

The Fabric Store

Loretta López

The possible costume picks were argued: nurses, lumberjacks, bumblebees, ballerinas, dolls. Every one of them envisioned with scarce fabric and fake eyelashes.

The doll pick won. The ruffled bloomers, thigh grazing dress and bows triggered a strange place in my brain. A yearning for the days I played with them and a desire to look fake.

We walked through the small aisles of fabrics. My fingers gently swept through them. I felt the textures scrape against my skin, rough and soft. All plainly displayed in large rolls.

One of my friends stopped at the checkered print and another replied we would look like a picnic spread. Another held a hot pink fabric covered in fluorescent hearts but it received dirty looks.

The disagreement went on for two hours, a new complaint following each piece of fabric: too colorful, too pale, too girly...too punkish. The colors made me dizzy. I let out short and heavy breaths; the neutral smell of threads discreetly suffocated me. My eyes

hazed up the hundreds of fabrics into one enormous, disgusting color.

The only thing that soothed me were the buttons, the smooth and flat synthesized pebbles. I sunk my fingers in a pile of them enjoying their concrete colors and their standard shape. The buttons I liked. The buttons I could handle.

As a child I used to stick my hands into the piles of beans and rice at the grocery store while my mother concentrated on picking avocados. I'd get looks from older women, revolted by the fact they had to eat something contaminated by a five year old's dirty hands. My mother would notice the looks and lead me to help her pick out ripe tomatoes. I would hesitate while letting go of the rice or beans. The pleasure I got from my fingers slowly sinking into a deep well of monotonous figures grew into something too splendid to give up. The indulgence

faded as the years went by and the piles of beans and rice were replaced by packaged plastic bags.

But the buttons felt even better than the beans and rice.

I grabbed a bunch of buttons, holding them in my hands tightly until my palms grew moist. Then I gently let them fall into piles. A



Photograph by Maria Jose Chambers

clanging noise followed after each plunge -the noise of a malfunctioning raindrop irritated by a metal ground. The drops fell slowly onto colored puddles. I let my fingers sink, I let them swim.

The buttons that surrounded my hands felt familiar and safe. A feeling of nostalgia crept through my body and it went beyond the days of beans and rice. It searched for the days too distant, the days that no matter how hard I tried I could not get a grasp on, the days inside a womb. The longing felt like a tiny knot in my memory, subtle but

important. I let out a long sigh, feeling ridiculous for missing a womb I never even remembered.

Slowly and unsurely I let my fingers slip out of the piles and faced the world I tried to escape with the buttons, the world with the different textures and fluorescent prints.

I heard a familiar high-pitched voice shouting out in obvious pride, “This one girls! This is it!” She smiled holding a plain red fabric in her manicured hands.

I smiled back.

Me duele tenerte y más perderte

Lucía Haro Gómez

*porque eres mía
porque no eres mía
porque te miro y muero
y peor que muero
si no te miro amor
si no te miro*

Mientras me siento en la húmeda y fría banca de la escuela, me pongo a pensar. Por más que intento, no te logro entender. Recuerdo cómo llegas y me dices: “María, ¿alguna vez te he dicho que contigo me siento completo?” Yo simplemente me sonrojo igual que la primera vez que me lo dijiste. En esos días en los que miro a esos tus ojos ligeramente verdes no puedo evitar sentir que tú también te puedes perder en los míos. Mientras nos miramos fijamente, mi cuerpo se entumece con brusquedad y siento que el tiempo se detiene, aunque sea por unos instantes. De alguna bizarra manera, te conviertes en parte de mí. Esencial. Como una pierna, un pulmón o mi corazón. Sin embargo, otros días pasas a mi lado y me saludas, mis ojos desesperados te buscan entre miradas desgastadas, pero los tuyos los esquivan cruelmente.

Simplemente no puedo descansar. Paso horas enteras hipnotizada por el monitor de mi computador con pirámides de tarea a mis lados y no me puedo concentrar. Me dices: “Dame tu celular, ya te llamaré mañana para vernos”. Espero tus llamadas que llegan y no. *La noche siempre está de ojos abiertos*¹ y mi mente vaga sobre el vivo recuerdo de tu imagen. Tu fuerte colonia invade mi olfato e instantáneamente me recuerda esa sonrisa que a diario extingue el dolor de tu ausencia. Sin embargo, yo sé que *eres mejor que todas tus imágenes*, ya que eres lo que busco *desde el pie hasta el alma*. Sé que eres bueno, pero que te escondes en tu amurallado corazón. Tienes miedo de que te lastime y te escondes frágil en el orgullo.

Cuando estoy contigo soy capaz de volar y tener pequeños vistazos a tu corazón. Me regalas flores, me tomas de la mano y me preguntas dulcemente: “¿Te veré mañana?” Pero hay veces en que las hostiles enredaderas de tu muralla tienen demasiadas espinas y lentamente me llagan mientras intento escalar. No contestas mis mensajes e ignoras que te extraño. Te miro y me hiere el saber que no te entiendo, pero cuando te vas, *peor que muero*, porque se cumple mi más grande temor.

No estás, y *siempre existes dondequieras*. Me asomo por la ventana mientras intento resolver el teorema de Pitágoras, lo único que logro visualizar es tu imagen. Todo me recuerda a ti, incluso el respirar. Mas supongo que te seguiré queriendo. No me importa si me ignoras o me haces llorar. Yo sé que mueres de frío y necesitas calor. Te seguiré queriendo, Felipe, *aunque esta herida duela como dos, aunque te busque y no te encuentre y los días pasen y yo te tenga y no*.

¹ Partes en itálicas son extractos del poema “Corazón Coraza” de Mario Benedetti

Go

Lauren Henry

*Go away and never come back,
because if you do I might not be where
you left me. Go; do not hope for me
because it would break me if I was not
what you wanted.*

I sat in the car, the engine running. It was easy, a new routine; I get up, get ready and wait in the dark and often dirty blue car. My fingers drift toward the radio, pushing familiar buttons and scanning through songs until one sparks my interest. The door to the house slams shut, and your freckled face consumes my side mirror. The car fills quickly with cool air from outside and a wave of cologne. I look across and as routinely, complain about the time, put the car into drive and we go.

On a smooth, white wall inside my house there is a collection of photographs. They are framed in the same slim black frame, but one stands out. You are standing, with glassy green goggles—that have left light pink rings around your eyes. You are holding a Fanta bottle with two untrusting hands and the orange lights up the frame. Your hair is bright red and messy, darkened by the water that seems to drip lazily off your face. It does not cling, it falls like we all do, and you do not seem to notice.

We drove home together; you fought to hear your songs, and I pushed to hear mine. I do not really listen to the song after we argue; the frustration and events of the day tag-team me. I make the few standard driving comments, beg other cars to move aside and wish to be home. Your schoolbag tumbles

around in the back seat with every turn because, despite my reoccurring requests, you throw it in randomly. I put the car in park once we roll into the driveway; you grab your bag, open the house door and close it behind you. I get my own bag, reopen the door and follow you into the kitchen.

I remember we used to race our bikes, skateboards and sleds down huge hills. You used to ask me what bus we had to take home. It never changed and I swear you knew it was 81, but you always asked. I remember we used to share a room, giggle into our pillows and talk until I heard your breathing fall deeply. You used to tell me that even if you did not answer, you were still listening. In the middle of the night when you were scared your tapping on my shoulder grew familiar.

It seems like just yesterday that you trusted me with your secrets; you had a gut feeling that whatever I said was to be set in stone. I could, and occasionally did invent stories and you believed them without a trace of hesitation. The secret inventions of an older sister became vivid realities of a younger brother.

I looked at you today, and you glared back. It's been a while since I saw you smile, since I heard your jokes and since your eyes lit up. You often wake up in a bad mood, and I steer clear of you for the better part of the day. Some days, just looking at you I know there is nothing I can say that will interest you. Most afternoons the car rides are on mute although your body language seems loud enough to leave my ears ringing. Graduation is a few lingering months away, and after that

I'll go. There will be months between our face to face conversations, days between hearing your voice. As if time was not flying by fast enough, I cannot mold our friendship back

into what it once was. Desperately, I'll go, and I'll miss you more than before, but I know that whatever you evolve into...it won't break me.



Photograph by Mónica Godoy

Colección de Poemas

Patricio Suárez

Somos Dos Palabras

Somos todo:
el lodo y sus gusanos
Somos.

Somos lo que quieras que seamos:
distanciados por un espacio,
un ligero respiro,
que con fuerza involuntaria separa:
porque uno, nunca.

Somos dos palabras.



Photograph by Jorge González

Las Pupilas Cambian

caíste del cielo tierna
y clara
para que mis palabras
te corrompieran,
y nuestra falta de humildad
me rompiera el corazón.

te quise ver con los mismos ojos
pero las pupilas cambian y con nuestra prisa
por tocar
me atrevería a decir:
que no sé ni cómo te llamas.

Un Lazo

Entre las manos roza
Que te toca y me toca.
Que te quiero porque respiro.

Bello viento gracias,
Por mantenernos lejanamente unidos.

Happenings

José Alfonso Silva Rivero

Times gone to school: 2,825. Number of schools attended: 1. Times flunked: 0. Number of naps in class: 30. Persons known: 347. Girls dated: 50; girlfriends 4. Countries traveled to: 15. Cities known: 98. Tennis shoes owned: 8; worn-out: 5. Times played soccer: 5,803; official games: 1,000; trained: 3,400. Consecutive days without taking a bath: 7. Number of t-shirts owned: 20; jeans: 5; shorts: 3. Times lost in places I didn't know: 23. Number of books read: 3; unfinished: 41. Number of times caught in a fight: 3; willingly: 2. Number of people I care about: 358. Times injured: 13. Number of times injured someone else: 32. Broken bones: 0. Times gotten sick: 10; badly: 2. Number of times fallen in love: 2. Times lied: 869. Number of brothers and sisters: 10; of blood: 2; in law: 3; others: 5. Number of dogs owned: 25. Times given a presentation: 207; academically: 198; musically: 9. Times let down a friend: 2; badly: 0. Number of concerts attended: 10. Times eaten too much: 53; enjoyed: all. Number of times gotten the runs from eating too much: 6; worth it; yes. Number of times struggled to get something done: 304. Times exerted effort for a cause: 508. Number of trees planted: 7. Number of addictions: 0. Waist size: 29. Height: 1.80 cm. Times represented the school: 11. Number of times heard the Mexican national anthem: 100,432. Times solved a problem, any kind: 3,249. Number of times missed someone: 57. Number of times beaten up: 0. Times done a thing I didn't want to: 20. Times got punished: 4. Number of times done something that pissed someone else: 15. Times told not to do something: 583; times obeyed: 147. Number of times sat in front of the computer doing nothing: 94. Number of movies seen: 715; liked: 639. Number of times gone camping: 3. Times crashed: 4; me driving: 1. Funerals attended: 3. Number of times daydreamed while writing this: 2,789.

Clicks of Snow

María Cristina Fernández Hall

Logarithmic functions, a book on racism, *La Sombra del Viento*, and a concert of Brandenburg encompass my intellectual desires up to this point. If only these assignment due dates could move to next week instead of this one. Next to my stack of homework, a black computer screen opaquely tries to reflect my good intentions but fails because the overheated screen went blind from looking at so many pictures on *Facebook* the previous evening.

Last night my eyes mirrored my own in a picture of me amongst the vast white. I was perched upon a layer of snow so immense that the tops of the coniferous evergreens were barely visible under my knees. The mountains behind me displayed a great plethora of such treetops rooted like hairs on an arm all over the scenery. I punched the *next* button above the picture to show a shot of my sister in the same setting, imploring the camera for hope. On that same snow, before I found her, I had bent down and sunken my gloved hands into the snow in a search for a magical button that I could click and smoothly transfer back to the bottom of the mountain where I could knock on a door and know that there would be enough heat inside to keep my blood from lamely slowing down until a glacier of red would travel up my heart and freeze my ventricles.

Is the asymptote of this logarithmic function inside the parenthesis? Or is it equal to the coefficient preceding it? I will take the second choice. A few nimble moves on a TI-89 graphing calculator can pop up a graph and

I will see what point my line can NEVER touch in order to find my asymptote. A curve appears on my screen. This asymptote definitely seems to be the number inside the parenthesis. I guess I was wrong...

I stopped kneading the snow with my hands and stared down at the slope and pictured myself gliding down and landing on flat grounds, only a few miles from the town. Then I imagined myself smacking my leg on one of the trees during my slide down, ending up in absolute impotence buried alongside the evergreens in a perpetually frozen state. But this would happen anyways if I didn't find a way back down before sunset. The sun moved threateningly westward. I lifted myself up and put one step outside the narrow path towards the covered forest. I sunk up to my knee in the slushy snow. This was not a game of guess and check.

I can stow my math homework in my backpack and fluff the blankets over me now. The mental to do list is appeased and melts into my pillow as I lay ensconced in my bed and shut heavy eyelids.

I trudged for two more hours and almost peed my pants with joy when I saw my sister in front of me struggling to turn her snowmobile back on. Two lost souls that could only hear their own muffled echoes on a mountain were glad to have clashed on their treacherous journey. Regarding the lack of success in our attempts to turn the snowmobile back on we kept walking. Our

feet weighed seventy pounds a piece and our snow coats weighed one hundred more. The remains of the sun beat down on us as I counted the crunching steps left in sight. I looked up to see that the sun seemed to have retreated eastwards. Or was it the reflection of a helmet in the distance? My sanity was left behind with the frozen snow-mobile a while ago. A portrait of dawn was shining

gloriously, their faces displaying pearls of hope, marbles of luck. They rode their snowmobiles in their dazzling red coats. The hunters had found us. The engine roared over crunching snow and snapping branches, swerving away from the asymptote of what nearly touched tragedy.



Art work by Ana Marva Fernández Hall

Never

Juliana Barbosa Haddad

I like to see life as a painting. Every instant, regardless of its meaning, would embellish it, until the final moment, where it is already done. The painting is what is left behind, the immortal you and me. For the two months following my arrival in California, five years ago, my painting would show my mother how I value her father.

My grandfather, now seventy-nine, turning eighty, is lovely. Not the usual grandfather television would envision. He was part of no war (except his own) and his own tragic stories he tells to no one but himself. He is red, he sweats continuously, he speaks too loudly, and he has one power (I shall not mention this to everyone), he is able to annoy with no effort at all. But he has a very touching way of being. He is with no lies, with no false smiles, with no vain words. He is in the purest way of being, in the sweetest taste of “like”. He must be asleep at this time.

Asleep as I wish I could be. Wrapped in towels, cold ones, as if over a chasm, in nights of insomnia, I, a granddaughter lie. I glance upon the automatic thermometer (things are now different from how they were then; ask my grandfather, he should know), forty three degrees centigrade that pierce through towels, body then face now bones and muscles. My fever is humid, and voracious.

What is, truly, wisdom? And is it as humid, as violent, as hot as my fever is? Did my grandfather earn it by living in two different centuries, by age, by feelings, by the constant completion of a mistake and the

realization of a learned lesson? Do I own any? Unlike me, he does not speak more languages than his own; he knows of no different cultures, the people he met are found in the same place they were left. Though, what no one can see, are the paintings he paints through songs, the images he draws with words and the sounds he emits from a glance. My grandfather created his own abyss, which will live through its extensiveness, holding deathless symbols of life. An abyss I will hold true to myself until it is my time to die.

I do not see him often, yet when I do it feels as intense as this high fever does. He speaks to me as a foreigner does in a new place when he finds something familiar. I am not the unknown, or if you mistake my explanation, I am no object. I am simply a word that explains an entire moment; a rare flower that is only found in the hottest deserts of Africa. At least, to me that is what I am to him. In his presence it is as if we flew downwards in an abyss of hope. I like him that much, if it is not cliché enough to say. And if is not cliché enough, I am still the flower, that knows not much about the sun, yet feels intense rays on its petals, far.

It has been almost as long since I have seen him as I have spent in non-slept nights. The feeling was the same, yet a bit intensified. I guessed it happened because he did not look the same, walk the same. The song he used to sing fell a bit deeper, and now his words were of solitude and desperation. So was his heart. He suffers from cancer now. I hope that has

sent another part of life into the abyss he created so that whenever I wish, I will reach into it, and grab with the tiniest difficulty everything I like.

How could I ever hope anyone would understand the way he sings the way I do? When I first arrived in Mexico I saw things in different ways. Now, I know they were songs. Each taco stand had its own rhythm and each emitted vibration created a new sound, Mexico sang in a whole. But I did not see it then. Then, they were only taco stands with no spark at all, and the people were the way I imagined, but not the way I had hoped. That is my grandfather, just the way you try to imagine, but the opposite of what you will hope.

I like him in the same abstract way I create paintings. I cannot feel him, hear the long speeches about the essence of Portuguese language, or the heroism of Brazilian heroes constantly. My wish is that he sees what I am, and tattoos painted songs on his sunburned stomach, so to remind him, while he strolls down the beach, that whatever he suffers from right now, will be one day gone like the fall, spitting drops of rain off other people's windshield. I have the hope

that his songs and my life painting will outlive both of us.

The true story my painting will tell goes along with all else. While I burn I paint a blank space by pieces where my grandfather and I lie in our world. Where we walk hand in hand through different countries, and if no one sees us, we see every one. Where we sing the most sung words of discretion and scandal waking animals and putting children to sleep. We quietly spread our secret, as they love or smile, knowing they will never understand it at all. Our lives forming the most solid diamond, both of us learning new words and perfecting the most beautiful ones. My scenery; as the night light shines upon innumerable chasms composing our lives, fears, suppressed by my lack of hand or skill, recede into the background so that you will know that the grandfather and the granddaughter taught each other to be. You will understand that she has gathered from him ways, times, colors and places; not reaching him yet walking hand in hand. And as we walk, with the boiling sun above our heads, inside, pupas dissolve; crusts leave, and from each of our pores drops of sweat beg to depart, evaporating into quiet musical notes and vicious splatters of paint.



Photograph by Jeanie Choi

Oreo

Pedro Encinas

Cómo te amo,
Mi descolorida ensalada
Que de semillas y vainas amargas
Traq notas dulces al alma. Sol,

Vibrantes, son las puntas de mis dedos al tocarte
Eco de las piezas que vibran a través de mis yemas
Quebradas. Cascarón

Gota a gota, tormentas cantan alabanzas
Directo de tus cuerdas de arpa.
Gota a gota, tus armas
De pasión me matan. De dulce, chocolate.

Confitería negra que cubre tus perlas
Mis dedos maltratas,
Dolor que a mi alma alegra. Bella

Negra es la coraza de tu corazón,
Y pura es la capa blanca
Que como oreo, te tapa. Luna, de miel,

Recollection of Thoughts as a Zombie

Patty O'Rourke

A wise soul once said that sleep is for the weak. That sage was probably an insomniac trying to find comfort in the thought that lying belly-up and open-eyed for hours made him superior to those dreaming and snoring next to him.

Those people who sacrifice sleeping hours to be extra productive I consider to be much stronger than those who are content with a sloppy job and two extra hours of sleep. However, living in the age of X-Box, super Nintendos, and The OC marathons, I cannot help but attribute modern lack of sleep to procrastination. In fact, those who sleep are much stronger than those who do not, since evidently, these people sacrifice hours of mind emptying television series to get things done on time.

Right now I wish time went a little faster or at least that I had something more to do than think about what I should be doing. I have reached the point where my back aches from lying down so long. It no longer amuses me to roll around in search of a cool spot on my bed. I've counted and recounted the twenty-seven blurry, glow-in-the-dark stars on my ceiling. My lethargy and sizzled out attention span does not allow me to finish my Algebra II homework. But who am I fooling? If I did not want to do it at 4 PM, there is no way that the fact that it is 4 AM particularly inspires me to do it. 4 AM is only good for sleeping and reminiscing; and since the former seems to be farther out of reach than my memories, I begin to dream awake and a vivid thought captures my mind.

When I was twelve years old, I used to wake up at six in the morning to sprint and leap over the high-stick that my dad built for my sisters and me. The high-stick contraption consisted of two upright wooden sticks that stood about two meters away from each-other that had metal nails sunken into them at three inch intervals. The metal nails held up the bar; my goal. I had to place the plastic bar on top of the nails that measured my confidence. I would move the stick higher and higher as I got faster and nimbler. The sharp blades of grass, moist with dew drops splashed my bare feet as I ran, and the icy wind that would make my eyes water and my breath turn white, propelled me to keep jumping over the stick. Not just reaching my goal, but soaring over it. For less than two seconds, I genuinely experienced the sensation of bliss, of flight, of falling.

I loathe the way that when I am about to fall asleep and realize it, my entire insides, or soul, or dream, plunge back into my body. My entire aura suddenly implodes and causes me to fall farther down into myself and into my bed.

Pathetic, maybe, that all this nervous energy can only be focused into something as productive as repeatedly rolling around, counting sheep, and seeing how fast I can blink. I am really starting to feel that I am wasting time, as valuable as it is. I recall now what my friend Fer said about time, and it starts to make sense.

During class, Fer scooted her desk towards mine with a gigantic, Cheshire cat smile and an air of self satisfaction. I

recognized that look. She told me, “Doodie, guess what! I was in the bathroom right now and I just got such a good idea! Okay, what I want to do is get this giant clock and stick a bunch of wires into it. Then, I want to buy a bag of feathers and glue them onto the wires so that they look like wings. And then once I have the clock with wings, I’m going to stick it into this huge, metal bird cage and keep it in my room. But wait, this is the catch...” she paused, breathed in, and set her hands out in front of her. “I am going to put a sign under it that says, ‘Catch Time.’”

I congratulated her without giving it much thought. But now, 4:23 AM, the whole idea of a gigantic bird clock in a gigantic bird cage gains a new meaning. If I catch something, I have control over it. So once I catch time, I turn everything around: Time no longer has control over me; I have control over time. Procrastinators such as I could no longer be able to own up to such a title and maybe more people could get some sleep. More people could fall asleep. I could fall asleep.

Mentira Absoluta

Jeanie Choi

Son las seis de la mañana, el sol alcanza la ventana de mi recámara...ya no hay paz. Los perros empiezan a ladrar y los bebés a llorar. ¿De qué me sirve mi despertador si el propio sol se adelanta? La inmensa ventana de mi cuarto permanece inmóvil, inocente de la suciedad que se le empieza a acumular. Aquí debajo de mi cama matrimonial tengo las cortinas que compré hace meses, pero prefiero esperar a que alguien las acomode. Sin impedir la luz, los rayos del sol me alumbran la cara sin remordimientos: soy su burla de cada mañana. Hoy no tengo que trabajar, los niños...pues han de estar dormidos. ¿Dónde estarás?

Los dos vemos el mismo sol.

Sigo acostada, con mi espalda contra la ventana, volteando a ver una pared blanca con algunas fotos de la familia que cuelgan, agotadas, perfectamente en orden. La única razón que me hace levantar es buscar el control para el estéreo. No sé dónde ha quedado, pues cada mañana aparece en diferentes lugares. Faltan doce horas para que descienda el sol. Es demasiado tiempo libre para una mujer como yo, que no tiene serias responsabilidades en el trabajo o quehaceres en la casa. Siento el calor del sol discreto, gateando lentamente para un lado como un cangrejo del mar.

Los dos sentimos el mismo calor.

Me rindo en buscar el control y empiezo a tararear la música de *Canon* mientras me dirijo a la cocina. Paso quietamente por los cuartos de los niños y no se escucha nada. La cocina también está iluminada por el sol y el propio mármol claro parece aún mas blanco. Mi tarareo se escucha por toda la casa, pero no temo que los niños se despierten. Después de nuestra separación, se han vuelto dos extraños. El lavabo está lleno de platos, la mayoría con comida de ayer que a ningún paladar había apetecido. Mis ojos y mi cuerpo ya se han acostumbrado a la luz del día, pero después de salir de la cama, mi cuerpo ha perdido el calor de la fricción entre mi piel y las sábanas. Fácil me serviría un cereal, pero mejor aprovecho la pereza y no como de mas. Regreso a mi cuarto y me dejo caer en mi ventana, desenrollando mi columna para sentir el calor del sol a través del vidrio. Volteo para abajo y se ve la ciudad vacía, considerando que es un sábado. Los taxis vagan sin esperanzas mientras recorren las mismas calles desde la mañana temprana. Un perro busca desesperadamente por cualquier migaja de comida en los basureros y una mujer ciega pide dinero a los pocos carros cuando hay luz roja. Están unos árboles altos, verdes y quietos que dan sombra a las calles. Soy sólo yo y el mundo abajo separados por el cálido vidrio del cual no me quiero levantar.

¿Qué es lo que nos separa a nosotros?

Las mentiras son las ilusiones necesarias. Mi propia existencia es mi mentira. Podría salir de la casa, ser feliz de nuevo, seguir viviendo esa vida que con tal delicadeza extraño: rogarte mi perdón;

pero me miento: digo que estoy feliz aquí en mi propia casa, encerrada por paredes blancas, conforme a mis hijos a quienes ya ni he visto a los ojos y ni me han abrazado desde ese día. Necesito creer en estas mentiras, porque sólo con esta tortura sobrevivo.



Las horas pasan sin trucos, el universo nos ha dejado atrás.

Los niños han salido sin ningún aviso mientras escuchaba *Canon* en mi cuarto. La luna va apareciendo y ya no queda evidencia de ningún sol. Volteo a ver al espejo y me sorprende ver que mi piel ya no es la misma. Ya no era esa piel que todas envidiaban, sino floja, cansada y flaca. Ninguna crema ya me convence. No me importa mi envejecimiento; el tiempo nunca para ni adelanta y mi cuerpo sólo lo sigue sin duda alguna. Soy nula. Voy hacia mi único consuelo, aquella ventana que es la única que me llama, que me despierta y me duerme. Me recargo en ella y voltee abajo. El concreto se ve azul, los árboles se han cambiado a un azul oscuro y misterioso, y apenas se ven pocas cosas con la luz de la luna y las estrellas. Aquel mundo abajo es el mar, un lugar libre donde cada quien tiene su barco y su destilación, pero yo no acepto, no quiero salir de estas paredes blancas ni respirar el aire de afuera.

Los dos vemos el mismo sol, sentimos su calor, vivimos las horas. Eres azul.

Ahead

Megan Verlage

The
Needle rests.
An arrow pointing
Firmly ahead over the star.
The star
Flickers.
Its Brilliant
Glow
Helps
You find
Your way
Through
And by sky.
This sky
Burns red
At your
Right as
The sun
Finally rises
And sheds its warm sunlight
Onto the flying birds
Pointing straight
Ahead.

Geographies

Michael Hogan

Sometimes you outwear the place
even a hidden garden in Guadalajara
where the roses are fluorescent four seasons a
year
and the air redolent with jasmine.
In the crepuscular shadows of late May
we are restless in our dove-cote prison,
though the streets of our colonia
are carpeted with the faded purple of
jacaranda
and vibrant with the cries of Hay Elote!
It may be that we are not meant for paradise
or that the scorpion's tail finds us
even in the heavy loom of the carpets.
I only know that two decades is too long to
have lingered.
We have grown old with tropical nights
where even the stars seem to rise later
missing their sidereal appointments
and Venus appears after bedtime, too late to
be of any use.
But where to go from here? Not north
where war drums deafen sense and sensibility
nor south where tyrannies attach themselves
like barnacles
to forlorn ships abandoned on the shore of a
fading faith.

We could go east but the Chinese are here
already.

They are everywhere.

No need to migrate and traverse one more
wall

though theirs is historical and aesthetic
while ours along the Rio Grande with its
Eastern block ugliness and barbed wire
mirrors the one even Reagan wanted torn
down in another country

whose worse excesses we now appear to
emulate.

Ich bin ein Berliner, Kennedy intoned. I am a
donut.

Worse. We are the hollow space in the middle
of the donut
surrounded by nothing that can nourish.

It is hot and dry as we near the end of
La Temporada Seca on the Jaliscan Plateau.
The Dry Season. The season of dust and
disease and despair.

Today we are not going anywhere.
Tomorrow. Well, already the cicadas have
begun their evening chatter
as the ceiling fan slowly turns and ripples
these pages.
Soon the rain.

Static

Lucía Haro



Borja sat on a bright mahogany bench. Behind him stood the intimidating Covadonga church with its colossal arches and between the Northern Pyrenees, nature in its most primitive state. The Covadonga church, a tourist cafeteria and the road leading to these, were the only signs of civilization. Borja did not move. The hazelnut trees rattled as the wind passed through their delicate branches. The prickly leaves of the nearby walnut trees wheeled along. The desiccated leaves on the ground bounced; the surrounding army-green and brown grasses vibrated next to them. Together, they created an unusual symphony each time fresh breezes agreed to waltz amongst them. Borja did not notice this. A bright royal-blue butterfly fluttered and landed on Borja's filthy dark brown corduroy pants. The petite creature carefully moved each of its minuscule legs, delicately inching towards Borja's shoulder. Still, he did not move. In the distance, behind Borja, a drop of water fell on the humid dirt. Soon another drop. And so on. The slowly swelling rain continued and Borja was static on the bench. Borja was soaked and the rain started eroding paths in sophisticated twists, intricate curves and wild spirals all over his mucky body. Tiny drops of blood started dripping from the hunting knife in his left hand. Borja's extremities resembled blue cheese. They were pale and repulsive, and even with the rain pouring a burning odor was still impregnated on them and Borja's whole body. Beside Borja's mahogany bench lay his only son, flat on the dark and cold pavement. Adjacent to the younger corpse an intense scarlet puddle of blood emerged. Borja sat there in the mahogany bench, motionless, besieged, holding his hunting knife and the last seconds of his life.

Islam

Ana Marva Fernández Hall

She,
Soul swimming in eyes
bandages pillars of faith that bleed
in discordance, in woe.
She, guarding the evening glow
giggles under her robes
she, the serviceful daughter of peace
knows
she appeases no man.



Jeanie Choi

Cold Fingers

Pedro Encinas

My fingers gently brushed the white paint hanging on the wall. I thought it was strange; the hallway was so warm with people, and the walls were freezing in loneliness. Strangers my mother knew walked beside me. A curious kid occasionally clogged the thin arteries while he lost himself gazing at the beating fire of candles.

I walked with my mother, getting pushed by the current of people coming in and out of the room. Inside, a grand altar dominated the scenery. The sky was a purple thunder of chipped paper hanging from long strips of string. The iconic building was surrounded by a fence of oranges and candles, protecting the valuable *cempazuchi*² flowers from strangers. A small town blossomed on top of the hill. People sat silently at the sides of the tower. Perhaps they were afraid of the wooden soldier at the foot of their hill, playfully watching over them.

My grandparents lay next to a giant plate of *chilaquiles* enough to end the hunger of the ghost village. I was unaware of their presence until a familiar painting, hanging from the corner of the picture, startled my vision. I looked again; Irma and Samuel sat in my living room, both smiling on Christmas Eve.

The room was half empty, but I could hear the people lining up outside. I exited and found my mom talking to a friend of hers in the narrow hallway.

“Esther, why didn’t you bring a picture of your parents?”

“I just forgot,” my mother answered.

I waited for the rustle of the hanging paper to stop before speaking. “My grandparents are there, I just saw their picture.” My mother’s eyes glowed in surprise. She could not understand how the picture got there. She immediately assumed they came here themselves. I knew she forgot the picture at the altar last year, but she swore she remembers picking it up.

I wanted to believe in my mother’s faith, but everything was too plain, a flat picture. I never really enjoyed Mexican traditions, any kind of tradition as a matter of fact. The Orange, pink and purple feelings engraved on an *altar de muertos*, occasionally satirizing death has no impact on me. Perhaps I just hide it, fear. Death.

I still stand awake at nights thinking about it. I had a dream, long ago, when I used to wet the bed. My godparents drove me and my cousins in a green minivan. Manuel (my godfather) asked if me if I wanted to visit the *altares de muertos*. He asked if I was brave. I answered with childish joviality a triumphant yes. Giant green boulders surrounded a type of crypt in a valley I never really visited. I looked out of the back window and could see my parents trailing us in a purple minivan.

² A yellow flower of Mexican origin. It is used to decorate altars on the Mexican celebration of the Day of the Dead.

The car halted at the entrance of a crypt. My godfather led down the stairs into a dimly lit cavern. I saw a couple of stained glass windows; blurry images dominated my still flawless vision. My parents and sister came in. No one said a thing. A hooded figure descended. A shining razor hung from a dark pole in his bony hand. Red eyes sparkled like diamonds in the room.

I cannot remember if I actually saw death decapitate my mother and father or if it was just an invention of my imagination. I can clearly picture the image though. No blood, a clean claim for *la Catrina*³. The heads vanished in the air with her, melting into a shallow grin eating away my five year old innocence.

³ La Catrina is a Mexican name for death. It has the intention to satirize it.

Sabilaⁱ

Maria Cristina Fernandez Hall

Aztec slippery
fingers. Sabila
smeared loosens grasp.
Too much land
to hold in one
Hand. From the Burning Culiacan,
to the forests of thorny trees...
the Reign of
Tenochtitlan Pouring
down an angular waterfall.
over the steps that now
rush down reflecting
the emerging sun. Single
Sinuous line. The
Snake of conquest

Slides under a horse.



Photograph by Jeanie Choi

ⁱSabila: Aloe Vera plant, has gel in it. Cures coetaneous maladies

Collision

Patty O'Rourke

I run. Run from the only people that care if I come back; that care if I come back to myself. Keep running until the lights flickering melt into a solid bar as I go faster, until the laughter dries up and I evanesce. My soles smack the floor. The steady beat of my drumming feet conquers the cacophony of warring thoughts crushing illusory regrets and tormenting unanswered questions colliding in my head. *Anything* but silence.

Silence to listen to myself. Time to feel what I need to feel in order to put it in the past. When things overwhelm me I will not give myself the time to disconnect the hairdryer that keeps blowing raging hot air into my

Photograph by Karla Ortega

eardrums. I rather believe that I cannot stop it or sort it out. Freud, or some other psychiatrist, would call it a case of conflicting internal desires with social conformities. I call it a seed.

The seed could grow if only I let it. With a squirt of cloud juice and a flicker of

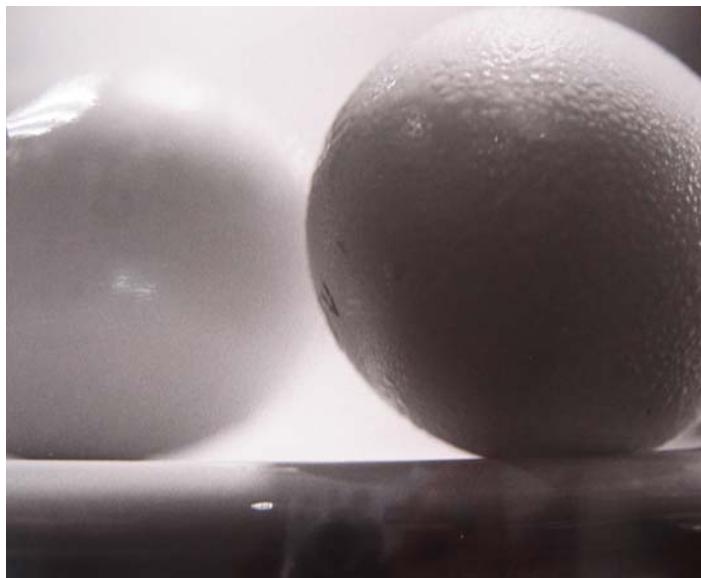
sunlight, silence and realization, the seed would give me a push to want to change for the better. I will do anything to feel better. Let the seed grow into something else.

From behind a stubby bush, I watch everyone pirouette continuously without me. I slowly and cautiously creep out to find myself encompassed by the rumbling music of laughter trumpets, gossip flutes, and fury drums. I can see the batons flying from a distance. I have always wanted to throw a

baton, even if it ends up swirling high in the air, plummeting back down, and leaving me unconscious on the floor. Another reason to get back up. So I run again.

Everything topples over me and the insanity comes into focus as I tiptoe closer. I arrange every toe into its place to pounce back in again. But before I know it, a blurry

face yanks my arm and sucks me into the parade, the pandemonium of forgotten regrets, the carnival of multiplying unanswered questions. The cheering and screaming does not let me hear myself anymore. But I stay. The seed has already changed me. I listened to everything I needed to hear.



Posession

Karla Alejandra Sánchez Alcaraz

Blame me
For the undone.
The damage about to happen
Or not yet to come.

Cut me
To sew me back again.
Or glue me to the table
So you can have me
At your pace.

Take me as origami,
To fold or
Rip me.
To make a flower.

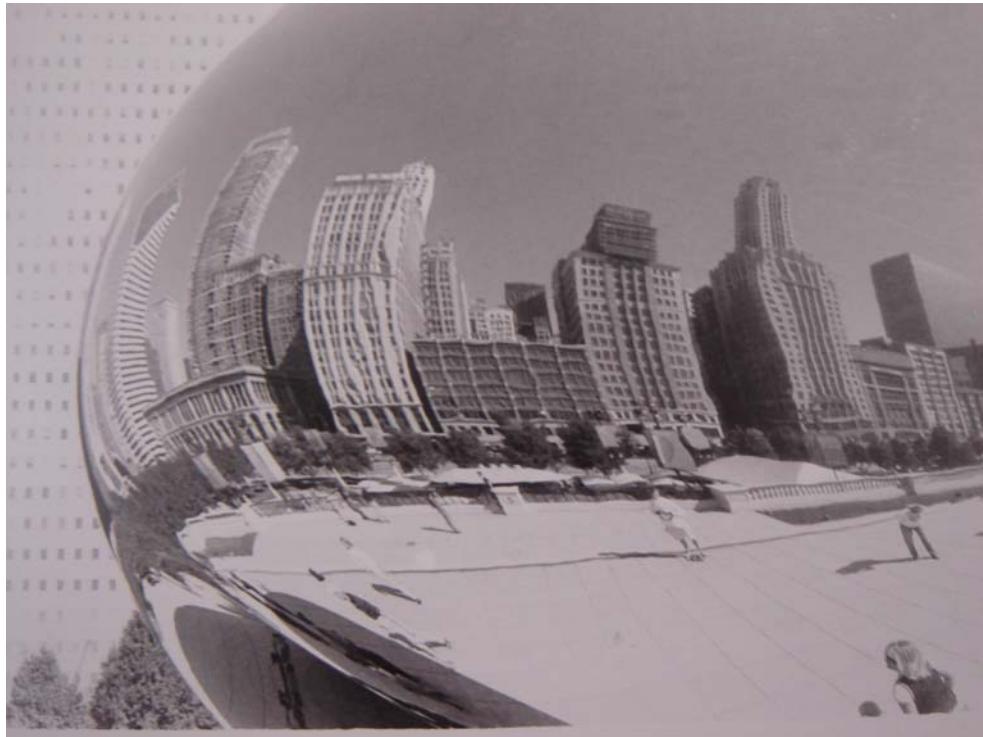
Or a boat.

Art work by Mariana Reginato



The Smoke and Scent of NYC

Omar Khan



Photograph by Jorge González

I lived the first fourteen years of my life in New York City. Of all the places I have ever visited, without a doubt, New York is the most magnetic, the most enthralling. This insomniac city has been battered, tossed, scrambled, like a salad or eggs or some heterogeneous mixture-definitely heterogeneous. Never have I seen an assortment of so many cultures. It is the epitome of human biodiversity. It is the source of high self-esteem, acceptance, and in my opinion, its own country within the United States. In a place with so much cultural diversity, where everyone lives in his own divergent dimension, where no one pays attention to the way you dress, or how you look;

New York is freedom in the form of a city.

Ever since I can remember, I have been amazed by the architectural display every time I glance out my window. The barrage of skyscrapers, each one attracting the eye with a different sense of modernization: a new type of glass, a different design, a contrasting modern building next to an ancient relic, and as the kingpin, the Empire State, standing tall with its chin up, displaying its beauty and its elegance. The streets are covered with a yellow blanket of taxis, rushing past the multiple traffic signals. Very few people remove the silken threads that the skyscrapers provide; they are unable to see the covert city.

Layers of smoke escape through the factories and make the sky constantly dark;

the smoke veils the steel creations, and forms clouds, or at least it appears that way. As I grow however, I become more and more accustomed to the smoke; in fact, I need the smoke to breathe. The smell of hundreds of garbage bags becomes part of my diet, my daily ritual. And the chiseling gusts in the winter tear your face until you bleed, you feel the gradual (or sometimes immediate) crystallization of your hair. It's worth it.

An adrenaline rush flows through New Yorkers as they try to live life at the pace of a New York minute, a life without meaningless deviations. The predominant atmosphere of excitement and of acceleration persists. This rate of action creates a society trapped by the clock, a society of time keepers, of time servers.

Now I live in Guadalajara, Mexico. As I visit New York, I feel primitive, like a child being introduced to light. Returning to New York, this time as a tourist, creates the ultimate regression into a cognitive state of

sensory-motor development; the reflection of light against the multiple windows hypnotizes. You simply see the adorned city with all its glamour and splendor, like a baby with dangling keys before him. That is not New York however. It is a city of humans, all with imperfections but that melted together provide the ingredients for an incomparable city.

Being in New York as a tourist, or as a baby provides the same innocent-minded beliefs. As a tourist we see New York as perfect, full of beautiful architecture, and enumerable skyscrapers that always seem to amaze the mind. However when you live there, you see the world realistically, and realize the many imperfections that the city is plagued with, but you fall in love with this plague. The liberty, the lifestyle, the people, you fall in love with; the stress, the smoke, the scent remain indefinitely in your memory, imprinted on your mind.

Collection of Poems

María Cristina Fernández Hall

Garlic

The shell cracks under
a knife
like a cockroach
below feet.
Juicy, but pungent, dense
Chunks creep into my pasta,
Accenting my mouth
seasoning senses,
invasive craving,
until I grow old
and banish
garlic to my pills

Haiku

Above the eyebrow
Frail trees thin and flowing
Melted copper lines.

Oblivion

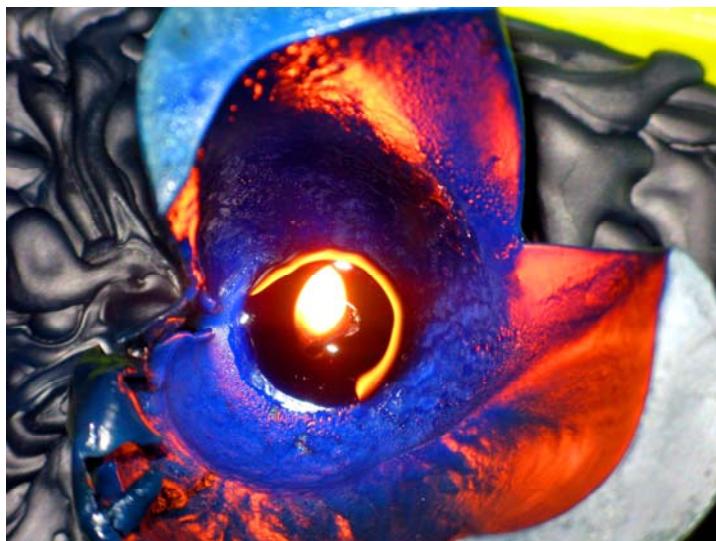
Tanned sand watches
from afar
As the ashes curve
and flutter in
the way that a
gypsy's skirt
Falls.

White Versatility

They can twist at
a slightly odd angle
But they always reflect
the eye-
Those displays of teeth
and their various
Extents
of lies.
Or not.

Continuance

The angles of a clock
Uncomb.
organic honey
Slides off glittering trees,
Even the shadows
are luminescent
At eight-twenty
Taste the hexagons
of time.



Photograph by María José Camberos

Tres Mujeres Hacen Mas de Tres Historias

María Inés Vallejo

Las cárceles son unidades que atrapan historias mutiladas.

En un quinto piso, sentada en un sofá beige, jueves 14 de septiembre de 1994 a las, 7:48 de la noche.

El espectáculo es largo y magnífico, y se desarrolla a ritmo lento, como la cadencia de un elefante. Las telas son de colores vívidos: sandía, toronja, sol, trébol y hasta índigo. Los movimientos son exactos: con gracia y elegancia.

Es increíble que uno de los animales más grandes y pesados del planeta posea grandes cantidades de inteligencia, organización, porte y, hasta cierto punto, ligereza. Al bailar me era absurda esta comparación, pues veía a los elefantes como bestias pesadas de la sabana. Cuando bailaba, yo más bien me sentía como una mariposa... algo mucho más volátil que un elefante. Ahora lo entiendo todo.

Hace ya veintinueve años que no bailo ni quiero bailar pues la grasa saturada se acumula en mis arterias, obstaculiza mi sangre,



Photograph by Leanie Choi

me entorpece. A mis dieciocho años: fue mi último espectáculo. Ahora tengo ya cuarenta y siete años y añoro bailar... bailar y soñar que vuelo.

En la calle, Pilar va con su hija camino a casa, jueves 14 de septiembre de 1994, 7:48 de la noche. "Sólo ella con su oído hipersensible se percata de esa interminable carrera de locos. Una sensación de impotencia la invade. Siente que el tiempo la cruza. Por primera ocasión registra su existencia como una cuenta regresiva".

Después del cigarro de aquella tarde se da cuenta que su hija la observa. ¿Se dará cuenta la niña de 16 meses de la atadura que se ha creado Pilar? Dejó de fumar los 9 meses de embarazo y le prometió a Marco no fumar enfrente de la niña, pero esa mañana ya no aguantó. Iban las dos en el coche, la cajetilla visible en su bolsa tinta que de reojo veía en el asiento del copiloto. No aguantó las ansias.

Frenó el coche, tomó el encendedor, la cajetilla y se bajó del coche y ubicó sus tacones que extorsionaban sus pies en la banqueta de un parque. Sacó el cigarro, lo prendió y comenzó a fumar. De pronto sus ojos encontraron los de la niña que la observaban fijamente desde que se bajó. Las miradas se conectaban por el vidrio semipolarizado del asiento trasero. No lloraba, observaba. Vió su vida reflejada en la mirada de su hija en el lapso de media fracción de segundo: el primer beso, vacaciones en la playa, caracoles, risas eternas con su prima, cosas perdidas y encontradas, cenas con amigas, el bosque, peleas interminables con su mamá, su boda, su embarazo. Un sentimiento de culpa contaminó la sangre de Pilar.

En un lugar desdibujado en la memoria, jueves 14 de septiembre de 1994, 7:48 de la noche.

La vi de pie, desencajada, envuelta en su túnica blanca, descalza. No la había visto así desde hace ya tiempo. Había corrido mucho, sus pies estaban sucios y sus cutículas hospedaban tierra. Gritó mi nombre. La primera vez no volteé. Creo haber visto esa noche en sus ojos nuestro pasado reflejado. Le dije adiós y no la volví a ver.

No importa la fecha y mucho menos la hora.

Tres mujeres no destinadas a conocerse, encerradas; sus crímenes las han hecho compartir el tiempo y el espacio. Rodeadas de paredes, barrotes y guardias se liberan al contar, fundir y confundir sus historias.

Lilo

Alicia Esmeralda Gómez

Click!

Diagonally cavorting her hand to the rhythm of a wave,
Which swims following the same path of the Koi fish.
The wave of her hand dies, leaving behind monotonous ripples
Flooding her abdomen
Sinking into her belly button
Triggering the pendulum of her hips.

Surrounded by the endless,
And bathed in interrupted cuts of green.
The entertaining scenario complemented by cacophonous sounds
thickens the atmosphere with a poor quality set of notes
that hardly match the dancer's rhythm.
Dancing mechanically the Hawaiian trend.

But she is happy, eternally blissful with her painted sardonic smile
With an even perfect tan, with her straight synthetic dark hair
And fake orange flowers glued to her plastic neck.
Then, batteries run low and she stops.

A Priceless Journey

Paola Rodríguez

Torn out cards release a trail of memories as the exhausted corners of their content begin to curl. Musical notes dance through the fading letters of each card. Each note is followed by another. They move to the rhythm of *salsa, merengue, cumbia, rumba, and bolero*.

Exquisite smells fill the room as picturesque individuals serve each platter. Luxurious restaurants such as *La Fermina*, *La Givaldilla* and *Doña Carmela* offer meals which seem elaborate in presentation and gratifying in taste. In La Habana, chicken is covered in orange sauce, rice is accompanied with bananas and sides of beans, soups are served with pork or beef and lobsters are available in most menus. A tropical ambience calls for marine meals. That is why several restaurants offer sea food with fruits (especially pineapple and papaya). Appetizing desserts include mango ice cream, chocolate soufflé; pineapple tarts, bread pudding and my grandfather's favorite... milk chopped candy. Grandpa would add a tip of vanilla, salt and cinnamon to his candy – just enough to make it taste right.

Cuba's vivid colors are not only present within its variety of flavors, but also within its distinguished architecture and art. As I adventured through the streets of Cuba, I noticed the tremendous appeal each building exuded. Colloquial buildings were encompassed by a row of columns, massive arcs which lead to interior back yards, wide balconies, and extended stairways with refined designs. This was of course, until I reached

the rural corners of its streets. Here, buildings were no longer covered with pastel paint. Innocent blues, whites and yellows had been scraped away from the walls with the coming of the years, revealing a much more aggressive and rapacious side of Cuba. As the paint on the buildings decayed, the ancient layers of its history left room for a texture of brown, red and gray tones. Here, men no longer wandered the streets carrying a Cuban cigar in their right hand. They would rather spend the day working in the sugar fields, fishing near the bay, or absorbing Cuba's natural beauty.

Every image was strengthened by a symbol. Windows engulfed by iron bars whispered a sense of restraint amongst the people. Crosses on every fountain exposed the strong Roman Catholic roots of the nation while luscious photographs and portraits screamed freedom. Painters worked the brush gracefully creating a representation of their ancient Spanish and African American descendants - all the way to present Cuban life. Tropical scenery, beautiful women, geometric figures, all seemed to pulsate with the rhythm of music.

My grandfather's words had clearly served their purpose. His words unconsciously transported me to an unfamiliar country. I had been carried to Cuba through an illusion which seemed more real to me that day than life itself. Crystal perception kept my balance steady while I crossed the boundary between two significant dimensions, between reality and illusion. Overwhelming recognition made me reflect on the idea that

“the pen is truly more powerful than the sword.”

Silence led to peaceful meditation. One of the stamps on the cards portrayed the Virgin of Guadalupe rising from a blue and yellow coast. Once I had smoothened out the edges I was able to notice smaller yet equally important details such as the four cent symbol on the corner of the stamp. The stamp reminded me of Cuba and its religious customs. Suddenly I felt the need to uncover other lost memories. As I sunk my hand through the pile of letters I found a different stamp on one of the cards. I stopped for a moment and observed. This

time the stamp contained a green building and in a corner I read “Cuba aereo twelve cents”. The building reminded me of Cuba’s distinguished architecture.

For a moment, a strong sent of tobacco caught my attention. It lingered vividly through the air. The smell prevailed even after I opened the window. It was as if one memory refused to be forgotten.



Suddenly the image of a man dressed in an elegant brown suit crossed my mind. His face was familiar though not enough for me to recognize it. He walked at a fast pace, and I followed. His rapid movements sprung a sense of alert within me. Each step he took was followed by a bloody trail on the pebbled ground. I observed from a distance as he spoke to a couple of men carrying weapons. I saw him vanish in the dark, leaving only the armed men in sight. The men called themselves “guerrilleros”. They seemed angered and ready for battle. However, I dared not stay another moment and observe. Instead I fled away from the scene and noticed how several people spoke of an important figure.

They called him “El Che” also known as Ernesto Guevara de la Serna. Such a man seemed to revive several revolutionary passions within the Cuban people.

Once the thought had forsaken my mind, an excruciating sensation filled my nerves. I had been gifted with waht brilliant minds could only dream of. Though I too had

experienced such gift within a dream, for a divine moment, my mind had been convinced otherwise. My grandfather gave me the opportunity to travel through time. He opened the door to all the cultural and historic experiences he had lived in Cuba through his letters and cards and made me feel as if I had actually been there beside him.

Sadly, the last letters I received from him gave me neither direction nor explanation for his disappearance from the face of the Earth. He had simply stopped writing. All hopes had seemed lost. That is, of course, until that mystical sent of his tobacco finally led me to him— yes, the man in the elegant suit who had gone back to travel the roots of his culture.

Self Satisfaction

Eunji Lee

I grabbed my favorite teletubbie doll, the purple Tinki Winky, from among the yellow, green, and red ones on my bed. Hugging it ebulliently with my right arm, I skipped toward the study where my sister, Eunbi, memorized the nine times tables for her math test the next day. "Six times five equals thirty and six time six e..qu..als... umm...thirty four? No... thirty six!" She stared at the ceiling every time she didn't know the answer to a multiplication problem as if the answers were written there. I stood next to her and placed my right index finger just on top of her cheek. "Eunbi." She turned her head towards me, making my steady finger poke her cheek. Ha ha ha ha. I could not stop laughing and neither could Eunbi. We laughed for several minutes and with an awkward silence, went back to our work.

I took out a pink pencil from my sister's top desk drawer and made an effort to place it correctly in my hand just as my kindergarten teacher had taught me earlier that week; index finger pressing on it from the top and leaning the pencil on to the middle finger. After failing a couple of times, because of the unbalanced weight of the pencil caused by the stacks of Sailor Moon stickers pasted on it, I gave up on grabbing it correctly and carelessly placed it in the middle of my sweaty fist. I reached for the math worksheet that I had inherited from my sister. $2+5=?$ Yikes, I thought. My two hands immediately opened and I started to count two fingers from one hand and five from the other. One, two.

Three, four, five, six, and seven. Seven. Obviously, I had a lot to learn before I passed on to adding numbers greater than five. Next question. I said to myself. $4+3=?$ Startled by the difficulty of the question, I opened my hands once again and started bending my fingers according to the number given in the question. My sister, starting from the number two times table again, paused for a second and laughed as she looked at me working out the problems manually.

By the time the long needle of the clock pointed at nine, I walked out of the study with an exhausted brain and a pair of sweaty hands. Although solving math problems made my hands sweat and it overstimulated my brain, I enjoyed facing challenges and feeling smart; none of my friends knew what "add" or "subtract" meant.

Sixth period. Honors Pre-Calculus.
Test. Chapter 2. Pressure.

If you do not do well on this test, you have to hand your best student award to Karen. I kept telling myself this over and over again in order to pressure myself into doing well. 23 . Reduce it to the simplest form... I panicked. I had not studied that section last night. Preoccupied with thinking about how many points the teacher would take off for getting this question incorrect, I used my sister's special studying technique. I stared at the ceiling and searched for the answer written there. Unfortunately, I could not find anything up there except for orange bubble

gum. Agitated, I considered leaving the question blank, but fear overwhelmed me. Frantic, I considered guessing, but I discarded it as hopeless. “You have got like... a minute left.” Wrap it up. I closed my eyes and said my farewell to my award. I could see white angelic wings grow out on its back and flap, flying away into Karen’s hands.

I sat besides Eunbi. Eunbi, my sister who got frustrated and screamed out “Urrgg!” every few minutes because filling her online common application did not come easily.

She started with filling in her personal information. Eunbi... February Seventeenth of nineteen eighty nine... Korean... Father, Mother, Sister... Once she had that part completed, she moved on to the extracurricular activities section. I still sat next to her with my favorite cookies, Principe, and all of its crumbs on my hands and mouth.

Eunbi took a deep breath. I lack extracurricular activities. I only have four, but the application has seven places for this section. Her tone had a little melancholy and a lot of frustration and a hint of dissatisfaction. In order to lighten up the mood, I placed my index finger near her cheek and called out her name, hoping that she would laugh her worries and concerns out. Eunbi’s reactions, however, left me astounded. “What’s your problem! Just leave me alone!” I could no longer hear her zealous laughter that overshadowed mine.

I have always believed that my desire for self satisfaction motivated me to obtain awards and acknowledgements. However, observing Eunbi struggle her way through her application for days, weeks, months, I have realized that self satisfaction did not form the biggest part of my motivation. Rather, fear did. The fear that I would end up like Eunbi.



Photograph by Jeanie Choi

The Stomping of the Miracle Lady

Loretta López

I woke up early on October 12, with the soft touch of my mother's fingers on my bare arms. October 12 meant a holiday from school and the Pilgrimage for the Virgin of Zapopan. On this particular day of the year, thousands of people from all over Mexico marched across Guadalajara praising their special miracle lady. I hadn't seen the Pilgrimage since the age of seven and my faint memories of it included the smell of wet dirt sweat and my fright at the loud rhythmic stumps.

Eight years later, on the same day, my mom decided it was time to walk over to see the Virgin and pay our respects. My father, brought up by a very Catholic mother, had strayed from the custom of going to church that the rest of my aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents practiced. My family saved church visits for the special occasions of death and marriage. But my mother occasionally decided to preserve my father's rigorous Catholic past and chose to appreciate the Virgins. She hung paintings of them all over the house; it got her approving smiles from my grandmother's high expectations and once in a while a small miracle.

My mother and I walked silently to the site of the Pilgrimage along with other people of the neighborhood who had woken up early for the same reason. The Virgin of Zapopan carried on a pedestal, displayed her white figure and her baby blue dress meticulously embroidered with delicate gold threads. Her white skin emerged, alienated in surrounding shades of bronze and brown bodies that

broke the silence of the grey morning to applaud her. The Virgin of Zapopan sat next to the cardinal and other important priests of the city. The cardinal's eyes, droopy and wrinkly, looked down upon the people. The tiny figure passed by and then the rhythmic stumps of her faithful followers began. The loud music created by their heavy shoes wrapped in a clanking metal collided through the cold morning.

The parade split into two rows. One full of shiny and fluorescent polyester costumes worn by dancing bodies and the other, by people who seemed to have joined the parade when they saw it pass by. Everyone walked by in a silent sacrifice, cotton sweat pants and untidy hair, a proof of their sleepless night of anticipation. The whole thing looked messy, tiring and happy.

The stomping created by everyone from five to eighty drowned my words. Most of the people dressed up as Indians and wore sandals and moccasins, dyed feathers and revealing skirts. The women wore tank tops and the men danced bare breasted. The costumes worn confidently by everyone exposed imperfections, the rashes, and the hair that the razor didn't have a chance to pass by. The hairy bellies jiggled to the rhythm of the drums. Most of them held plastic bags with water to their mouths throwing the empty bags onto the streets. I admired their sweat. Trickling down the foreheads of some and splashing down the noses of others, I admired their devoted faith.

The parade seemed strange to me. Most religious celebrations I had seen didn't display sweat, spit, nakedness and tired eyes. For years I lived amongst the society of Guadalajara who could afford to send their groomed children to the American School. The Catholic devotion I saw from them seemed like a whole different world.

The few church services I had attended also included: a lot of gel, makeup, and expensive clothes. After smelling the suffocating perfumes for an hour or so the people engaged in the inevitable routine of walking across the street after mass to sip out of the green Starbuck straws.

I remember once my friend told me in a lazy voice, "I really don't feel like dressing up, ironing my hair and putting makeup on today."

"Why, where do you have to go?" I asked.

"Church."

I had heard the term "Sunday clothes." It meant the type of fancy clothes



Photograph by Jeanie Choi

people owned to go to church in, but I never had thought of its strangeness until going to the Pilgrimage. In the Pilgrimage I witnessed the most real faith I had ever seen in my life. The Pilgrimage didn't seem to hide anything real like the tangled hair, the tired morning faces, and the trickling drop of sweat. The act looked messy but in a necessarily important kind of way.

The most significant events in life happened messily.

My visits to the hospital and any excruciating pain I had ever felt, made my body twist into knotted positions making me expulse gagging sounds and acid liquid.

My tenth birthday ended up with brown chocolate frosting so far up my nostrils I blew my nose the whole day and little crumbs came along with the snot.

My birth, bloody and gooey stained sheets, and made my mothers veins pop out in a transparent shade of blue. I had made her face turn red and wet.

The type of red and wet I saw on the faces of people dancing in the Pilgrimage that came from the messy, tired, happy mixture. A messy that people should not hide. A messy that reassures that life is real and raw.

**

October 12 ended with thousands of plastic bags on the street that people held earlier that day up to their dry mouths.

October 12 ended with my ears ringing from the stomping feet that I admired so much and still remained frightened of.

Migratory
Michael Hogan

Startling flash of deep red
among the willows and first growth birches
the scarlet tanager mistaking parkland for forest
ruffles his black wings, feeds one last time
before leaving his offspring on the journey south to Peru.
Even if it were not for the shiver in the morning air
the cold drizzle at dawn,
his red signal would toll for us
the benediction of summer's brevity:
ungainly fat of baby raccoons scrambling out of the dumpster,
diaphanous summer dresses of young coeds discarded
for hardier tweeds and woolens.
My mother at ninety-two clings to life
like a limpet on a granite rock
surviving through the cold and dark,
the hopeless repetitive swing of tides: defiant, implacable.
This morning with the chill of autumn in the air
I think of you , Mother, bent over by osteoporosis,
thinner, more frail each phase of the moon.
But just when I feel most tender
your eyes sharp and cold as blue ice
glower up at me (at life at death),
as if to say like the tanager on his solitary trip to Peru:
It is all one to me: the coming, the going.

Curse the Night
Juliana Barbosa Haddad

Immaculate teeth as joyful melodies
of the bolted star, vainly.
Broadening of the mouth,
the inconstant yet
marriageable beat.

Source of lips (magical only in the silent smirk of birds)

Miracle of spring intact
at snow's grave
pearls as roses
opened to the wind

Music within petals.

Curse the majesty of sleep
for in it,
smiles remain silent
throughout the night.

Ticking

Ana Gabriela González Ayala

My grandfather was a photographer. One would think that his children might have inherited some of his passion for it, but they didn't. It is a shame that not a single one of them inherited his affection for photography, or arts in general. My younger self would describe my grandfather as an old man who always tried to make me smile. But I've grown up.

I look back and I still see him as an old man trying to make me smile. But I also see him as an intellectual, a man that could talk about just anything, open minded, agnostic, collector.

Every time I got upset, he would appear with a camera masking his face and say "Come on, give me a smile. You don't want to come out all teary in the picture, do you?" So I would smile, but then my cheeks would push my eyelids close and the remaining tears would blind me, so I would stretch my eyelids open -one hand on each eye- and I'd forget everything about smiling. I would appear all red and puffy, from crying, but you could tell that I was trying really hard to dissipate the tearful effects.

I have been living in his house for four years now, without him. He used to be the only reason I enjoyed being here. Sometimes I feel that I can still listen to the clicking of his camera. It is not a big flash; it is a click-clack of the mechanized lens that moves with the pressing of buttons. His bohemian style, of politics and paella, French cheese and red wine, lives in his photography. I see myself in his pictures, and I can feel him as the surface of the photo paper shines in my hands.

Photos don't take one's soul away, they store it and feed memories. They make us immortal.

• • •

I was raised thinking that God lives in the Church, that it is his house. As a child I did not question it, and even though I was told that God is everywhere, I knew that he is in his house. I was taught to sit quietly, keep my mouth shut and my arms folded while in Mass, because I was listening to God. But I did not see him. I could only hear his word and hope he didn't catch me *not* paying attention to the priest.

I was taught that every time I passed by a church, I was to make the sign of the cross. This is to show my respect and awareness of God's presence; our own personal way to salute God. My mother told me that almost every one believed in God, but people address him differently and pray differently. She told me that people had fights over it, but that there is nothing wrong with thinking differently about God.

I grew up in this city, where there are hundreds of Catholic churches. Every morning, I had to cross myself about five times, one after the Morning Prayer, and other four on the way to school, in the car while passing by a church. I was not exposed to the other names for God, or the other religions.

My first interaction with another faith was with the Jewish religion.

One of my grandmother's best friends is Jewish. We used to pick her up from synagogue, for it is just a few blocks away

from home. I asked my mother where we were, and she answered that we were in the house of God, but it wasn't a church. She told me it was my cousin's house of God and it was a different religion, but a sacred place that deserved my respect nonetheless. That building went from being just some building, to becoming the house of God in my mind.



Art work by Mónica García Lemus

Now that I am older I question my own religion's institution. I question the interpretation of it and its many rituals. But I still have its values and I still think of Church as *my* house of God. Now that I am older I understand the differences between religions, but I still think that they all believe in the same God, only that they choose to name him differently and have him live in buildings with different structures from mine.

Religion is our excuse to believe that we are not powered by batteries. It's our desire to transcend.

I still live a few blocks away from the synagogue. Every time I pass by it, I feel the impulse of raising my right hand and addressing the sign of the cross, for in my mind, it is a house of God, and I have to acknowledge his presence.

• • •

Last night I took the batteries out of my tic-toc clock. It's a mock of a cartoon clock, now that I think of it. Its bells are huge. The batteries are what make it a XXI century clock and not completely vintage, I suppose.

I killed my clock.

Its ticking was preventing me from falling asleep. It's not the first time this has happened, this ticking instead of sleeping. The only reason why I hadn't done it before was because I thought to myself that I would find another sound, a substitute for the tick. At least the ticking was a recognizable sound I grew accustomed to. I'd train my brain to not mind it and fall asleep, eventually. However, its substitute might be of an unknown and uncontrollable source which would only intrigue me and keep me awake.

The ticking didn't require much thinking. It's an objective, mechanical sound, easy to identify and easy to ignore after several years of sleeping with a tic-tock-mock-of-a-cartoon-clock in the same room. A ticking keeping someone awake is a cliché. Like fairy tales and Peter Pan.

Clichés cloud our already clouded minds. The problem with clichés is that they lose their meaning after time. They become grey, like the pavement under rubber soles.

"People don't die when their bodies pass away; they die when we forget them". That's the cliché of every funeral; only second to "I'm sorry for your loss." It is meaningless. People do not know what they're talking about when they say that to you. The people that have actually gone through it, refrain from saying it during funerals, for they know, they know.

I remember you told me once that the ticking of a clock all night would drive you insane. Maybe it's what made you regret that

night. The ticking of my clock drove you
insane.

I hope it is.

I hope it's the meaningless cliché of the
tic-tock clock and not me that drove you

away. Last night I took the batteries out of my
tic-tock clock. It's a mock of a cartoon clock,
now that I think of it.

I took them out so you'd come back.

Delirio

Mónica Morales

He hecho de todo para que termine:

Hice un pastel de nueces.

Pálidas.

Sí, nueces pálidas.

Hice un cuaderno de recuerdos, garigoleos,
anécdotas.

Uno pobre: lágrimas, cenizas.

He plantado un lirio blanco,
También.

Probé la yoga, el pilates, un laxante de
memorias...

Seguí un sendero de adoquines en mis sueños
Me llevó a un bosque ufano...

A un bosque donde los árboles murmuraban
sus risitas burlonas...

Donde...

Perdón. Regreso.

Me bañé con aguas turbias, con aguas
santas.

Ordeñé una vaca, acaricié una nube,
respiré.

Respiré asustada.

Me perseguía el fantasma y, ¡no sabía
qué hacer!

Corré catorce kilómetros, desnuda,
descalza, enfundada en aire,
Excitada y confundida.

Mis pies cortados.

Jugué a tocar el piano, a sonreír a las personas,
a cantar en la regadera,
A ser bailarina, mexicana, creyente, niña,
mujer...
Jugué a estar viva.

¿Dije viva? Ah, sí, dije viva.

El ángel de la muerte me miró, le coqueteé un
poco.

Y en mi delirio me evaporé. Me perdí, no sé si
para siempre.

¡Regresa! grito.

Pero se lo ha llevado todo, me ha llevado a
mí.

Ahora, pretendo ser poeta, pero no parece ser
la solución.

Las ideas expiran; se extinguen.

¿Y, qué queda a mí?

Adoquines que me llevan lejos y un delirio
que no me deja regresar.



Photograph by Jeanie Choi

My Grandmother's Dimples

Eunji Lee

She was not ambulatory, my grandmother, during her last ten years of life. She had two major hip surgeries in one year because of a fall down the stairs, which is why she moved in with her oldest son. She tried hard to ride her wheelchair and take slow walks with the help of a metal cane, although moving caused her pain, creating more wrinkles in her face. A strong sense of esteem towards her built in me for the first time. However, her attempts to walk or ride a wheelchair ceased in the second year. It seemed that she could no longer handle the pain that moving caused her.

Her bones began to lose strength and very soon, she had no other choice but to stay in her remote controlled electronic bed 24 hours a day. She ate in her bed, she watched TV in her bed, she took her medicines in her bed, and she even performed her sanitary

necessities in her bed with the aid of my aunt. My grandmother's helplessness and refusal to make another effort to move, took big bites off my admiration toward her.

Photograph by Jeanie Choi
When I watched her frowned wrinkled face and her askew body on the bed, I could no longer see my grandmother who used to make eye-catching multicolored traditional Korean rice cakes every year during the harvest festival on September 23rd with my cousins and me. I could no longer find my attractive grandmother who had lovely dimples that created a perfect balance in her face. I was only able to see an old lady with white uncombed hair, who yelled at everyone for walking too loudly, for being garrulous, or just for being around her and whose dimpled skin became only another piece of fleshless flesh hanging from her cheeks.

My Moon

Juliana Barbosa Haddad

Unwilling to break in half, numb to any
and all art deciding to make the moon a satellite of mine,
so I can land and stomp my feet.
Then, I shall spark it up and give it a soft blend of something
definite and infinite. Send it swirls of scarlet, magenta, blue and
violet stones; spray the most furious wind and let the loneliness fly off.
Illuminate it with crystal light reflecting the beauty of misty nebula;
wet it with soap and make it soft, clean, welcoming; I will cover the holes
with foam and fill non-existent corners with bubbles. Real enough, it must
look, so I will give the moon the power to speak, but only memorable words.
To feel but not to see or to hear. My moon will be a
carnival composed of happiness and chaos,
all will be a part, all will dress in black
and white.

Childhood Cigarettes

Loretta López

“Let’s go smoke some ‘em cheap cigarettes,” he said as his hair fell over his forehead. He had let it grow long and wavy so it would constantly brush his eyes. I glared at him. I didn’t like that he smoked, but it soothed me when he did because it smelled warm, like my grandparent’s chimney, and his mouth created circles of white clouds and I guess I didn’t mind that either.

He slipped the thin stick from the white box and lit it up. I waited for the stick to disappear and we kept on walking.

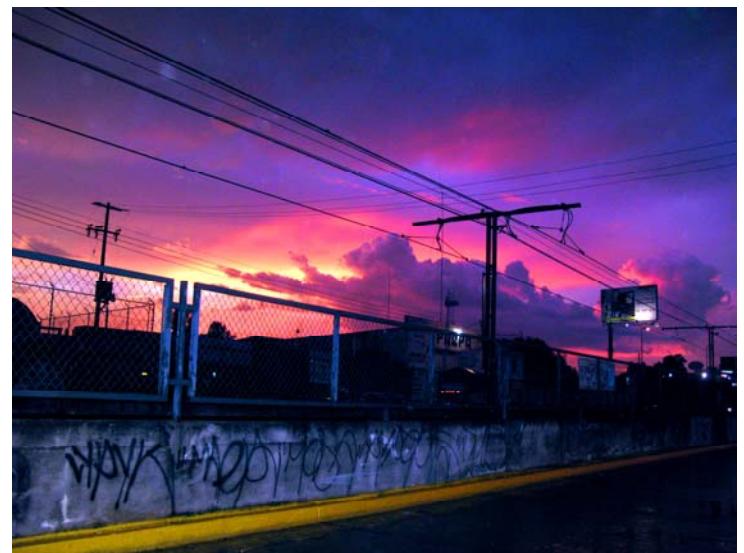
He pointed out a blue beetle and punched my arm. We had played the beetle game since we were little but he had gotten stronger and now it hurt when he punched my arm, even though I pretended it didn’t. I knew the game would have to end sooner or later because purple and blue shades spotted my arms. But I hadn’t told him about it. I didn’t want the game to stop.

We waited for the bus to approach and he paid my fare. He gave me his crooked smile, which meant I had to pay for his next ride.

We sat next to each other and he took out the thick green marker from his pocket. I looked out of the window into the grey

afternoon sky and watched the cables fly above our heads. He looked over his shoulder, dirty hair brushing his pale face, while he scanned the gray seats to see if someone watched. When he was sure no one looked he drew a big cursive “L” on the back of a seat.

I knew he had made it for me, so I slipped my cold fingers into his warm comforting hands.



Photograph by Maria José Camberos

I felt that I could have sat there a long time.

Five Brahms Waltz

Raquel Gomez Miguel

Hand palms caressing the stage
The docile coral tunics swaying
Above tender porcelain legs
Firmly defined

Charming notes
From the man's fingertips
Embellish the peachy fabric:
Translucent, colossal

À sauté en attitude
Sou-sou, plié, sou-sou.
Fierce movements,
Yet sweet expression

Then paper petals
As if manipulated
By wind,
By echoes
Soar, rest and finally die.

The veil lying on the piano
Shall resist the dancer's request
Until ready to obey,
and reach the stage's sky with a momentary
Relevé

I Read

Doug Parker

"Rarely is the question asked: Is our children learning?"

—George W. Bush

A recent study published by the National Endowment for the Arts chilled me. Young people between the age of 8 and 16 spend, on average, two hours per day watching television, and fewer than seven minutes per day reading for pleasure. When one adds internet and video game and cell phone time, the situation becomes even more dire. The same study said that students who read for pleasure do better in all subjects, including math, and that students who do well on reading assessments end up earning substantially more money in their careers. A more significant reality, to my mind, demonstrated the positive correlation between people who read and people who work to better the world. A nation of non-readers, of television junkies and internet addicts, has less knowledge of the outside world and less ability to both care about and come up with creative solutions to help others. They either do not know the problems exist, do not feel empowered enough to make a difference, or simply do not care. Either ignorant or weak or heartless. As the globe warms and thousands die for want of a ten dollar mosquito net, we kill aliens with our joysticks while real control becomes ever more remote.

By now those who do not read, if they even opened the pages of this magazine, have certainly stopped reading. I find this liberating for at least three reasons. First, it assures me that my audience will consist of

fellow readers, literate and inquisitive minds that know the joys of the printed page. Secondly, it allows me to call non-readers all kinds of unflattering things, as I will do towards the end of the essay, without worrying that I may offend them. Finally, it allows me to write an outrageous pun, as I will do in the next sentence, and know that my audience will understand it, or, at least, pause, use a dictionary, and try to figure it out. So, it all means that this essay really preaches to the quire.

My audience, then, must certainly share my puzzlement with the choice of television over reading. I never felt deprived when almost every other family in the neighborhood had a television before my family did. I had books. In fact, I wondered what this large new box could possibly offer, with its silly people doing silly things and trying to sell me fantasies and peanut butter. I could never understand why a friend might prefer to watch television, even baseball, rather than coming out and playing real baseball with me.

Television brings back memories of times I endured when home from school and too sick to read. I remember watching the children's television shows with talking mice and friendly giants and seven foot yellow birds and mostly, I remember boredom. That large box contained less than even the smallest book I read.

Mostly, when young, I read sports books. *Scrubs on Skates* and *Puckgrabber* and *Rookie of the Year* and *Bang the Drum Slowly*. These juvenile, formulaic books replenished the fantasies that fuelled my actual, less than stellar, athletic career. When my friend Jim Stevens and I shot pucks at his father's new aluminum garage door, I was *A Boy at Leafs Camp*. When we tossed a baseball back and forth in the spring, I tried to imitate the grace of *The Kid* from a John R. Tunis novel. As we tossed and caught and tossed, I peppered the rhythm of the afternoon with the latest quips from a collection of baseball humour that I had borrowed from the library. "Good pitching will always stop good hitting and vice-versa" (Casey Stengel). "If the world was perfect it wouldn't be" (Yogi Berra).

But baseball books taught me tragedy as well as humour. One story that has stuck with me from my earliest reading told of a major league pitcher, Bob Feller I think, whose mother had never seen him play a major league game. On Mother's Day he bought her a ticket to New York and good seats to watch him pitch. An opposing batter sliced a foul ball that went into the stands and hit his mother in the head, killing her. That story has stayed with me all these years. The terrible irony, the pride smashed by the fates, the terrifying fragility of life.

My early reading of sports novels prepared me for the later fiction I would devour. I learned about the heroic journey when I still only knew Homer as a baseball term and not a Greek epic poet. Or a yellow cartoon character. Good and evil, loss and redemption, the quality of friendship, *hubris* and *anagnorisis*, all played out on the fields and rinks of my youthful imagination. In some ways, they built on my earliest myths, the

Bible stories my Mom would read to me before I had learned the magic, spiritual power of letters. David always defeated Goliath and all could be right with the world.

After I learned to read, I looked forward to Tuesday nights with the relish my later, working self would look forward to Fridays. We had a small library in our town, but it closed at 4:00 every day except Tuesday, and weekends did not open at all. Tuesday nights, though, it stayed open until 8:00. Snowstorms, blizzards, rain squalls; nothing could stop me from bundling up and braving the icy streets and howling winds to make my pilgrimage. For my parents, Tuesday nights had a different sort of spiritual significance: the weekly Bible study, where ten or fifteen Brothers and Sisters of our congregation would come to my parents' house to read the Good Book. Bible study started at 7:30, and I knew the terrible wrath I would incur, both here and in the hereafter, if I came home late. I remember so many Tuesdays, approaching the altar of the checkout desk exactly 21 minutes before the start of the Bible study, then bundling up my parka and my new worldly treasures and battling my way back on the twenty minute trek home. I would kick off my winter boots and rush up stairs to put my books away. The next hour, of pious and good-hearted people discussing the words of the Lord, seemed like all nine circles of Hell. I spent most of the time rehearsing in my mind the books I had waiting for me, and looking at the grandfather clock in our living room waiting until 8:30 when I could dash up to my room and luxuriate into my latest novel.

I read constantly, voraciously, uncritically, especially in the winter months. I came home, frozen, from school, cut myself a crust of my Mom's fresh-baked bread, and

headed up to my room. There, as my reading tastes broadened, I would pirate with Captain Blood or gunsling with Billy, deduce with Sherlock or hunt with Tarzan. I raced through homework to earn my precious sojourns with words. On my weekly paper routes, freezing and trudging through snowbanks, I wrote in my head the endings of books I had started

That love of the printed word still warms me no matter how cold the world becomes.

When I backpacked through the tropics, finding books became a major obsession. I have never felt the desperate craving that came over me on that trip when I was nearing the end of the last book in my backpack. When I hiked my way into a new village, I would always ask where I could find a store that sold books. One time, in Ambon, I had finished my last novel, and, discovered that the big town fifteen kilometers away, up a steep jungle road, may have some. I hiked in, and found one dusty and sun-faded book – the unauthorized biography of Nancy Regan. I bought it, and it lasted me until I made it to the next backpacker's flophouse where I traded it in for the James A. Michener novel *Texas*. Any book in a drought, like any port in a storm.

The thousands of characters that I have shared journeys with have provided me with some of the most valuable insights of my life, much more so than spiritual instruction or psychology classes. All those nights reading by flashlight under the covers have shown me the big questions of the human condition. While I can't say this always prevented me from making mistakes, it always gave me ways of examining what went wrong and models of what I could do differently.

And it always made me feel part of a brotherhood, and sisterhood, of the most interesting people in the world: readers.

For the rest of what I hesitate to call humanity, those who will not read this, I have little affection left over. Last year, when *Sin Fronteras* came out, one of the students who had contributed a piece came to me almost in tears. She had helped distribute the magazines, and saw students walking out of classrooms and tossing the magazine into garbage bins or onto the ground, where they soon were soaked and soiled. I tried to calm her, but inside me burned the same old anger that has always emerged when I hear of burned books, or readers having pejoratives like "bookworm" and "inksniffer" hurled at them, the same disgust I feel when I hear a person brag about having graduated from high school without ever having read a book. I want to scream at them that life doesn't come with an online cheat site, that they are morons who rejoice in the idiocy of gouging out their own eyes, that they will become the people who elect a president who, when asked about the favourite book from his childhood, could only name a book published one year after he graduated from college.

So, my apostrophe for all those who will not read this. I know that you probably have good reasons. E-entertainment sneak-previewing the latest Paris Hilton video or the new Wii game just came out or you have to add your name to someone else's Facebook wall. Get on Messenger and celebrate yr imbecilic inadequacies w/ other avatars of cretinism just lik u. LOL. Write on, in the most puerile PowerPoint inanities. Let the narrative of your life be scripted by vidiots. Cheat. Surf. Plug in and tune out.

We will read, my brothers and sisters and I.

I know that we will continue to clean up the mess made by the non-readers, as we have done for centuries.

And, hey, if you don't have a good book at the moment, drop by Room 15. It would thrill me to lend you a good novel.

When the Day of Judgement dawns and the great conquerors and lawyers and statesmen come to

receive their rewards—their crowns, their laurels, their names carved indelibly upon imperishable marble—the Almighty will turn to Peter and will say, not without a certain envy when he sees us coming with our books under our arms, "Look, these need no reward. We have nothing to give them here. They have loved reading."

(Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), British novelist.
"How Should One Read a Book?" The Common Reader, Second Series (1932).)

Essay on My Madness

Pedro Encinas

A voice flashes like lighting in the dark muteness of the room. "I can't understand!" a stranger says. The thunder soon follows, a glass smashing head butt against one of the new white desks. "I won't understand," the stranger keeps shouting. Drops fall from his mouth in a cacophony of self loathing, rain over the

silence of the room. I watch his head moving up and down; the desk approaches as fast as it begins to blur. Perhaps I forgot to bring my glasses today; that would explain why everything looks like it will dissolve into the air like water. I check my face, only to unexpectedly hit myself; my glasses were always there. I cannot understand how they got there.

The first day at therapy I learned not to speak. Just as in court, everything I say will be used against me. My mother just dropped me off in a room full of wonderful toys and a very nice lady called Arazeli. I know why I am here: I tried to start a fight with a kid in my class, but I lacked the courage to throw the first punch. Well, at least I will get the chance to play with legos instead of doing my math homework. Arazeli asks me to not mind talking while I play. I find it funny, the

way in which people expect you to say the whole truth when you are asked a question. I look up when she asks why my car only had three wheels. "I like the way it looks. I think it is special." She nods and lets me continue to build irregular buildings with no room, and headless yellow men walking on an imaginary street painted on the carpet. "Do you have imaginary friends?" she asks. "No."

I cannot remember the day I met Cristy. Some day when I slept outside, with my head hanging a side of my bed with my eyes fixed on the black television screen, a day when I felt crazy. Then she appeared, or rather sneaked up behind my back, scaring me. She wore a blue dress (most likely the

same one she wears right now); her blue wings were shining with the daily moon. She said, "My name is Cristy. I can play the piano the violin and sing." Or perhaps she just came one day without saying anything, and I noticed her without noticing. The rest I made up.

Most people who have never seen a shrink think therapy consists of sitting in an awkward couch answering strange questions. They can picture an old man with bottle bottom glasses showing spots while he occasionally nods his head and says, "How do you feel about it?" They know nothing. I do not sit, I run. I do not talk, I scream. I do not think, I kick. I do not answer, I ask. I do



anything I can think of. I fear no judgment. If I had issues, let them be. I felt better doing what I wanted to do than listening to imaginary voices and living in the abstract world of reality.

Sometimes I can not sleep at night. The lights in my room are still on, so I tuck a pair of jeans under my door to trap light in and let my parents sleep. I try to read, but my eyes cannot stay open. I try to sleep but my mind cannot keep quiet. I can listen to the imaginary Kurt Cobain, standing on the corner of my narrow room. I watch how he slowly shrinks into white noise, echoing at the back of my head. My fingers stretch out,

waking up from their numbness, reaching out for a piece of his talent, grasping dead silence. I drop my head on my desk, between Western Civilizations and Algebra 2. I watch the green numbers on the alarm clock beep on and off. I can hear someone screaming, but I am alone.

I completed my anger management therapy when I turned 13 only to start with another when I turned 16. I liked the new one, even if I remained unaware of the reason I had to take it. The new shrink had a guitar he let me play, even if I did not know how.

I felt like a sober Sid Vicious.