Western civilizations’ reactions toward the West in three different categories; band-wagoning, modernization and isolation. Torn countries, such as Mexico and Turkey, are cases of failed band-wagoning. Despite their attempts to join the Western civilization and to accept its values and institutions, their non-Western history, culture, and traditions have stopped them from belonging to one particular civilization or another.

On the other hand, modernization has taken place in South Korea. Although since Independence, South Korea received military and financial aid from the United States and other Western countries, it has been developing its own economic and military power and has been making efforts to resist westernization. Achieving an incredible record of growth since the 1980’s, South Korea joined the trillion dollar club of world economy in 2004 and reached GDP per capita of \$20,400 in

2005(World). Rising as one of the biggest stars of the high-tech modern world economy, it has created, developed, and followed its own path to success without succumbing too much to the Western civilizations' beliefs and conveniences.

South Korea started stepping away from westernization, even at the cost of straining its relationship with the United States, when the ex-president Kim Dae-Jung launched the "sunshine policy" of engagement with the North in 1998, opposing the West's wishes to be more aggressive. For most South Koreans, the concern is to prevent another war on the Korean peninsula that would cause devastating consequences for the South; however, the Bush administration's intention is to unseat Kim Jung-Il, by applying financial sanctions and even force if necessary. Such attitude from the West has led South Korea's current president, Roh Moo-Hyun, and politicians to encourage the notion that the United States, not North Korea, is the biggest threat to peace (South).

Certainly, recent events have only aggravated the matters. Last year, "a group of young radicals tried to pull down MacArthur's statue in In-cheon, claiming he was a war criminal."(South) A few weeks ago, President Roh initiated a debate about whether the United States should maintain operational control of South Korean armies in wartime, and about the relocation of American military bases. This implies South Korea's desire to re-gain complete national sovereignty, refusing any intervention from the West. Also, a recent seven-nation survey conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper, the *Korea Times* and the Gallup group showed that the image of the United States, the most representative nation state of the West, has deteriorated in recent years. The seven

countries surveyed were Japan, South Korea, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. In South Korea, the percentage of negative respondents increased from 14 to 48 percentage points since the last poll in 1995 (US).

North Korea has chosen isolation, segregating itself from westernization. After the Korean War and break up of Soviet Union, Kim Il Sung decided to keep his people from being overpowered by the U.S.'s "tempting words and promises" and to exclude themselves from the Western-dominated community. For some time, until after Kim's death and the succession of his son, Kim Jung Il, North Korea refused to interact or communicate with any other country except other communist countries. Later on, it formed a part of the Confucian-Islamic connection by developing methods to produce nuclear bombs.

Though nothing has been proven due to North Korea's refusal to allow the entrance of foreign press, or even the press from the United Nations, Khan, a Pakistani scientist, confessed last year to having supplied them with centrifuges, the essential components for enriching uranium necessary for production of atomic weapons. Even though Khan stated that he did not pass on the knowledge and methods necessary, Pyongyang announced last February that they have built nuclear weapons for self-defense. Also, on the fourth of July, while most Americans were celebrating Independence Day, North Korea tested seven missiles in the Sea of Japan, which included short-range Scud-type rockets and Nodong missiles capable of reaching Japan, and long-range Taepodong-2 missile capable of reaching Alaska or the west coast of the United States. This unexpected bombing, probably intended to warn the international

community, has left North Korea in an even more isolated situation for having ignored its strongest ally, China, who urged the maintaining of peace (Japan).

According to Huntington, the Confucian-Islamic civilizations believe that they have the right to own and produce as many nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as they wish in order to secure their countries. Hence, North Korea and several nation states from the Middle East, such as Libya and Iran expand and exchange technology and weapons with each other. Therefore, North Korea, following the lesson learned from watching the Gulf War- “Do not fight the United States unless you have nuclear weapons,” (North) has now spent practically most of its resources on developing the most destructive bomb known to mankind, leaving behind thousands of unfortunate North Koreans starving and infected with diseases.

Huntington explains that because “differences among civilizations are not only real; [but] they are basic,” (Huntington) and “civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, [and] tradition,” (Huntington) the source of conflicts in the future will be along the cultural fault lines. An important clash between civilizations has already been presented. Last August 15th, the anniversary of the Japanese emperor’s admission that Japan had lost the war- considered as Independence Day by South Koreans-, the Japanese prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi paid his respects at the Yasukuni shrine wearing a formal morning coat. The shrine is more than a memorial to 2.5 million Japanese dead soldiers. Embracing more than fourteen war criminals, secretly enshrined in 1978, it demonstrates the unrepentant militarism. Koizumi’s visit and the shrine’s

description of Japan as “the liberator of Asia, a victim of Western belligerency in its wars of 1937-45,” brought a storm of disapproval from neighboring countries, especially those from the “Confucian” civilization that have shared a similar past against the Japanese civilization. For instance, both China and South Korea have refused to hold summit meetings with Koizumi, and raised opposition to Japan’s attempts to gain a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (Japan). This clash between Japanese and Confucian civilizations is in accord with Huntington’s explanations. The cultural and historical differences between these two civilizations have led to such criticism, enhancing the civilization-consciousness of people.

Fukuyama’s idea shows little support from current events. Huntington’s clash of civilizations has been proven in numerous occasions. The clash of Japanese and Confucian civilizations, the modernization- and separation from the Western civilization- of South Korea, and the isolation of North Korea suggest the beginning of a new source of conflicts. Hence, nation states must prepare themselves, for civilizations will “weaken the nation state as a source of identity.”

“The next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations.” (Huntington)

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“The next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations” (Huntington).

Colección de Poemas

Ana Lucía Bonilla Orellana

La caja de los recuerdos

Cuatro tristes lados.

Ni siete vidas como las del gato del vecino. Ése se murió ayer. Gastada la séptima.

Un sol por la mañana, una nube en la tarde, quien sabe por la noche.

Por una ventana entran los milagros y se vienen a dormir en mi caja.

La caja de los recuerdos.

Sin llave ni papel café, envuelvo la tristeza de la felicidad que me da.

El niño de enfrente con su carrito se deja empujar por una colina de pasto húmedo, con lágrimas.

Si sólo vieras mi caja enorme. Casi tan grande como el varío de mi mente que ya puedo llenar.

Enorme como... lo olvidé.

Del mar

Si como sirena pierdo las escamas día a día,

No me queda más que peinar el pelo de un caballito de mar.

Sobre una piedra turbia de gris mosaico espero

a ver la luz del sol que escala la reja que hay del otro lado del mundo.

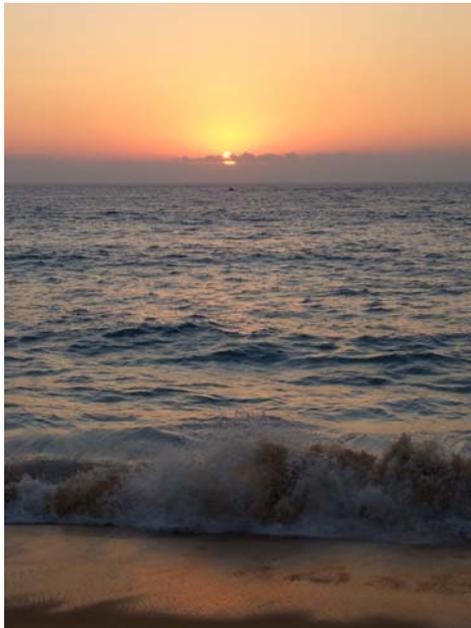
Llega sudoroso, con gotas de lluvia que se mecen sobre su pelo.

Se sacude, despierta y ahí se queda.

Sigo sobre la piedra, cubierta de espuma salada que va dejando marcas como años sin dueño.

Cien, mil, tal vez.

Pero yo tendré más escamas y más alma con cada día que pasa y va.



Song in the Blue Danube

Juan Manuel Pérez Pelayo

It is strange because I hate having terrible habits, but loving bread is my favorite. After every meal I always feel this dryness in my tongue which means that it is time to eat sweet bread. I am not a picky eater. I like the plain ones, the ones with sprinkles on top, the funky shaped ones, round, big, small. I've tried bread from almost anywhere; Mexico, US, Korea, France, Spain, England, Italy, Greece, Japan, China and I like them all. I like it by itself or drenched with my grandma's hot chocolate. The flavor really does not depend on the side dish. My mom always tells me: "You are just like me, you love sweets –and it's bad!" In some ways it is, but I have no idea why I like it so much.

Bread is so easy to get, therefore it is hard not to love it. It is now a habit to go to a bakery after almost every meal and get my favorite breads. I get a pair of muffins and a poker of cookies. The lady in the cashier lines them up like playing cards, one after the other, and as she places them inside the plastic bag, she leaves behind the cookies' tiny sprinkles and granulated cinnamon on the tray. Every time I go to the bakery, I buy something for my sister and my mother. But the truth is that I end up eating everything, except for that carmine red, almost lipstick-colored paper wrap around the soft yet crispy carrot and cinnamon cupcake.

Whenever I have a bite of any bread, I imagine those gladiator-like people back in Pompeii thudding and punching bread dough under Mt. Vesuvius. I like to think they were the ones that invented my sweet temptations. But in reality, I am deeply in debt to the

creator of this genius invention, whoever that was.

I remember spending my rainy afternoons observing through a stained dark window with just enough light to see how cakes inflated and ended up bouncy and brown. I am amazed at how tricky bread is too. If you mix it too much the dough can get rubbery. If you do not let it rest by a warm place, the dough will not rise to twice the original size. As of now, my family lacks experienced bakers. I try my best, but create completely new recipes that are not even half as good as the intended one. Cookies are the worst for me. I hate gathering the dough that remains after the first time you cut out cookies. I still love eating them though, round-shaped or even flower-shaped.

"Say it with flowers," "A flower can say more than 1000 words," communicate popular sayings of those flower shops that aim at clichéd people. Flowers constitute uniqueness and finery. The way they bloom is amusing to me. They start in this round bundle and eventually open up to expose their beauty, just like bread springs up in an oven.

Mothers receive flowers when they give birth, on birthdays, Valentine's Day, anniversaries, Mother's Day, and eventually, laid on top of our chocolate-brown-chromed colored coffin. Flowers have countless purposes. In ancient times, the Parthenon in Greece was decorated with flowers by the people as an offer to the gods; in Spain after a bull fight, the crowd throws roses at the bullfighter to admire his bloody deed. Flowers in my house have the intention to lighten up the day, bring a smile to our faces, and make

us stop and think what nature has to offer us and how are we going to appreciate it. I've noticed women prefer roses over any other flower. My family tends to like lilies, white lilies. The tropical looking flower whose petals have a gentle curve at the end and powdery anthers that emphasize the flower's purity. My grandma, my mom and my sister all like white lilies. My grandma says that her favorite part of the flower is the petal that has tiny red dots. Just like a flush of hearts and diamonds.

It is a pity that none of my friends really like to play cards; maybe not as much as I do. I like this game called "Chinaso," the Mexican version of "continental" or those games that give you one more card every round and your objective gets tougher and tougher. Two pairs, then one pair and a straight, two straights, three pairs, etc. I used to play it all the time over at my grandparents' house. I got better by the minute and soon playing *Chinaso* was no joke to me. The actual game was not the only thing that I liked; it was spending time with my family, always sharing something to eat; chips, fruit, bread. There was never a tense situation; the table had a fence that did not allow any distress to come in. Our laughter blocked any unpleasant sound. My aunt and I used to laugh at how my grandma held two fans of cards in each hand and struggled to grab her next card when her turn came." I waited for weekends just to play cards. I waited for my 21st birthday to fly to Las Vegas and play cards in the *Paris!* casino and gamble like a pro. We rarely play that game now, and part of it may be that perhaps new generations find it boring, or just "busy time" takes over our "leisure time.

Whenever I go to a mall, instinctively I look to see if they have a MAC store. I drop in the store just to smell a red lipstick. That scent is thick and

strong and still, I do not particularly like it, but I have to smell it because it just brings childhood memories. It is a sort of mania that people have. Like, you have to touch the couch's corner every time you go to your room, or you have to open your underwear drawer with your foot. If my manias are not carried out, I feel something is wrong and I have to do them to be at peace. Crazy? Maybe. But it has a purpose just as flowers have a purpose. I remember once that I smelled a *Chanel Rouge Allure #10 Attitude* and I imagined the smell hiding the putrefying scent of the Seine in Paris. The scent traveled through *Rue de Parlemme* and *Rue de Rennes*, finally stopping at *Avenue de Champs-Élysées*.

A scenic sight in Europe. Just like the ones my grandma tells me about every time I go. She tells me how she, my mom, and my grandpa spent three months traveling all over Europe. My grandma remembers all her time in Europe dearly and every detail of it too. How they took a picture at *La Fontana di Trevi*, or posed with the royal guards at Buckingham palace. I know how much she likes to tell me about her stories in Europe, perhaps that is why I do not tell her that I know it by heart now.

Every time she sighs and tells me about the time she was in the "Old Continent," the story is a little different. She forgets to mention a city, or does not remember the name of the "crooked" tower in Italy. Every time, her Alzheimer's takes over her heart. It is sweet to see how she says the same things over and over again without remembering that she just mentioned it, or how she carries her youngest grandchild and rocks him, calling him the wrong name. I encourage her to play cards with my family, but no matter how much she wants to, she does not remember how. I listen to my aunts and my mom talking about how she has

forgotten how to take a shower or gets lost from her bed to the bathroom. Currently, my grandma is stable. She seems happy, but it breaks my heart to think that one day she will forget everything that made her the strong, inspiring matriarch of the family. She will forget her early days as the cashier of a bakery lining up bread and getting paid 2 cents for her working time. She will forget how she, a ten year-old child, spent her 2 cents on bread to split with her diabetic mother, and her 3 older siblings and her baby sister. She will forget how happy her mornings were when she carried the dozens of lilies into the church and made beautiful flower arrangements. She will forget how two plain white lilies lightened up her day and how strange it was that those flowers lasted for more than the expected time. She will forget that she taught me how to



play cards even though she, herself has forgotten how to. Or the way she was always last when playing cards and how much she laughed whenever she came first. She will forget how to put her red lipstick on and she will forget the time I spent a whole afternoon fixing her drawers full of lipstick and earrings without pairs. She will forget her husband whom she scolded and loved greatly, whose face she saw in any place with everything. She will forget her daughters and son. She will, eventually, forget me.

But I will never forget the way she engraved traditions into my family. I will never forget who she was, and who she expected me to be. I will never leave her in the past. I will always look back and remember a table with lilies in a flower vase, bread on top of a napkin with a red lipstick stain, a table cloth full of playing cards and your voice describing the way you sang and saw the blue Danube. It will breathe your memory, grandma.

Kissed by Allen Ginsberg (And Other Confessions of a Minor Poet)

Michael Hogan

I am a minor poet. What that means essentially is that I am not on the short list for the Harvard Visiting Writer position this year. I do not appear in Bill Moyer's video series, and have not been asked to Breadloaf. While I appear occasionally in small journals, including decent ones like the *Paris Review* and *APR*, my work has yet to be seen in *Harper's* or the *New Yorker*. A few textbooks and anthologies carry one fortuitous poem of mine entitled "Spring" which has been reprinted enough to garner me sufficient royalties to buy a mountain bike.

When I die, which probably won't be too much longer if I don't quit smoking, I will be joining the ranks of Clough, Lovelace, Herrick and the obscure but prolific Leigh Hunt whose haunting poem "Jenny Kissed me" sums up what I love best about minor poets: their ability to hang in there as a tentative trembling note amidst the grand symphonies of Milton and Keats, Browning and Eliot. If you hang in long enough and don't embarrass too many people with your pretensions, you'll get invited places and might even be chosen to appear on stage with one of the masters to fill out a program.

It was on one such occasion, a conference of small press editors and publishers back in the Seventies, that I first met Allen Ginsberg. The event was at California State College, which you would assume was somewhere in that eponymous state on the west coast. However, you'd be mistaken. It was actually in California, Pennsylvania, a small liberal arts college hidden in the

rolling hills which border the Monongahela River.

I was a member of a trio of poets which included Dianne Wakoski and Allen Ginsberg. Our contract required us to each give a couple of workshops to writers, editors and graduate students during the three day conference. Each night there was to be a poetry presentation from one of us. On Thursday night Diane would give a reading to a small group in the library; Friday, I would do the same, and on Saturday, Allen would give the final "master's" reading. I knew Ginsberg's work quite well. I had read "Howl" as a teenager. I had even taught that poem, as well as the more accessible "America" as part of my junior English class offerings in American Lit.

Ginsberg was an icon to my students, but to me he was someone more complex: a fellow war protestor whose courage I admired, a beatnik who heralded my own hippie youth, a notorious homosexual known for his forwardness. It was hard to separate the public figure from the artist. I knew that he had become part of the canon, but he was neither my favorite poet nor someone with whom I associated literary depth. He was a writer of the rant, the barbaric yarp of Whitman; one who shocked the establishment and etched a place for himself on the mutable wall of contemporary fame.

What a surprise then to attend his class on the French surrealists and watch writers, graduate students and professors, struggling frantically to keep up with their notes as Ginsberg analyzed text, quoted lines from the poets in French, made

biographical references, and connected literature to art and history. Eyes blazing above a trimmed beard, he was the epitome of a brilliant professor; not a sign of the ageing beatnik to be seen. His thick lips pursed as he thought of examples to illustrate his points; his New York accent was crisp and his delivery rapid. The lecture was a tour de force.

That evening the three of us were invited to conduct a discussion in the round which was televised by a local PBS affiliate. We answered students' questions on the art of writing, problems with revision, the importance of close reading in literature, and the value of the masters as models. At one point a graduate student was holding forth on the feminine mystique in literature and I noted several of her classmates had begun to get that glazed look in their eyes, which usually signals something less than rapt attention.

"Perhaps you should change the subject," I whispered to Allen. "I think we're losing some of our audience."

"Why don't you change the subject?" Allen replied.

"Because you have so much more authority," I said.

"Just do it, Hogan!" Allen snapped. "Show some chutzpah."

I cleared my throat and then suggested that maybe we had belabored this topic long enough. Perhaps we could turn to an earlier question, as to how a carefully chosen particular can suggest the universal.

Allen smiled, then turned and kissed me right on the lips. "Mazel tov!" he crowed.

Just then the camera, which had been focused on the student, suddenly shifted and presented the audience with the luridly thick lips of Allen connecting with my own.

Whatever the average viewer thought (or did not think) about my sexuality in those days, there was no

question that my young wife of six months, who was watching the show at home, suddenly had reason for concern about my road trips. Nor was the fact that I was blushing madly as a sixteen year-old lost on the students who sat around in the circle until one mercifully rescued me with a reply to the suggested topic change. Diane smiled knowingly, as if to say: *I am amazed at nothing men do.*

That evening Diane read from her recent book entitled *The Motorcycle Betrayal Poems* which she dedicated "to all the men who have ever betrayed me, in the hope that they will fall off their motorcycles and break their necks." It was a responsive audience, made even more so by the claque of young female groupies who sat in the front row and chuckled at her quips, applauded every poem, and added "Oh, wow!" in breathless whispers after every other verse.

The following evening I read my poems to a group which, although more subdued and not as emotive, was no less attentive. Like Diane, I managed to sell sufficient copies of my book to insure that next month's rent was covered. Allen, in his generous-spirited way, supported both our readings, and even stood in line until everyone else had gone before he stepped forward with his copy to be autographed. Both Diane and I were touched by that.

Towards the close of the book signing, when we were drinking wine and eating strawberry crepes, the moderator suggested that those who wished to attend the Saturday Ginsberg reading sign up now. He said that the administration was concerned about seating and wanted to make sure there were sufficient chairs in the library, so that the reading would not be interrupted by shuffling and scraping. He also said that he expected some local citizens might be attending and so would place the sign-up sheet on the library desk where it would be available throughout the following day.

As we came out of the library into the muggy Pennsylvania dark, a dozen or more busses began arriving and parking in the lot below. When they discharged their passengers, the atmosphere of the campus changed at once. Young girls wearing shorts, t-shirts and tennis shoes descended onto the tarmac and began singing scraps of songs, calling out to one another, collecting baggage and backpacks and heading to the dorms.

“They can’t all be writers and editors,” I remarked to Bill Welsh, a local poet.

“Nope. It’s the Eastern High Schools Cheerleader Camp. Girls from all over New England came here to sharpen up their skills at cheering, tumbling, dancing. Probably not Diane’s favorite group!”

“Oh, I don’t know,” I said. Some cheerleaders these days are pretty sharp. Cheerleading is more like gymnastics, much more athletic than it was in the past.”

“Still, I doubt many are interested in poetry...” he observed, as the raucous groups passed us in the parking lot, shouting and chanting as they headed for the empty dorms.

I didn’t disagree.

The following day, Saturday afternoon, as we went about conducting our workshops and heard their voices raised on the athletic field, I pictured them, eluding their chaperones after lights out, descending on the town’s little disco and bar, dancing up a storm and tempting the local boys, then coming home a little drunk and flushed after their night out. I envisioned at least one or two sick in the bathroom, getting caught by a wide-awake coach, and threatened with expulsion from the camp. The tears, the threatened phone calls to parents....

We went out for an early dinner on Saturday evening, and then returned shortly before Ginsberg’s reading was

scheduled to begin. When we got to the library at 7:30 we found that it was closed. A notice on the front door informed us that, due to the size of the crowd for the reading, it had been moved to the football stadium. What? It seemed incredible that Ginsberg could draw that large a crowd of townies from a little village in the Pennsylvania woods. This we had to see!

As we headed to the stadium we heard the din of the crowd. Not only were all the participants of the conference there and a couple of hundred folks from the town, but the entire contingent of cheerleaders as well. The open-air venue was packed with blow-dried and lipsticked blonds, chatting away as if this was just another event in their cheerleading agenda. Incredible! And what would the ageing beatnik/intellectual professor have to offer this motley crew? They seemed worlds apart.

As he strode to the stage in his dashiki and knitted yarmulke, the crowd hushed, and then burst into warm applause. The girls joined in and accompanied their applause with cheers, an occasional whistle, giggles and woos. Woos? Hmm. This will be interesting.

He played a few notes from his harmonium and then began to speak about death, the loss of his mother, the Jewish prayer for the dead. Then he read his haunting and well-known “Kaddish.” The girls were quiet and respectful, as typical an audience for a poetry reading as you’d see at any college venue. Ginsberg was subdued as well. He read only a handful of poems as the evening progressed, perhaps three more of his own, a couple by William Carlos Williams, a long passage from Whitman, each piece drawing us into his inner world while opening us up to a language that was both concrete and expansive. Mostly he talked about art, about life.

And then as the hour wore down, he switched tactics. He began speaking of

music, of Indian mantras, of incantatory verse and the importance of parallelism and repetition, of sound and echoes and how all of these had a spiritual essence. He talked about William Blake, the mystic, artist and poet who could write disturbing lyrics like “The Tyger,” as well as simple, often sentimental Christian verses such as “the Lamb” Then Ginsberg actually sang each of these poems accompanied by the harmonium: “TI-ger, TI-ger, BURN-ing BRIGHT, in the FOR-est of the NIGHT/WHAT could FRAME they FEARFUL SYM-atree.”

The girls cheered this rendition of a poem that most of us had read at one time or another, but never actually heard sung. Ginsberg told the students that these poems were from Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* and were all written to be sung. He also reminded us of the words of the Chinese poet Li Po: “Make it new! Make it new!” and said that is what poetry was all about. Just as their rendition of cheers and gymnastics “snatched beauty from the jaws of time,” poets find ways to praise life that are unique while at the same time realizing that they stand on the shoulders of all those who went before and who taught us how to dance and sing. Even poetry readings like this one, he said, honor those who have gone before, remind us that all dance, all song is prayer, and that our time here is short. *Carpe diem*.

But now the stadium, which sat deep in a hallowed-out valley that abutted the rolling Pennsylvania hills, had begun to darken. Evening was descending and the sun blinked in and out among the trees which bordered the field. Ginsberg had waited too long to recite his well-known “Howl,” a long poem which would leave him reading in the dark. It was almost time to end it. So, which one of his favorite poems would he choose? “Walt Whitman in the Supermarket”? “America”?

Now the strumming began again. And this time it was the seldom-anthologized Blake poem called the “Nurse’s Song” that relates a story of children playing in the fields as darkness is descending. Told by their mother that the children must be in before nightfall, the nurse calls them. But the children, wanting to take advantage of the last dying rays of the sun, are reluctant. Finally, they persuade the nurse to let them play just a little longer. The song with its haunting refrain of childhood goes like this:

*When the voices of children are heard on the green,
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast
And everything else is still.
“Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Come, come, leave off play and let us away,
Till the morning appears in the skies.”*

*“No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,
And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides, in the skies the little birds fly,
And the hills are covered with sheep.”
“Well, well, go and play till the light fades away,
And then go home to bed.”
The little ones leaped, and shouted, and laughed,
And all the hills echoéd.*

Now the light was fading behind the trees, and the cheerleaders all stood up in the green-gold dusk as Ginsberg began the refrain a second time.

*And all the hills echoéd, and all the hills echoed,
And the little ones leaped, and shouted and laughed,
And all the hills echoéd.*

Now the light voices of hundreds of teenaged girls joined him in his deep-throated amplified chorus, and the valley was filled with the sound of them, and we

all rose and our voices joined in harmony
chanting the ancient refrain again and
again until all the hills indeed echoed in

the soft Pennsylvania evening. Oh, if only
you had been there, when we were kissed
by Allen Ginsberg.

**“And all the hills echoed, and all the hills echoed,
And the little ones leaped, and shouted and laughed,
And all the hills echoed.” (Ginsberg)**



Under the Lily

Lara Richardson

Crinkled brown leaves rustle
in the ghostly breeze
Solitude has settled.

Echoes infest the hollowed trees
what is left in this place, solemn.
Chaos abounding,
tombstones knocked over as if
fleeing,
seeking
a place where they will not be forgotten.

Abandoned
all but One is forsaken
lain in a moonless night-
unmarked grave under a pristine lily
left by crooked, wrinkled fingers
encrusted with the dirt
of a thousand regrets.



One Day

Ko Un

Translation by Eunbi Lee

My wife's laptop was stolen.
A cheap necklace and
200,000 Korean Won and
roughly two hundred American Dollars
my wife kept in our bedroom bureau

To reach my quarters, No. 20 on the third floor
one must open a double-locked door
I wonder where the key could have come from

The time all three of my family
Leave all together
is from 6:40 to 7:00,
our daily walk at the park.
After eyeing the hour
the thief must have come in, unlatching the door,
and seized all.

My wife must have thought it unseemly to do nothing
for she reported the robbery to the University Police
From then on my wife,
as in the past, had to write
her letters and her verses by hand.

Anyway,
the thief had been observing us all along;
Now we have been temporarily liberated from that thief.

no, not just the thief
but the meditative Maple trees outside the window and
the jet trail from Québec and
the jet trails from Newark
had been gazing down at us all along.

The wind passing by
had watched us.
The frequently visiting Cape Cod seagulls
had watched us.

When we saw them,

before and after we saw them
they had studied us more meticulously.

All three of my family
have been face to face with the World.
Is that not
participating in the world's single truth?



The Window

Abigail Salazar

She watched him from the window. He had always been outside at the same time, with the same swift curve on his back, with the same concentration in his effort to clean the street. With old, light denim overalls and a scrawny broom in hand, he swept away the dry leaves, the candy wrappers, the extra dust and the people's rubbish. Delicately. Loyally.

She had always known he was there, a street sweeper that was part of the trivial lives within her own. He never looked up. He scrutinized the sidewalks as if his eyes were microscopes. Perhaps he couldn't hear; a deaf sweeper. But today she was curious. A five year old, a man that had wrinkles on his face and faded eyes seemed an interesting specimen of examination. She pressed her forehead to the glass and stared at the worn skin of each finger, the nails that were trimmed all the way to the rosy flesh, the arms that moved mechanically like the arms of a man rowing a canoe. His hair was silver, his skin milk coffee, his face, silence.

He felt the eyes on him. She, unaware, kept gazing out. He pretended not to notice and entertained himself in the same square meter for a minute longer. He inched his way to the window. The little girl, wide-eyed, saw the sweeper looming closer. She held her breath. He turned. He bent. They froze. No noises, no images other than their faces reflected in each other, no sensations of the sun rays of the morning, only inhaling the infantile adventure of looking at an adult— an *unknown* adult—straight in the eye.

She pretended to be brave. She didn't notice the rush of blood to her cheeks, making her turn red and rosy with embarrassment and fascination. Her newly begun archive of memories was analyzing, saving the image of an age that was not yet. He, in turn, was looking at one more child, like the one he had been, the ones he engendered, like the ones he encountered daily at the parks, or riding their tricycles, except she had dared to look at him, not ignore him in the faded mural of the city. He admired her defiance. He broke the century of a second with a half smile. Slowly he unbent himself and shook off the weight of his years. He took up his chores again and continued the repetitive arm movement.

The girl exhaled in relief. She unstiffened herself with laughter and ran back to her world of safety.

Man in the Moon

Lauren Henry

"We don't know who we are until we know what we can do."-Martha Grimes

We blink about 14,000 times in one day, an unnoticed act of simplicity. Blinking is only smearing tears across the curve of the eye to remove the build up of daily living. Interesting how we remove what comes naturally with something that so strongly represents sadness.

I once met a girl who blinked every few seconds, agonizing and forced blinks. She shut her eyes as though they burned with a hidden fire, and kept them closed behind the sharp frames of pointed glasses—not opening them for a painful eternity. Between moments of incredible discomfort, waiting for her eyes to reopen, I glanced at my surroundings. My lack of concentration prompted awkward conversations of little substance- I could not keep up and she did not know why. The Pope once said that a closed heart is the most fatal punishment, but I came to believe he was wrong, that closed eyes were truly worse.

The flipside to those slow and uncomfortable blinks I began to understand after meeting a twitchy girl years ago. Some people are stuck with a perpetual smile, one that remains even while tears stream down their face or anger wells up inside. They project an uninterrupted image of contentment; consequent to their mood or not. This girl had the perpetual smile



and the quick, jerky blinks of the anxious unknown.

I began to entertain the idea that we define ourselves by the things we do, and never actually notice the things that explain our personal passions incidentally. Perhaps the way our 'outer-self' behaves speaks more volumes as to what we have inside. Blinking is an unconscious promise to all outsiders that there is something waiting to be discovered. It is something that lingers behind simple and constant motion.

I often find it easy to overlook things. Sometimes a blatant beard or embarrassingly, a mole or pimple allows my eyes to wander distantly off a person's

actual face. Details seem to bore me and once a single feature tempts me, I stick with it. It is a terrible issue, yet it seems to consume me. They capture me, these things that we want, never need but disgustingly, have.

I read recently about a plastic surgery

error, a scalpel that remained inside the patient once the stitches had been placed. It was a stomach staple, a clear cosmetic surgery for the benefit of the outside world, the pursuit of beauty. She pierced a metal staple through her stomach to make it smaller and more rapidly contented on purpose, and only appeared in the news

because someone made a mistake. It bleeds irony. She has a stainless steel knife sewed into her in the name of beauty-and we notice that someone else forgot to count his tools. Was it Picasso or Van Gogh who forgot the tools of their trade?

Not that we should adore these physical demands; but I wondered innocently what that woman felt after being defined by a fault. In the search of perfection; she failed, and as Woodrow Wilson claimed at the end of World War I, 'you fought for something you could not have, and I could not give'. The extremes we dare ourselves to meet easily become overlooked by a careless memory lapse.

In the blink of an eye, in 14,000 blinks, nobody noticed that woman's passion, her calling or soul...we noticed her wrongs—the failures that have become hers.

Fate, they say, is in the stars. Our successes and failures, and the answers to all life's questions are there every night. There is no doubt that there are realms of possibilities in the stars. After all, was it not Romeo and Juliet who were so famously 'star-crossed lovers'?

Van Gogh read the stars according to his passion. He saw wisps and blurs of brightness in between the dark pits of life itself. An overly credible art critic once mentioned that Van Gogh destroyed sameness. So it is possible; I can find the moon between blinks and create perfection in the dark.

I believe, beyond the stars, that there is a man in the moon. In Mexico they see a rabbit, in France there is a cat and in Russia there is a buffalo, and I have a man in the moon.

There is a logo used by a common film producing company, DreamWorks, which illustrates a man sitting on the edge of the moon throwing a fishing line into glistening blue water. He swings his feet

carelessly and his face seems focused downward, awaiting possibility. The symbol shows the silhouette of the small man in an overwhelmingly empty space, tossing his hopes into the waters that seem to extend for thousands of unknown depths.

Each person seems to understand the moon as a different representation of his or her personal passions. Some people believe the moon is mystery and confusion, others get scared away and some never find the time to discover it. It remains outside, with the universes' answers and the hopeful dreams of the man in the moon, waiting to be discovered.

He blinks, the man in the moon, blinks 14,000 times like I do. He searches for the same answers we do, and awkwardly waits between eternities. He does not look for the everlasting human beauty, and has no artists forgotten tool encased in a perfect shell of flesh. My man in the moon is normal; he breathes desperate sighs and cries salty tears. After all, being on the moon is no great feat; he is there alone.

It is what it is; we are what we make of ourselves. The drawing of a man throwing his fishing line from the moon is my understanding of all things unknown.

You throw your line into a painfully large, blank space and hope that something grabs on. You dream that you are looking for happiness. Happiness, I once read, is not a place, it is a direction. You can only be heading *to* happiness, I have never got there but it seems to be a time-consuming trip. I continue to believe that it is not fleeting moments of sadness that clear my eyes of life's challenges. It is not an unattainable beauty that illustrates our failures, and there is a chance that somewhere between 14,000 blinks we will see the man in the moon.