

2019

Volume 65 Full Text

Toyon Literary Magazine

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Volume 65

Toyon Lit Mag.

The Movement Issue

Volume 65
2019

This is Toyon: Humboldt State University's journal of literature and art. This student-run journal, founded in 1954, has published once a year for the last 65 years. In the pages of Toyon you'll find both emerging writers and published authors, written word and visual art. Toyon blurs the line between "high" and "low" literature in order to create a platform of expression that is accessible to our readers and contributors in more languages than just English.

This issue's theme is MOVEMENT. As you read through the pages, you will have to engage with the book to read or see the works correctly. We hope this reflects the movements that people are sometimes forced to make against their will. We hope the way the book is made is a conversation in itself, whether it be what is there or what isn't. Engage and move with us.



Toyon Lit Mag

2019



TOYON

VOLUME 65

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The Movement Issue

**Humboldt State University's Multilingual
literary Magazine**

Volume 65. 2019



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Winner of the Toyon Staff Award for Visual Art



Women's March Patrick D. Garcia Jr.

And All The Walls Between Them

Ryan Van Lenning

W|h|a|t i|f | a||l| | o|f | t|h|e|s|e | l|e|t|t|e|r|s |
h|a|d | w|a||l|l|s | b|e|t|w|e|e|n |t|h|e|m?

h|o|w | d|i|f|f|i|c|u||t | w|o|u||d | i|t |
b|e | f|o|r | t|h|e|m |
t|o | c|o|m|e | t|o|g|e|t|h|e|r |

a|n|d | f|o|r|m | t|h|e | w|o|r|d|s |
t|h|e|y | l|o|v|e?

Or if th smllst lttrs wr sprtd
from th Biggr Words

|||||||||e a e e e e a a e e e !|||||||||
|||||||||

How hard would it be
for whole poems to come into being
when they moved from one place to the other

without the vowels
who just want to play?

Would they be outlawed
for threatening a new way
of living together?

Winner of the Jodi Stutz Award for Poetry

What Wif Wone Wletter Wbelieved
Wit Was Wsuperior Wto Wall Wthe Wothers
Wand Wdidn't Weven Wnotice
Wit Wstarted Wevery Word?

And imagine if some [words]
were put in [boxes]and {cages} for random traits
like how many {syllables}
or what {alphabet} they're from
or what they {rhymed} with

or didn't rhyme with
like cash or white—
words like right would be alright
but words like justice and color
just might be
left out altogether

and what if s-me letters
were simply n-t all-wed t- exist
because -f the c-l-r
-f their s-und
and simply sh-t -n sight?

What kind of language would that be?

Dépaysement

David Holper

Barbara Curriel Multilingual
Award Winner

After the plane lands
or the ship docks
or the train has carried you
over a border
in the dead of night,
you may find yourself
waking early, strolling along
a strange avenue, noticing

how the light settles
differently here than the angle
you never noticed at home. Or perhaps
the coffee tastes like memory. Or just maybe,
when the sycamore leaves fall, they drift
earthwards as if the earth
called them by a new name.

Dépaysement (French, noun): the feeling one gets
of not being in one's own country, of being a foreigner.



Dahlia Noire

Erika A. Andrews

Welcome to womanhood!
Admission granted after you sat
on his dictation, slowly
weighing the depths of his command:
“Tell me, who does this pussy belong to?”

You don't know how
to answer.

You have become the master
of baiting the desire of men,
whose fever is permanent illness
to the jungle of your thighs.

Forced to swallow
the dark abyss of white secrets
made custom for the deep of your throat,
you've become numb.

How does it feel to be made dog
in this style of oppression?

Dahlia Noire,
do you ever gaze upon your midnight skin,
wishing it to lily white safety?

A safety that does not exist
for flowers that are required to grow
without water.

Yes, Girls Too

Asha Galindo

I took the doors off my closet and expanded my room by another 2x4ft. rectangle. My closet didn't have clothes, but I had a collection of small plush animals and cartoon characters on a little chair inside and a big cube where I kept my collection of *Rolling Stone* magazines. On top of the big cube, I had my own TV/VCR combo that I had bought for myself after an entire summer babysitting my cousin, Stevie. My uncle paid me about \$50 a week to watch him. It was pretty good money for a teenager. At most, I had to argue with a 7-year-old about eating his mac and cheese before buying a Big Stick from the ice cream man and keep him from carrying a purse when he played dress up with my little sisters. My mom was okay with his wearing dresses, but the purse was too much. "Mijo, here. Here is a backpack."

Like most 16-year-olds who earned \$50 a week babysitting their spoiled cousin, I considered myself grown and only a boarder in my parent's house. I enjoyed the modern cosmopolitan convenience of independent study from a local charter school and a door knob with a key. I used part of the money I earned over summer to buy it so that no one could go in my room and rifle through my stuffed animals and rock magazines. Not that I left very often. The lock was almost strictly used from the inside.

Since I didn't have my own closet to hide secrets, I used my parents' instead. There I found the teal metal box filled with VHS tapes, some with handwritten labels: *Sex and the Single Girl*, *Hot to Trot*, and my fave, *Guerilla Girls*. I had already long discovered the joys of masturbation: humping the rails of my day bed or pushing the mound under my underwear in a way that felt nice, like scratching something bumping under the skin. Budding sexuality.

I wasn't so innocent that I didn't know what the tapes were. I took them one at a time into my closet, flipped the lock, and watched them with the sound level at 1: loud enough to hear the moans, but low enough that no one outside my closet could. I felt dirty afterward. I'd rewind the tape to whatever

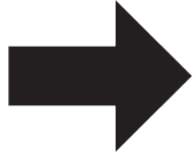
position it was in when I popped it in, paranoid of the embarrassment of being caught.

When I couldn't steal the porn, I turned to creative writing. I had begun to write short erotic stories about convening in a storage room with another young woman, reclining on sacks of flour as we explored each other. I was pretty sure I wasn't a lesbian; I was just fantasizing. In the garage, I found my older sister's things that she couldn't schlep all the way to Hawaii, where she lived in a tent reeking of patchouli. In her crates, I found *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the feminist FUBU of women's health. I was interested in the chapters on sexuality, including frank discussion of masturbation and even personal testimonials from women of their fantasies. My pulse raced as I read about women who desired men, women with strap-ons, men and women at the same time, and missionary sex. I masturbated to the testimonies, too, making sure to put the volume back in the crate under the pile of old schoolwork each time.

Our Bodies, Ourselves said that masturbation and fantasies were normal and, of course, natural. I was a natural woman. I was validated. I was pretty sure it was a "for adults only" thing; the tapes belonged to my parents. I wasn't supposed to look at them. I still felt the guilt that secret thoughts entail, but I at least knew that some people knew I wasn't a weirdo, that I wasn't obsessed with sex.

Of course, I wasn't grown enough to know that loving women outside of my closet wasn't as easy as fantasizing about them, and loving dudes was not as complicated, but just as difficult. I didn't know that just not mentioning it was the same thing as being closeted. The wide world of sexuality blew off my closet doors, but I still put a lock on the door to the outside.

I sleep with the door open now. I'm not sure there's even a lock on my bedroom door, my closet still has no door, and my life spills out all over the house.



El Reparador Ashley F. Underwood

The Wordsmith as Worldsmith in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

Jessica C. Lao

Court against country, mind against body, even truth itself against fiction—in a play filled with dualities, perhaps none is so encompassing as that of action and passivity in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. As its characters struggle to impact and even define reality, this interplay of thought and action frames their interactions with the world, before being ultimately refined by Rosalind's synthesis of the two through language. In fact, as an intermediary between the mental and the physical, linguistic performance comes to claim greater creative power—of worlds, genders, bonds—than either. Indeed, in a work that delights in fiction as much as truth, Shakespeares' and his heroines' creations testify to the triumph of language in shaping reality more effectively than either crude action or ideas alone.

Nowhere is the play's reproof of unacted thought or thoughtless action more stark than in the ineffectual extremes of Jaques and Touchstone. Dismissed by 19th-century critic William Hazlitt as Shakespeare's "only purely contemplative character," Jaques and his passive obsession with the "abstract truth" (Hazlitt 547-48) evoke a mock transcendence at the price of earthly bonds, like the love he deems Orlando's "worst fault" (3.2.286). Perhaps unsurprisingly, his final abandonment of community to muse inwardly with ascetics highlights his spurning of not only action, but even the communication required to cause outward change (5.4.190-191). Tellingly, this pure cerebral detachment fails to promise any happiness but that of uncertain pursuit—not to mention that even the much-mulled pessimism behind that chase may be simply disproven by examples like "good old man" Adam, who finds peers and music in times of weakness (2.7.208). Contrasting such isolation in one's own mind, Shakespeare blasts the action-centered, less melancholy but vapidly physical alternative in lines like Touchstone's "from hour to hour we ripe and ripe, / and...rot and rot" (2.7.28). Though lacking Jaques' pseudo-intellectual

solemnity, this libertine abandonment of any higher thought than pleasure still by no means equals satisfaction. Banal in the physical and even chronically regular sense, its adherents' ripening meets only a rotting end that—like Jaques' confinement to his head—offers neither happiness nor meaning from affecting others, much less from asserting one's own vision for happiness onto the world. After all, differences in route aside, both fools end up in a bleak isolation sealed by Touchstone's "two month" marriage to dull Audrey (5.4.201). For all its earthly "realism" compared to Jaques, even that lusty courtship proves ineffective at winning real love or happiness from the world, only confirming the mind-/body-obsessed pair as poor at communication and out of touch with reality in multiple ways.

As much as the supporting cast fails to communicate or act on their surroundings, Rosalind excels at both tasks, and she reveals the play's inextricable link between the two in the process. Seen in her comparatively successful marriage and scorn at Touchstone's "rotten" idea of love, Rosalind's actions clearly hold more of both tactical thought and romantic ideals than those of the dissolute fool (3.2.120). However, more than evincing a greater initiative to act than Jaques', her verbal interventions like urging Phoebe to "look on [Silvius] better" mark Rosalind's wit as the conduit of not just her own courtship, but many other otherwise stagnant ones in the play (3.5.82). In the same vein, after Rosalind's promise to unite all with magic, the stalemated lovers' thrice-repetitions of "it is to be all...and so am I" (5.2.88-89) and "if this be so, why blame you me to love you?" allude to her linguistic magic in more ways than literally resembling the chants of a spell (5.2.8-10). Whether in correcting Phoebe, guiding Orlando, or simply calling everyone to their weddings with those very "incantations," Rosalind fulfills her magician's promise with the magic of her linguistic translation of thought into action—a virtual creation of love. Thus, out of the extremes of ascetic introspection and base action arises the synthesis of language. Limited to neither mind nor body, at the heart of *As You Like It's* dualities is this most productive intermediary embodied by the witty and cross-dressing Rosalind.

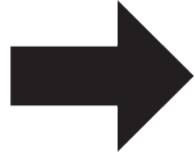
Interestingly, in Rosalind's veiled courtship of Orlando, that same creation of love parallels her words' creation of entire genders and identities. Just as her speech represents both union and translation of idea into action, her verbal ruses as the male Ganymede draw on ideas of gender construction to reinforce her depiction of language's creative power. From her very first donning of male disguise, Rosalind's observation of how "mannish cowards" derive masculinity from "swashing and...martial [outsides]" introduces the idea of manhood as an act (1.3.127-128). Indeed, mirroring Shakespeare's own creation of Arden and the play itself, gender—like many relationships in the story—becomes something of a linguistic product that Rosalind creates and maintains with

characteristic verbal finesse, bidding all to “call me Ganymede” before advising lovers through her male identity (1.3.132). In fact, though some may dismiss her creation of gender as more image-based than word, Rosalind’s traitorously “pretty” form as Ganymede mitigates any physical presentation’s contribution to her ruse (3.5.120). In this way, just as her verbal facilitation of love testifies to the power of language, so too does Rosalind’s creation of a male identity illustrate the power of words to build entire aesthetic realities.

Of course, if to act is also to be perceived and judged, it follows that the audience, too, has a voice in the moral judgment of any performance—*As You Like It* proves no exception. In the realm of Arden, however, there is no truth or lie scrutinized as closely as the freedom of creation itself. After all, when linguistic performance can create a new reality, the need to choose between reality and fantasy is diminished in a sense; Thomas MacFarland of Shakespeare’s Pastoral Comedy characterizes love as a mistaking of reality, but in a play that offers few consequences to penalize such a mistake, one may just as well have crafted a new reality instead to enjoy (117). From Touchstone’s celebration of the truest poetry as the most “feigning” or “fain-ing”/preferable, to this entire work of fiction’s endurance in the modern canon, the idea of creation as great—a trait perhaps less debatable than its virtue—abounds in nearly every judgment around the play (3.3.18-19). Indeed, when the curtain drops, regardless of Shakespeare’s or Ganymede’s success at a form of world-building, one might say that *As You Like It* celebrates fantasy not in literally becoming reality, but in being created to be indulged in at all.

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Apocalips Blake Lavergne

Departure

Kimberly Lee

Swallows migrate annually in search of food and a more hospitable locale, escaping oppressive environmental conditions that are unfavorable to their survival. -The Ornithology Primer by Albrecht Culpepper

My shoe box contains no shoes. It's lined with wax paper, doubled over, and folded along the edge. Food for the colored train car. Three pieces of fried chicken, three biscuits, corn on the cob, two slices of pound cake. The girls have boxes too. Carrie wanted drumsticks—like most children. I gave her two, plus a thigh.

The whole thing was Noah's idea. He came home one night from the field with a wrinkled flyer: "California Jobs for Negroes." A few of his buddies were going. He wanted to go, see what it was, get settled, set everything up. In one month's time, I would follow him out there with the girls.

Noah is a proud man, maybe too proud. But I like that. He looks every man straight in the eye, no matter what color. He talks back, stands firm on his feet. I've heard the word as we pass by on the road. "Uppity." The night riders know who he is, where we live. They came by our house and he raised his shotgun, shot high into the air. No one was hurt, but I knew that if he stayed, he would be. He left town deep in the night.

Noah said he first noticed me on a Palm Sunday. I was in the choir stand, singing "I'll Fly Away." He said, "it wasn't my favorite hymn then, but it is now." Do birds fly at night? I'm sure some do. When they need to.



Swallows quickly adapt to their habitat at the migratory site, thriving on abundant food sources and congenial surroundings. This newfound stability serves to instigate participation in typical avian behaviors such as nesting and preening. -The Ornithology Primer by Albrecht Culpepper

Back home I taught in the woods. One big room. My girls, plus J.C. who was 13, and Edna who was 7, and Douglas who was 9, and Lottie who was 5, and Willie who was 11 and a half. Plus 13 others. We got the school district's scraps—books with missing pages or pages that were scribbled on. One time we got a book that had been gnawed on, like someone had tried to eat it.

I can't teach here, but my girls have new books. They join the Campfire Girls; it meets at a white lady's house across town. They will take piano, or violin.

Noah works on the shipyard, helping build submarines for the war. We sell the vegetables that grow in the yard. I meet Augusta at church. It's my turn to bring home a crinkly flyer: "Women Needed for War Effort."

I arrive on my first day, my hair freshly pressed. Augusta gives me one look and hightails it to her locker. She returns and wraps a scarf around my head, then nods at the helmet in my hands. I put it on, and get to work.

The air is different here. Lighter. It could be that I've never been this close to an ocean, never felt the calm mist tickling my skin. Or maybe this is what it feels like to breathe easy, and free.



Genetic factors and instinctual knowledge are believed to produce a signal, prompting swallows to return to their original home site when conditions are conducive to their existence. -The Ornithology Primer by Albrecht Culpepper

I go back just one time with the girls for my grandmother's funeral. We step off the train and the air settles on my shoulders as if it is full of burdens looking for a fresh place to land.

I need a hat for the service. Nervous, I jangle change around in my hands, waiting for the bus. I step up and pay the fare, then step off and go to the middle door, closest to the colored section. Carrie points to Maddie as I sit down. She's sitting just behind the driver, not noticing the ugly stares coming her way. I get her and bring her to the back. Now I know why I was nervous.

I say goodbye to my grandmother, wearing the hat that I wasn't allowed to try on. We board the train home, to a place where we will not be asked to live a lesser life.

Soft Bellies Made of Flesh and Stone and Oodles of Love

Christian Riley

Our first child we named Hazel. She is sweet as clay, and when she cries I hear the sound of distant thunder followed by the displacement of moist gravel. She cannot walk yet, but already she has learned to explore the world with her hands, and possibly her mind. I sense this in her actions, such as when she moves her body toward the east, as the morning sun rises. Or when she laughs, while playfully throwing sand and pebbles high into the air. Her skin has the feel of chipped granite, with the exception of her stomach, which is soft as soapstone. This lovely child preceded our second and last child, Milo. In every way he is identical to his sister, excluding his cry, which is almost always sudden and distressing. It's as if Milo knows he is in constant threat of being crushed under the weight of the world. Or under the weight of his own making.

Both of my children were born faceless, save for a mouth. They have no eyes, or nose, or even ears, for that matter. Nor do they have any hair. Their bodies are clean slates of stone, with soft, fleshy stomachs—a single characteristic that I still find puzzling. But what would life be without something to ponder? I tell myself this every day as I blindly brush my cheek against their soft bellies, and feel the warmth in their pulsing lives.



I have come to learn that there is much to see when one's eyes have been sewn shut. Before my thirtieth birthday I voluntarily did this. I used a fishbone needle and catgut thread, and I closed them up. I was tired of seeing the world spin around me, with me somehow in the center—the center of the universe, for all that that did not matter. I found the vertigo of my life impossible to bear. It was stifling. I couldn't breathe. Watching the world spin through the motions of its expectations kept me feeling suffocated and nauseous. So what else was I to do?

I put an end to the madness, that's what I did.
And only then did I find the beat to my heart.

So then, does it really matter—how we made our
children?

I am asked the same thing over and over, “How is it that
you...made babies with that?” They are words never left unsaid.
Insufferable words with insufferable tones, quick to make my ears
bleed.

Does it matter? I would reply.

And then, somewhere, an echo in the clouds, perhaps—DOES IT?

Does anything matter when a bond is sealed by unadulterated affection?
Does it matter, when there is love between two separate, yet consenting
species? A love that is pressed together and cemented through the fissure of
flesh and stone—of dust and blood.



I had to learn how to walk again, blind and all. It's true what they say, your
other senses picking up the slack where your eyes had left off. I got real good
with using my hands, my sense of touch. I *felt* my way into this world now, my
fingers and elbows and shoulders pushing and gliding a path through obstacles.
The world feels different, somehow. It has always felt this way, I suppose, but
one never knows how anything truly feels when their eyes are holding them
up, crutch-like. It's a strange sensation—a true perspective—when you have
to rely on your feelings. And your feelings—well, they draw a path straight to
your heart. Sure, I have my other senses. But stone doesn't have much of an
odor, and you certainly can't hear it. You can feel it, though. And you can taste
it. *Is it an acquired taste?* one might ask. I wouldn't know. I've been in love with
the flavor since the moment I pressed my tongue onto it.

But the world, it is different now from anything I have discovered, of this,
I am certain. And with this knowledge now buried under my skin, every day
that passes is a blessed reassurance, a confirmation of the day in which I closed
the world up. I will never go back, content as I am.

That said, there is a bitter agony that plays onto my mind's eye, and
this agony is called “memory”. Memory, in this case, is the jaded images that
my eyes have left me with. These orbs are relentless, so it seems. While left
incapacitated, they still see. They have left their mark on me a thousand times
over, and it is an endless war to defeat the impressions burned into my mind.
Because of this, I almost let slip by all that is beautiful.

My hands were the first to discover him, and I am thankful for that.
Through my other senses, I had already gathered a clear understanding of
the surrounding atmosphere. I heard the chorus of song birds acquainted
only with the quiet breast of solitude. I smelled a labyrinth of pine trees.
With my skin, I felt the rawness of land. I was on the outskirts perhaps, or

maybe deep in the wilderness. (Does it matter?) And when, perchance, my hands brushed across his chest—chiseled muscles and the rough texture of such flesh—I became enthralled. With fingers I found his face, discovered its impressions and features, and his everlasting expression. With body, I explored his angles and curves. I sensed his loneliness too, and I immediately understood this as our first form of cohesion.

There have never been any words spoken between us, such beauty therein lies. And I refrained from hauling this stone masterpiece home with me, more out of respect than as a statement of complication. He does not even have a name. But every day I am with this piece of earth. And every day they come, and watch, as we admire our creations.



Nothing about any of this has been simple, despite my sometimes euphoric tone. It is not easy to seal away one's vision. And it is more difficult to transpire among a world while left sightless. Even worse is the effort to overcome the inherent stigmas that have risen against my bold actions. Apparently, not one soul has understood my choice to close my eyes against the world. And, as of yet, so it seems, no one has embraced a marriage between the animate and inanimate. Most of the world remains perplexed, roaming with their deceitful eyes, speechless, albeit curious over the oddities of my life.

The irony is that those who have been closest to me are the ones who accept my choices the least. Strangers, who are quick to lay out such wide distances, at once become symbolic to the acknowledgment of my marriage—for better, or for worse. But my family calls me a freak. They announce my relationship as an act of blasphemy. Our children—abominations.

How can you treat me this way? I had once asked. How can you treat them like this?

Does it matter—now that you are dead to us? was their reply. As dead as that rock you profess to love. As dead as those lumps of mud you hold dearly.

Does it matter...?

At first, I tried to change their minds. I tried to make them understand. I said, "Listen to their small voices. Listen to them cry." And then I tried to make them feel. I pushed my children into their arms and said, *Here, hold them. Hold your family against your chest, feel their heartbeats. Feel their soft stomachs, which lift and drop the same as yours. Feel them—feel their lives.*

At first, I tried.

But eventually their rejections brought pain onto my children. Around such family, Hazel would become stiff as her father. Immobilized for want of self-preservation, perhaps. I would hold her, and she would sit in my lap and wait, her body positioned outward, as if she could see, and hear, and even

smell the anger working the air around her. But I knew she could feel it. And then Milo, he would just cry. His panicked whimper would grow louder, more piercing, until it became a rift of thunder into my ears, tearing at the fabric of space.

It was painful to hear and feel my children in this state. When I began to understand how they reacted to such hatred—to the words spoken between adults—I was at once reminded of why I closed my eyes against the world. And, like I had done before, with ritualistic fervor I took Desperate Measure into my hands and I smeared its yellow entrails over my face and across my chest, into my mouth and ears, and then I murdered my family, the same as they did to me.

It might be true that the most staggering form of punishment is to withhold one's love. Especially when the subject of this punishment is accustomed to such reward. This was the poison I used to kill my family, and theirs was a slow and agonizing death. I will not say that this brought joy to my life, only that it was instrumental at lifting away so much weight. Killing them worked. I achieved my objective, and for now, my children are safe. For now, Hazel laughs much like she ever did, and Milo's cries are less painful to hear.

But under this volume of silence which always succeeds death, I am again reminded of those insufferable words I still hear every day. And, like always, I answer the same question with another—*Does it matter?*

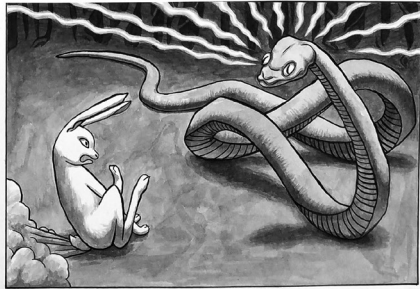
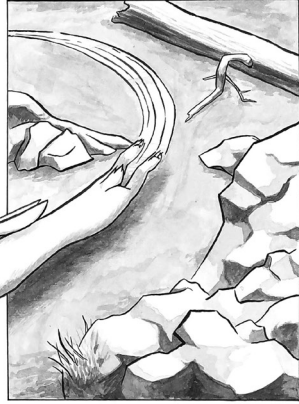
DOES IT?

The truth of it is that no, it doesn't matter. None of anything matters, now that I've reached this final, resonating point in life: the nadir of my existence, as others might suggest; or, the pinnacle of triumph, as I proudly declare. And that pride is what the people shall see, what they *do* see, I so convincingly tell myself, as I press my children deep against my bosom, wrap them tightly with cloth, then blindly fold my arms around our stone pillar, and hold our world closely until we can at last embrace the impending warmth of darkness.

End



Bird Olivia K. Howard



Self Sabotage Kathryn D. Johnston

Mana

Kirby Wright

PUKO'O WAS A DISASTER. The project was an eyesore with its sand and coral hills, stacks of diesel cans, and lava mounds from the ancient wall. The Sam Fong sign was riddled with bullet holes from passing motorists. My father threatened to sue Fong for missing deadlines. He was also furious because the construction boss had neglected to cut a trench that would have prevented storms from turning the highway into a raging river. It wasn't long before Fong waved the white flag and fled to Hong Kong with his mistress. Dadio took advantage: he purchased all the heavy equipment at auction, including dump trucks, end loaders, a crane, and the dredge. He rented the equipment to Matayoshi Limited, a Kaunakakai company the Canadians paid to mop up.



My big brother Troy and I continued our sojourns to Moloka'i on alternate weekends. I detested being alone with my father. It was as if he were a magnifying glass that focused the power of the sun on me. My weekend rolled around and soon I was flying over the channel with Dadio. Our Cessna sailed over a kiawe forest and touched down at Hoolehua Airport. I lugged out a box of tools for the dredge and my father cradled a roll of meshed polyurethane meant for his waterfall. His vision was to transform the fishpond into a sprawling resort with pools, tennis courts, and Polynesian bungalows. He quick-stepped toward the gates and I did my best to keep up.

My grandmother was waiting behind Gate #1 wearing her ranch clothes and cowboy boots. She had on her grouchy face. "Early, Buddy," she said.

My father's face was ruddy. "Pilot forgot our damn luggage," he told her. "Fo' the luva Pete," she frowned. "Wheah the bloody hell is it?"

"Back in Honolulu."

Dadio berated the counter girl, demanding our luggage be driven out to the ranch when it arrived. She paged our pilot and he reassured us the bags arrive no later than the next morning.

My father snatched the keys from Gramma and I followed him out to the lot. We stuck our supplies in the Scout's bed and Gramma slid into the cab. I

hopped up on the bumper and swung in my legs in as the engine roared to life. We shot out into the adjacent pineapple fields and I could smell the ripe fruit. I pressed my ear to the rear window: my father's rant about Puko'o was laced with foul words. My grandmother looked small and weathered. The wrinkles in her face went deep and her skin was the color of old newspaper. She pulled a cigarette from her pack, lit it, and nodded as my father cursed.



Lupe barred its teeth when we rolled up the incline fronting the beach house. My father climbed out and raced off for the pastures to inspect Valdez's work. Lupe jogged alongside him. Dadio had always been that dog's favorite, even though he rarely petted him.

I followed my grandmother in. She had me wait in the parlor and disappeared into her bedroom. She returned wearing a housedress made of thin yellow fabric and white terrycloth slippers.

"Nee help in da kitchen, Peanut."

I broke ice cubes free of their trays and poured kibble from a bag into a plastic garbage can. "Weak as a bloody cat," she said, handing me a pickle jar she couldn't open. I wonder if her decline coincided with signing over her land to my father in exchange for his promise of \$500-a-month. I figured she felt guilty for not splitting her ahupua'a equally between her boys.

Dadio joined us in the kitchen. "Your Valdez's is one lazy buggah," he told his mother. He rifled through the cupboards and gave Gramma a tongue-lashing for not buying enough gin. He scolded her out for being too lenient with Valdez. She remained silent. She'd told me his tirades were "just blowin' off steam" and said she'd learned the hard way never to challenge him.



After chop suey dinner on the lanai, we retreated in the parlor. This was the largest room in the beach house, one doubling as a living room and guest bedroom. It was decorated with an eclectic mix of art, everything from a copper Chinese cistern to hand-stitched murals of peacocks and roosters. A color TV played *This Is Tom Jones* against the far wall. I sprawled out on the pun'e that I once shared with Gramma and my brother small kid time. Dadio dropped into his Lazy Boy. He swilled a martini from a water glass, resting the glass on an end table with a marble top. Gramma sat on a cushioned chair on the western side of her picture frame window. Every morning, she'd camp here and survey the pastureland up to the red scar of road that led to her mountain house. I knew she didn't like me much because she felt my mother had spoiled me. She'd enjoy telling me stories about my father's horrific childhood when he wasn't in earshot, things he'd admitted during his boyhood summers with

her. Perhaps she felt that, by sharing these agonies, I'd wake up and vow to be more like him.

Gramma smoked through a chrome holder. She had to suck hard to fill her lungs with smoke because a filter captured most of the tar and nicotine. She made up for the lost drug by lighting up more. She tapped her cigarette against a copper can on the table and knocked the ashes off. "Why aren't you in da Olympics, Kirby?" she asked.

"I'm lousy at sports."

My father shook his glass and the cubes rattled. "Ha," he said, "I know the real reason."

"Wot's dat, Buddy?"

"Kid's gotta lazy streak a mile wide."

My grandmother dangled her holder down between puffs. "Heard yo' grades are terrible," she told me.

"I get 'Bs' and 'Cs.'"

"Don't you study?"

"Yeah, I study lots."

Dadio lifted his leg and farted. "No good college would want 'im."

"Christ, wot'll the keed do?"

"Be a clerk."

I sat up on the pune'e. "What do clerks make?"

"Nothing," Dadio answered.

"Isn't Mom's brother a clerk at Mass Envelope?"

"Yeah. That's why your Uncle Harold lives in a tiny apartment with no family and only a cat for company. He constantly begs your mother for money."

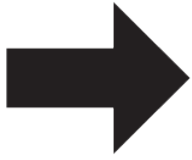
Gramma tapped more ashes in the can. "Puah Peanut won't have a pot to pee in."

They loved teeing off on me. I didn't know what inspired their humiliation game about me but I guessed it had happened to them when they were kids. It must have made them feel good running me down.

Gramma switched gears. She accused Troy of being "a pakalolo fiend" because his eyes were always glassy when he was up. "How's that big horse?" she asked, referring to my mother. She called my kid sis Jen "a skeleton" and said she'd heard the big horse dragged the skeleton all over town to shop. Dadio never challenged these attacks. Instead, he called Troy "a bum and a mahu" and my mother "a shopaholic." He told Gramma that Jen ate with her mouth open and "smacked her lips like a pig." Gramma sucked hard. She blew out a cloud of smoke from her nose and it rolled over the table.



Saturday was always barbecue day. My father told me to stand and watch over the hibachi after lighting the fire. The LA Rams, my favorite team, were



El Cruce Ashley F. Underwood

playing his San Francisco 49ers in the parlor. We'd just returned from Puko'o. Going to the project was excruciating because all Dadio did was hunt down problems. He'd discovered a dredge with a shattered steel jaw, drums leaking diesel, and that the ditch hadn't been cut deep enough to prevent run-off from leaking on the public road.



I snuck onto the lanai and peeked in at the game through the screen door. Dadio was gulping Miller High Life in his Lazy Boy while Gramma sat in her usual spot by the window. The 49ers fumbled and the Rams recovered. "Chrissakes," he said.

"That Brodie's got buttah fingahs," Gramma said.

"Go, Ramies!" I cheered.

Dadio turned. "I told you to watch that fire."

"It'll be okay."

"Get back out there."

"I can watch the game and the fire, at the same time."

"You heard me."

"Listen to yo' fathah, Peanut," Gramma warned.

My heart pounded. "The 49ers suck raw eggs," I blurted, "and so do you."

Dadio slammed down his bottle, flung open the screen door, and charged down the steps after me. I escaped through an open storm window as he charged for the back door. I fell when my rubber slipper struck a root. My father lunged at me but I rolled away and got to my feet. I sprinted through the naupaka. Lupe ran beside me down to the beach while my father plowed through the naupaka. He gave chase over the sand.

"Stop," Dadio said, "you goddamn coward!"

I quit running. I was fourteen and small for my age but the time had come. I spotted a thick kiawe branch lined with thorns, picked it up, and swung it like a bat. "Let's go, Dadio."

My father stopped ten feet away and was breathing hard. We were about the same height but he outweighed me by a good forty pounds. Most of his extra weight was fat, not muscle. His glasses slipped down over his nose and he pushed them back up. He looked vulnerable in an undershirt with holes, stained shorts, and old man leather sandals. He straightened his back. "Now put that down, Kirby," he said. "That's not a fair fight."

"You're bigger than me."

"Hit me with that and I'll lambaste you."

I swung viciously. "Come and get some."

He spun around and headed back.

"Look who's the coward now," I called.

He parted the naupaka and disappeared into the smoke rising off the hibachi. I stuck my slippers on a boulder and dug my toes in the warm sand. I ached for a showdown. I wanted to go back in time and beef my father when we were both fourteen. Instead of boxing or wrestling, we'd fight to the death in a steel cage. I threw down the kiawe, picked up my slippers, and headed east. Lupe came with me. The high tide line was marked by limu, shards of plastic, and broken shells. Sand fleas jumped up on my bare legs. I hated myself. If only I could run strong and feel free, unencumbered by self-doubt and unfulfilled longings. I wanted to be bright and worth something, not trapped between boy and man. I was half-man, a soul struggling to make sense of the world by learning how to fight back. I wished it was the 21st Century and my teen years were far behind me. Would I ever marry? I didn't want to end up alone and living by the sea. If I was meant to live a life without love, I vowed to move to a big city like New York so I'd be a stranger to everyone. Part of me had broken away from my father, the part that knew he hated me.

Lupe chased after a plover. The bird flew along the shore before heading out to sea. A cigar-shaped bar of sand lay warm and dry above the waves spilling over the reef. I knew the bar would soon be gone but I liked how it defied the rising tide.

I followed the edge of the ironwood forest east to Kainalu Stream, where a sand wedge dammed its mouth. An aquamarine channel reached into the harbor and cut through the reef. This was where fresh water seeped into the ocean and killed the coral. Sharks and ulua followed it to reach the small fish schooling in the shallows.

I waded out to the sand bar and gazed back as tiny waves erased my prints. I frightened a blue crab on the bar and it spread its claws. Here was the magic spot, the place my father had me drop my bait all those years ago.

I returned to shore. Lupe whined through his nose and trotted home. I put on my slippers and entered the forest. Needles and tiny pinecones crunched beneath me. I spotted a boy and a girl on the banks of the stream. He dipped his spear in the tea-colored water.

"No mo' fish low tide," said the girl, "only get crab."

"We go reef," the boy suggested.

I reached Chipper's shack, a collection of driftwood, irregular pieces of lumber, and corrugated steel panels orange with rust. He'd owned Hale Kawaikapu in the beginning but lost his kala chasing women and binging on booze. Gramma had made the mortgage payments from money earned driving cattle and weaving lauhala. The divorce papers had given her all the land in exchange for Chipper's life estate and enough money for a house. He'd built a cozy bungalow with bay windows but he burned it down smoking in bed.

I ducked under a laundry cord strung between papaya trees. The ax side of a pickax was stuck in the ground, the pick facing up. Coconut husks were scattered around. Chipper stood in a patch of jasmine wearing jeans and a green cap. His chest was raw from the sun. He held a rattrap in one hand and a hunk of coconut meat in the other.

“Howzit, Uncle Chipper?”

He studied the trap. “Tell Gramma dat tripe stew stay ono.”

“Sure. Catching any rats?”

“Not yet. Gunfunnit mongoose keep stealin’ da bait.” He attached the meat to the barb on the trap’s trigger. “Dat local outfit doin’ good job Puko’s side?”

“My father says they’re all lazy.”

Chipper pulled a length of catgut from his pocket and wound it around the hooked meat. He cut the catgut by sawing it with his teeth. “Dem buggahs born lazy,” he replied.

I said good-bye. I could tell part of my uncle wished he’d never left Gramma. I scurried past a dump that smelled like death and reached the old ironwood tree hunters used to butcher deer. I headed north through a pili grass pasture, crossed the public road, and entered a valley thick with kiawe. I found the stonewall that marked the eastern edge of our ahupua’a.

The pungent aroma of guava made me recall previous summers. I remembered hiking with my father and two boys named Mercury and Dodge. All of their siblings were named after cars, even the girls. The boys had led us up to the falls and hiked back down with us. They’d been great escorts. “Aloha now, boys,” Dadio’d said when we all reached the public road. They’d watched us slip through the fence line and our mares amble over to greet us, including my father’s prize Arabian. “I like one dollah!” Mercury’d called from the road, his fingers clutching the top strand of wire. “Me too!” Dodge had chimed in. My father’d stuck his hands in his pockets, pulled out the white linings, and said, “No mo’ dollah.” I had the urge to run ahead and return with money but lost my nerve watching my father march for the beach house with his head down. I’d heard a mare whine and looked back—the boys were pelting the Arabian with stones.

I followed the wall up. Clouds hid the sun. A stream raced by. The yellow lilikoi on the ground looked like tennis balls. I reached a web of ferns and pulled back on a frond. There, carved on the face of a lava boulder, was a petroglyph of a warrior. His body was thick with muscle and his legs were spread wide, as if he were claiming the universe. Rays of power erupted from each bicep and fused over his head. He was the Rainbow Warrior, a godlike fighter who’d never lost in battle. I envied his strength and power.

I asked the gods for mana.



African Affinity Mask

Giselle M. Strauss

November 8, 2016

Monk Zhang

I don't have to watch TV today.
It's a quiet night
at Big Sur Lodge, and luckily,
I find no TV or wifi
in my room.

But I know it is happening
when I hear them talking
about Michigan
by their truck
with the radio on.

I take a walk; I call my parents.
I tell them my road trip
is wonderful.

I turn on the radio; I turn it off.
I don't quite understand
what they are talking about.

Next morning the radio plays
a sad song by Dinah Washington.
She said she could kill the man
and get on an express train.

And I need nobody to tell me
Leonard Cohen is dead
and a new president is born
as I drive towards San Simeon.

Las calles de Sacramento

p joshua laskey

Necesito oír a los espíritus
y la historia
y la historia de los espíritus
que frecuentan los lugares mismos que yo frecuento
para aparecerme en este lugar
yo mismo
para vivir
para morar

para trasladarme por
los caminos y los callejones
como una vez lo hicieron
para trasladarles
los cuentos
de la manera en lo que llegamos a la confluencia
como una vez lo hicieron
para trasladárlesme
la sombra a los fantasmas
como una vez lo hicieron
para vivir
para morar

para dejarles esta morada
a los allegados y queridos
para ser humano a los que después
frecuentarán los lugares mismos que yo frecuento
las almas gemelas que después
oirán después de que yo oigo
a los espíritus
y la historia

y la historia de los espíritus
para vivir
para morar

cuántas bellotas llegaron a ser robles
cuántas llegaron a ser polvo
cuántas se pulverizaron en comida
cuántas se pulverizaron en el suelo
debajo de nuestros pies

cuántas conchas antiguas constituyen la tierra
cuántos flujos de lava constituyen los campos

cuánto serrín y cuánto polvo astral
construyeron el fuerte
cuántos polvos de oro y de carbón
construyeron el pueblo

cuánto sudor chino
y cuánta sangre mexicana
y cuántas lágrimas japonesas

cuántos mayores licenciados
y mineros cobrados de más
y cuántos vástagos
de esclavos agotados

cuánto cautiverio
y cuánto drenaje
cuántos ponis de carne y caballos de hierro
jadeando y soplando

para cultivar almendras y aceitunas y naranjas
para rapar el arroz
para producir tomates
para generar generaciones

cuántos míwok andaban por aquí
cuántos maidu se conformaban con acá
cuántas carretadas y barcadas
y monturas y suelas
se gastaban
y se desgastaban
para crear espíritus
y la historia
y una historia de espíritus
para vivir
para morar

necesito oír

necesito hacerlo
en este lugar

Assassination Nation

Donel Arrington

It's just 50 years
since they murdered
Bobby Kennedy
and
Martin Luther King, Jr.
for trying to help the poor
the brown
the oppressed
workers
victims of war.

And people wonder why things are
the way that they are
why homeless camps and
foreclosures?
medical bills
police shootings
school shootings
mental health crises
epidemic addiction
rape
of bodies
and land?

Why corporations get tax cuts
and bonuses
while school lunch,
music, education, and
hunger programs get cut.

How nobody really gives
a shit unless they're hurting

feeling pain, the strain of
economic insecurity.

People wonder why—
say it's 2018, aren't
we supposed to be
past this by now?
'I can't believe
that this could be
happening'—

Nazis in the street?
KKK viral tweets?

Not knowing your own
recent history
is as lazy as it
is dumb.

If we're to become "woke"
we've got to first wake up to
and remember the past—

Mi Casa Linda

Carlos Corona Jr.

Mi casa linda it is a place in my heart put there
By dreams of my parents chasing something we might never have
It is bright and sunny and warm and safe
No more moving or running
No more going place to place
Mi casa no existe
Yo soy el moreno correteado de casa a casa
Apartamento a apartamento despreciado por mi color
Odiado por mi orgullo nunca parando de reconocer de donde soy
Ni quien yo soy. El más indio de todos no más no menos soy
Quien soy
Mi madre mi orgullo mi pais mi corazón mi familia preciada
El pelionero del barrio el albañil de Pachuca
El Pachuco más orgulloso más bravo
I am a wetback, an alien, a frijolero it's true--I am who I am and proud of it
too
Mi casa no existe
Pero mi familia es todo so no ocupo donde vivir si mi familia está
Conmigo yo feliz vivo.

Crossing Boundaries

Andrena Zawinski

We tip wine glasses to Paris, Bastille Day,
whirl and twirl each other across the walk,
swing into the street, two women travelers,
smiling and laughing until the hems of our skirts
are singed by firecrackers tossed at our feet
by men demanding dances we would not give.

Women in hijabs pull us into a cloistered corner
of sisters inside La Belle Equipe, encircle us,
show us how to position hands, stretch out arms,
as if to push away looming shadows
of their guardians and husbands, crossing
boundaries of differences for what we share—

where years later extremists with Kalashnikovs
would spray bullets into the crowd along that same
Rue de la Charonne—a sidewalk to turn altar
of flowers, candles, sentiments, and tears,
women embracing each other, trying to hold
the world together—in courage and fear.

Winner of The Redwood Empire Mensa
Award for Creative Non Fiction

La Porta D'Oro

Christina H. Dunbar

Basato Sulla Storia Di Mio Nonno

**Note: This story contains depictions of violence.
Reader discretion is advised.**

Joseph woke up to an earth-shattering clap of thunder.
“*Mio Dio in cielo*” cried his father lying next to him.

Despite having four members of the family, there were only two beds for the several week trip from Sicily to New York City. Joseph sat upright, knocking his head on the bunk over him with an audible thud. “*Merda!*” he muttered under his breath, only to receive a slap across his back for swearing.

He twisted his legs over the pathetic cushion they called a bed and looked up. His little brother was puking into a bucket due to the rocking of the boat. The sound of retching was not as bad as the metallic clanging of his sick splattering on the bottom. It was rank and smelt of spoiled goats’ milk. Joseph was intimately aware of that smell because he long ago left a jug out in the sun for several days. He had paid for it with a beating to his backside from his mother’s rolling pin.

“*Vado a fare una passeggiata,*” he called over his shoulder as his feet rested on the damp floor. It was hard to tell if the floor was moist because of a leak, bodily fluids or a combination of the two. Soothing his internal reflexes, he pretended he was walking on the beach instead. Pacing the ship at night was idyllic. You got to see everyone when they were in their most vulnerable state; small, alone, and sleeping. Even the biggest bully on the ship, a former mafioso who went by the name ‘*Un Occhio*’ slept like a little boy. But he did keep his hands on a visible gun.

Tonight, it quickly became obvious that not everyone was finding rest. The water was choppy, leaning the boat violently one way or the other. The loud clanging of what sounded like hail sized raindrops made such a cacophony it could drive a man. Several children were up; lighting matches and quietly trying to play cards or jacks without waking their parents. A slight boy who was an outcast by the others for his strawberry marked face, played ball against a wall alone.

"*Questo è il marchio del diavolo,*" he had heard his father say under his breath when he first observed him at the docks.

Pity swelled in his heart for the poor child. He knew what it was like to be alone. Joseph dared not talk to him for fear of experiencing a beating worse than a sleepy assault on the back. Wincing at the thought of it, he moved on.

Further along, the smells and sounds of other passengers throwing up or shitting themselves were pungent and clear. One frail older man who had been sweating for two days straight, was crying to God for land. He was doing this trip alone, sent for by his son. He was lucky, it was not unusual for split families to never see each other again.

A woman with her head buried under a black scarf, was crying silently for a lost child.

The baby once had an insatiable cry that pierced the air at all hours. For days it screamed in pain, not taking to milk or food. Joseph's own mother attempted one of her superstitious rituals on the baby. Stealing an egg from the pantry she kneaded it along the child's body, begging God to remove the curse. It was useless, and a few days later the pathetic thing closed its mouth one last time, quiet at last. The mother had held on to that corpse as long as she could, not willing to admit her child was dead. But a mutiny to throw it overboard had been successful. She asked for a priest to recite a blessing, but it was no use. The baby would not be buried in hallowed ground and would remain in purgatory forever. At least they didn't have to listen to it cry.

They were all suffering on this journey to America. "*Cos'è l'America?*" Joe frequently thought to himself. No one they had known had ever come back from America, yet everyone wanted to go. He approached the end of the passengers hold and sat on an soggy barrel. Out of a microscopic window he could see the moonlight peeking through the dense clouds.

"*L'America è la terra delle opportunità!*" his father had exclaimed when he initially told the family about it. "*In America, tutti possono trovare un lavoro! In America, non devi rispondere alla mafia! In America, possiamo avere la vita che Dio ha programmato per noi!*"

America. America was the land God had promised them. The land where they could work and not pay the mafia for protection, because the police would defend them. Where no one

would discriminate against them for being Sicilian. Yet, what they had to do to get to America. Scraping up every *lira* they could find. Selling off their animals and possessions. Performing risky jobs from *mafiosos* for payment. Even then, they could die merely trying to immigrate.

"Non ho mai visto una foto dell'America" Joseph thought. If he had never seen it, how could he know it was real and not mythical?

Joseph stood up and stretched. The waters were calming and maybe now he could get some sleep. As he turned, a small glint flashed in the slice of moonlight from the window. A coin twinkled from underneath the edge of the barrel. He assumed it must have been left there from a previous group of people. Picking it up he realized he had never seen this type of money before. So many people were traveling, taking to the seas to find their future it could have been from anywhere. Rotating it in his hand he read "United States of America." His first piece of American money. Pocketing it he headed down the makeshift hallway in the hold.

Everyone was slowly drifting off except for the little boy with the ball. He sat with his head in his hands looking somber. After surveying the area to see if anyone was looking, Joseph quickly bent to one knee and pulled out the American money. He forced the boys head up and put the coin in his hand.

"Per dolci in America," he said with a wink.

For the first time in the entirety of their journey, he saw the little boy smile. He rustled the cap on his head affectionately and went back to his bunk. Sliding onto the cushion softly to not disturb the beast he shared it with. "In America," he thought to himself, *"i bambini dimenticati possono comprare dolci."*



Joseph struggled to catch his balance as he rocked on the top rotting stair on the way to the basement. The door slammed loudly whacking him in the backside. Scrambling to find the door handle he pushed back forcefully, but it was useless. He had already heard the haunting and unmistakable sound of his father latching the door behind him.

The worst things about the basement was the unnatural darkness that filled the room. The darkness occupied every inch of space, you could not escape it, and it was suffocating. He extended his hand and touched the exposed brick wall, he could tell where he was on the stairwell by the texture of the brick. Some were covered with a damp, smelly moss that formed from the humidity. Others were bare, cold, and naked.

The only sounds that could be heard in the basement were the loud banging and high-pitched hissing from the ever-faulty water heater. It had been designed to accommodate twenty tenants, not the sixty plus that now lived in the slum apartments. Even with his father's work and the boys dropping out



For Tara Brian Michael Barbeito

of school for odd jobs, it was not enough to escape the squalor. In America there was such an abundance of laborers. Hired to do the jobs other people didn't want for less money. They were "filthy, immigrant laborers" as some politicians called them. Any hope they had of lessening racial tensions had long passed once they stepped off the boat. It was no longer the Italians vs. the Sicilians. Now it was the Jews fighting the Poles, fighting the Irish, fighting the Italians for jobs. Joseph's father rapidly had to learn that in America they didn't care if you were Italian or Sicilian, they lumped you all together. One dream about America, dead.

His hand finally hit a notch he had carved in the crumbling brick a month ago, signaling the end of the descent. By running his hand down the wall, he gently withdrew a loose piece. Wiggling free a wedged box of matches and a lonely cigarette he had bought off a vagrant. He squatted low before lighting up. The taste caused him to feel sick but older, like an adult.

"Thanks for the offer" came a voice from the back of the room. His little brother Pasqual's newly deep voice was still unnerving to hear.

"Where are you?" Joseph asked, his eyes had not and would not adjust to the darkness. The embers from the end of the cigarette only made him more blind.

"Near the table. Some hobo left a blanket here a few weeks back, think it has bugs but it's warm," Pat said nonchalantly.

Joseph spun so he was facing the far wall and counted five steps before his toes hit the base of the water heater. Turning right, he walked ten more paces before the table on the far side made direct contact with the middle of his femur.

"*Minchione fetuso*" he said at the stinging in his leg.

"You're getting too tall, Joe," said Pat.

"*Stronza*" Joseph said back with a snap in his voice.

Pasqual laughed, "the only words you remember in Italian are bad," he said. Joseph sat next to his little brother, passing the lit cigarette to him.

"Well, yeah. Dad would kill me if he heard us speak Italian. You remember what he was like when we got here?"

"We are in America. We speak America now," they said in unison with each other. But it hadn't solely been their father who had the issue with the language. Once on the docks, a shipman had overheard them talking with a friend from the old country. They had been sent home without pay. That was the end of Italian for them. No one could afford not to work.

They sat in silence until the cigarette reached its end. The high-pitched wailing of the heater was joined by a slow dripping of water.

"When did it start today?"

"The second he got home. He came in, poured himself a glass of that putrid dandelion wine and didn't say anything. Just stared at nothing like a

mad man. Mom dropped a glass because she was so scared and that's when he laid into her." Pasqual said vacantly.

"What was he saying?"

"Hell if I know," replied Pat. "I love how we can't remember Italian anymore but the second he gets upset it's all he will speak in. It's like a fucking code now."

"Yeah," Joseph said robotically.

"Nicky and I tried doing that thing where we stack mom against the wall with our bodies, so he can't get to her. But he got in the front and got knocked square in the head before running away."

"Any idea where he went?"

"Your guess is as good as mine, I hope that little man got as far away as possible," said Pat. "I'm used to getting knocked around, but the whole point of the stacking is so he doesn't get hurt either."

There was another pause.

"He's getting worse, isn't he?" said Pat, a tremble in his voice.

"Yeah," said Joseph, staring glassily at the darkness. "Sometimes I ask myself why God is even doing this to us in the first place."

Pat whacked his wrist against his brother's shoulder. "Watch yourself," he snapped, "that's blasphemous!"

"Are you telling the priest?" Joseph said indignantly, before reaching to share a bit of the moldy blanket. They huddled underneath it and Joseph could distinctly feel a beetle run across his hand. "You were right about the bugs," he chuckled.

"Wish I could see them," said Pat, "they could be my pets whenever we are stuck down here." The boy's shared a genuine laugh before falling silent.

Silence was an underlying theme of these frequent visits to the basement. Sometimes they would be too sore to have the energy to speak. Other times they would be so distraught they couldn't find the words for their feelings. On one occasion, Joseph was so tired he fell over in a faint and slept for two days.

"I saw our neighbors the other day, in the hallway, the Pollok," said Pat. "You know, Nowak or whatever their name is? Funny guy. Not much of a talker."

"He probably doesn't want to start trouble. There's no privacy in this place."

"Do you think they can hear mom...you know..."

Joseph waited before responding, "probably," he said, "but that family has enough to worry about without dealing with our father."

The sudden urge to pee brought Joseph to his feet. He stretched a hand out to find where the table ended before counting his four steps to the wash bin they used as a latrine. The smell of several weeks' worth of piss and shit was so overpowering it was an assault on the nostrils. But the stench did help

with making sure one's leak ended up in the bucket and not on the floor.

"We have got to figure out how to clean this out," Joseph said over his shoulder.

"Well, how do you propose we do that?" said Pat.

Shouting and the sudden sound of urine hitting the slosh residing in the bucket awoke a creature in the corner. The movement was small but noticeable. Joseph assumed it was one of their rat friends who lived in the basement when an unmistakable human groan came from the corner.

"Nicky?" he said. "Hey Pat. I think I found Nicky." Joseph walked to the corner, dragging his feet on the ground so he wouldn't inadvertently step on someone or something.

When the toes of his work boots hit a large fleshy mass, he bent down and lit a match.

The light was just enough to see the outline of the face of his youngest brother, with a huge lump on his forehead.

Nicolo had been born eighteen months after their arrival. Even more poor than they were now, his mother had been forced to give birth in the basement of an Italian bakery with no doctor. A rather stern looking Russian woman who lived on their floor assisted her, barking out commands to the rest of the family. Their mother endured a brutal fifteen-hour labor. The primal sounds that came from the basement that night still gave him nightmares. Frail and early by two weeks, no one expected Nicky to make it. Their father even mentioned how convenient it would be if the baby died on its own accord, so it was one less mouth to feed. Both Pat and Joseph took care of the child while their mother recovered. Seeing him after a beating broke Joseph from the inside out.

Defly picking him up, he bore the small boy to be with his brothers. Nicky was breathing, but it was hard to tell if he was unconscious or sleeping. Yet, once his back laid across the laps of Joe and Pat he instinctively cuddled into both of them, as though he knew he was protected.

No one spoke. Pat broke the deafening sound of the child's breathing,

"Do you think Dad knows we are sending him to school instead of having him work?"

Joseph jerked his head vigorously before responding. "No there is no way, I give Nicky money every day on his way home from school to give to Dad." He paused, "he's probably just getting old enough that Dad doesn't care anymore."

"Yeah," said Pat, grimly. "I wish I could go to school. Wasn't that the whole point of us coming here? A better future for us?"

"I don't even know anymore," said Joseph, "but if it was, maybe one of us will get out of this alive; one is better than none."

As they both held their brother closer and settled in for the long night ahead. Joseph whispered with vitriol under his breath.

“Voglio tagliargli la sua fottuta gola.”
“Me too,” replied Pat. “Me too.”



There was an unusual skip to his step today as Joseph made his way down the last turn onto Congress Street. He wasn't quite sure why. It had been a miserable day at the plant. Several of the machines had broken which set them behind production. The owners had made it quite clear how unhappy they were with their workers, threatening to dock pay or lay off people. Unbeknownst to them, the workers had just decided to join the local union. Maybe that's why he couldn't help but smile to himself – he knew that soon there wouldn't be someone who could hold any power over him. In a short time, he would be free.

The brisk Buffalo air stung his face as the colorful leaves fell to the ground. The snow would be coming in and soon the cold would make it impossible to walk to work. Salts on the road would wreak havoc on his prized Chevrolet, but that was a problem for the future.

He liked living in an Italian neighborhood in such a sizable city, though only a fraction of the size of New York City. It instilled in him a sense of community. Plus, you knew exactly where to find Mike after he had embarrassed you at the last Knights of Columbus meeting and give him a piece of your mind.

Even though he knew there was a home cooked dinner waiting for him; something about the cold autumn air caused him to crave pizza, hot wings, and a nice cold beer. Resisting temptation, he stopped in at the local bordello and picked up a soda as a treat for his young son.

“Hiya Steve,” he said to the man behind the counter.

“Hiya Joe! How you been you, old son of a gun?” replied the man with an overly jovial smile on his face matching his large beer belly.

“Oh, you know, same old, same old. At least we are on this side of the grass!” They chuckled that deep, full bodied laugh that only dads know how to make.

“Heard your youngest is going to St. Martin's this year, between that and St. Mary's how on earth are you guys managing it?”

“Oh, you know...” said Joe, skirting the issue, “...we manage! Say hi to the wife and kids for me!” he shouted as he exited.

Reaching the duplex, he could smell the distinct scent of his wife's home-made tomato sauce. The sound of her singing along to Sinatra filled the air. They had married young. She was the last of twelve siblings and needed to stop being reliant on her parents. He needed to get out and far away from the sins of his family. They had met three weeks prior to his proposal.

As he unbolted the front door, the music stopped abruptly and the unmistakable sound of his children's feet running down the stairs filled the room. By the time he turned around, they would all be seated and ready to eat. Walking

to the table, he set the soda down in front of his son. Pouring himself a glass of homemade dandelion wine before sitting he instructed his daughter to say grace.

“Bless us, Oh Lord, for these Thy gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, Christ Our Lord. Amen.” They all chanted along.

Conversation was polite, but almost forced. It was strenuous relating to people he was supposed to be so close to but led a completely different life than he did. By the third glass of wine, he was relaxed and happier.

Joseph was scarcely finishing his after-dinner salad when he looked up and something caught his eye which altered the whole mood of the night. Without taking his eyes off of it, he walked over to the dishrack where a complete set of Corelle dishes laid. Washed, but not put away. A rage bubbled up within him. As he reached the rack, he gradually took the dishes out. One by one and flung them on the floor. He could hear the silence laced with fear behind him.

“Dad...” implored his eldest.

“Why,” CRASH, “aren’t,” CRASH, “they,” CRASH, “put,” CRASH, “away?” He bit the words as he spoke, they were measured and deliberate. He knew exactly how to produce the impression that he wanted. Looking up at his wife, she stared at him with vacant eyes, emotionless and empty. Didn’t she know how hard he worked to provide for this family? And what was she doing all day that she couldn’t complete a straightforward task?

A pulling on his lower pant leg made him turn around. It was his son, grasping him and crying. Joseph picked him up and thrust him off; he screamed louder. How ungrateful both his children were. They didn’t have to work, they got to play; they got to attend a private school, not a public one. Tuition took almost a third of their monthly income. Sometimes they could barely afford the roof over their heads. But having them raised in a non-Catholic environment had been out of the question.

“You two go to your room!” he barked at them, they were both sobbing now. “And you!” he said turning on his wife “I’ll deal with you later.”

He pushed open the back door and marched out, past the tomato plants, and into the garage. The anger was slowly subsiding. He turned on the radio to the local news with an overly aggressive punch of buttons. Joseph hated when he got like this, but he understood it as he got older. Working desperately hard, for long hours and everyone lets him down. Maybe if he hit his family like his father had, they would obey him. This brief thought made his stomach churn as the face of a fifteen-year-old Nicky flashed before his eyes. Joseph had left him with his father. But he had needed to get away. He needed freedom. He hadn’t seen him since.

Pouring himself a small glass of whiskey from a flask he kept under the workbench he lit a cigarette before plopping down on an old lawn chair.

“New layoffs at another factory in Buffalo, New York, this week. Analysts begin asking, ‘Is this the end of manufacturing in the city?’” With a sudden panic he unplugged the radio. It wasn’t helping.

Reaching under his chair he groped for yesterday’s paper. He was making an effort to read more, but it was slow going. Instead, he found a crudely drawn crayon image of the American flag crossed with the flag of Italy. Joe Jr. gave it to him last night. He had barely even noticed, he had been so tired and angry, the two feelings he was most intimately familiar with now.

As he stared at the drawing, it became obvious how different his children’s understanding of what it meant to be an Italian was. They displayed it as a badge of pride, as a fun party trick they could bring up to their friends. They didn’t know about the boat, or the docks, or the sacrifices that had been made to make that possible. They didn’t know what it was like to really be Italian. But then, he didn’t know what that meant anymore either. America had been the dream of his father. A land of opportunity, of promise, and of hope. They had suffered so much, and yet their livelihood was always in limbo. One minor change and they could topple over and end up in a poor house. That wasn’t the America he had been promised.

With bitter distaste in his mouth, he walked over to the metal waste-bin in the corner of the room and laid down the drawing. Flicking the end of his cigarette into the bin, he watched a stray ember burn a hole through it. He poured himself another glass of whiskey.

The radio in the house had been turned back on to try and bring a sense of normalcy to the children. This time it was Bing Crosby crooning.

He slumped in his chair, leaned back, and closed his eyes. Dreaming of being far away from here. In the place, he loved most. Of a beautiful life with no factories, or buckets, or Knights of Columbus. Somewhere with radiant skies, beaches, rolling pins, and jugs of fresh goat’s milk.

Macabre Upbringings: A Look into Identity in *Mort* by Terry Pratchett and *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman

Cody Thomas

The concept of an individual's identity and the stages of growth through which one passes are core foundations that scholars have used to approach children's and adolescent's literature for decades. One's name is often their connection with the world in which they reside, and if their name comes into question, their link to reality can become blurred or faded. The questions addressed in works that deal with identity and names resonate with readers of all ages—in part due to the fact that many adults, themselves, are trying to solidify their own fundamental selves and carve out an identity from the masses. It stands to reason, then, that what are often cast off as children's books and therefore not worth a read might indeed be worth reading as an adult. These questions of identity and what is “normal” are directly taken on in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2008) and Terry Pratchett's *Mort* (1987). The macabre upbringings, as shown in fantasy and quasi-fantasy settings, allow the characters to come out with a more grounded identity and a greater willingness to face the future. It is easier for children and adults alike to relate and grow from a story featuring characters who have overcome fantastical obstacles as opposed to ones rooted in reality because the reader stays engaged and learns to understand their own fears and worries through the metaphors and analogies.

Throughout their distinct journeys, the boys grow and learn in their new environments, having been taken from their normal world and thrust into strange surroundings. Because of these changes in their situations, both Bod

and Mort grow into fuller and better developed characters with which children can better relate. Bod has his own life put into perspective by the lives of a thousand-years-worth of souls, ranging from a Roman on the frontier to a few late 19th century city-dwellers; he ultimately must go forth and live his own life in the modern day, but he will carry with him the lessons and experiences they shared with him. Mort is forced to confront his own mortality, and, after literally fusing with the anthropomorphic personification of Death, finds his morality. They leave their strange circumstances surprisingly more “normal” than one might expect: Bod pursuing a normal life with a wallet full of cash and a passport at his disposal, and Mort marrying and being left with the task of making sure history unfolds the way in which it was originally bound.



To continue reading *Macabre Upbringings: A Look into Identity in Mort* by Terry Pratchett and *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman scan the above QR code, or visit www.toyonliterarymagazine.org/critical-analysis

The Pale Town

Heather D. Rumsey

When I think of home, I think of a place that I needed to leave. Today is the end of summer and the return of fall. Outside my window, nature sings as the temperature plummets. Where I come from the seasons don't change. Instead, they resemble each other in air and shape, returning on time with an absence of expression. The buildings and beaches disguise the desert as something habitable. I remember dry grass, polluted water, and hot yellow, unending days.

This morning I think about all the peculiar things that had to happen for this moment to exist. Here it is living and here I am invading its space. I drop the needle on the hard wax. "I've Just Seen A Face" plays to the wind. I leave the front door open and sit on the steps. Shade covers the house and the cold air clings to my skin. I stick my feet out to reach the only spot of sun, shining among the shifting shrouds of pale white and blue. Along comes a spider charging towards my foot, but when I move, it folds its body in retreat, falling. Its furry black legs face the sky, stone still, stopped in time. I sit still staring at it for a few minutes and then whisper, "I know you're alive." I wonder how much of a spider's life is spent pretending to be dead?

As I stare at its still body, I can't help but think of my lifeless life, of the apartment I grew up in, small and tacky. The walls all white, the town all white, my friends all white. Catty girls, deeply judgemental, unaware of their own biases, easily interrupted by men, and blind to their crudeness. Not that I was any different.

Where you're from shapes who you are. When you're young you soak it all up until it becomes the standard or until one day you change and grow from it all. But most of the people I grew up with stayed the same. The hardest part about going home is seeing the people who were once such a huge part of my life, the same as when I left. At some point, I really thought we would make it out together. The past stores these identities that are inescapable and

when I visit home they come back to haunt me.
The nostalgia is like a hand to my throat, squeezing.

Suddenly, I'm seventeen again: riding around in a big truck with friends on our way to a party to drink cheap alcohol and act as if only tonight matters. Living in those memories are a group of white kids surrounding me, listening to hip hop and rap music, appropriating and misunderstanding a culture.

The same kids who would get a girl wasted, talk about her body like it was objectifiable, get themselves laid, and then shame her later for the lack of consent.

When I go back home, buildings pass my car window where those women once were pitied. In the stores and around town, I see those boys who are now men, staring back at me with familiar eyes. As a young woman, I was taught that my appearance was the most important part of me. Every day I'd get up early, paint my face, and brush every single strand of hair into place. But it wasn't enough, I was still teased for the way I looked.

When I was seventeen a group of guys, who claimed to be my good friends, wrote a rap about six girls. I was one of them. The rap bashed our looks and our bodies, going into private detail about what they looked like and why they were ugly. One of the girls couldn't go back to school for a week. I forgave them. I accepted their excuses for degrading us as some kind of joke. Like we, "shouldn't be so mad they were joking." This is the place I came from, and I believed it would never hurt me.

That same year my girlfriends and I were getting ready for an event at my house. Erica walks out the door and says to one of the girls, "Damn you look great! You look so beautiful! I'll meet you all there." She closes the door behind her.

"Do you think she's a lesbian?" the girl says laughing. "I'm pretty sure she is."

"I can just tell by the way she like looks at me sometimes. And I don't think she's ever had a boyfriend." The rest of the girls start laughing.

"Let's go." I say.

I decided at that moment to never come out about my sexuality. It was easier to lie to myself. It didn't help that my mother physically cringed at the sight of any non-conventional sexual intercourse. There weren't people in this town that I could look up to. Provided to me was an empty understanding of the world, one that favored heteronormativity and pale skin. I spent my life beating myself up for being different than this. Behind my smile was someone who was planning a way out, someone who had to leave home to find home.

I was curious about life at the university. In college, I went to a party that was hosted by fraternity men. On campus I felt mature and sophisticated, but socializing with men from campus was entirely different. That night my girlfriend and I painted ourselves with makeup and wore revealing dresses; mine tiny,

black, and riding up my body every five minutes. We approached the gates, large intricate arches, and were greeted by a man.

“Who do you know here?” he asks, looking us up and down.

“We know Tanner,” my friend says.

“Fine.” He opens the gate.

The place was crowded. A gaggle of girls in little to no clothing came swarming out. They were shitfaced, discoordinated, and stumbling towards a group of guys.

“Where have you bitches been?! We’ve been waiting out here forever!”

Behind them, the home looked like a giant hotel. There were two stories of rooms, about fifteen to each level. We walked upstairs to find our friend and stepped into the first room. In the corner was a bar. A shirtless guy stood behind it handing out shots of vodka, the cheap plastic handle kind. The music was so loud I couldn’t hear anything and everyone was touching each other. A single black light was emanating from the corner.

A guy falls into the side of me, and I spill my drink.

“Hey!” he says. “What’s up?”

“Nothing.” I say.

“Want to make out?”

“No thanks.”

“Then why are you here?”

I threw the black dress away the next day. It was cheap and had a hole.

That place, those nights, taught me to hate men. I didn’t trust them not to be like those men, like my friends who rapped about me, like my classmates who pounced on anything that moved or didn’t move, like the boy who wanted me for my body and didn’t care about the rest.

I’ve been closed off to my sexuality ever since those men cornered me, and shaped my world to their standards. I cover my body now with old and shapeless clothes because I’m scared of being looked at by those men again. Who I was then, what people told me I was, is nothing like I am now. I did things that went against everything I believe in.

When I go back to where I came from it feels like I’m standing in front of this old version of me, my finger firm and shaking angrily at her face.

I lean in slowly and whisper, “I am not you anymore.”

She looks back at me, smirking, “I know you’re still alive.”

I left that town when I was twenty four. My old life behind me as I drove the desert roads north, passed the buildings and people I try and fail to forget. I still scroll through their lives filled with fantasies I know are not, cannot be, real. It’s suffocating. I pretend to care, liking and looking at what they are doing or how they are living. I guess a part of me still cares about that stupid town no matter how shitty it is, no matter how far away I’ve gone or how much I’ve

grown. It has a place in my heart. It's still home, in a way, as fucked up as it may be.

I look back into the door of my new home. It's time to flip the record. The sun gets higher pushing its rays up my legs. The spider lies still, folded, lifeless. I blow on its body, and it does not move. Is it still acting, still alive? Or have I killed it? I stand slowly and stare at my new town, nearly a thousand miles from the old one. I go back in to the house, and flip the record.

When I return the spider is gone either of its own volition or carried by the wind. I do not know.



Finding Place in Eureka Ryan A. Sendejas

The Dreamers

Anna Abraham Gasaway

“What happens to a dream deferred?” Langston Hughes

We came drooling, cooing,
tied on our mother’s backs,
presented in rebozos
of teal, red and magenta.

We came
because paid coyotes
spirited us to
the other side.

We came fleeing
an abuser’s pistol
cocked
at our mother’s pregnant womb,
one born in Guadajajara,
the other in San Diego.

Our parents came to work
in the garment district
while we played with scraps,

hidden from bosses
with a deft covering
of silk.

Our mamas took care
of other people’s children
so that we would be fed.

We came thirsty,
trudging,
across the ...desert,
in ...tunnels,
in vans and trucks.

And now, America,
fear stalks us every day.

Now, America
you shun us,
and the whole world
looks away.



The Richard Cortez Day Award Winner

On the Wind

Wyatt Georgeson

The old tree at the edge of the yard had been there before the house, before the family, and only earned its designation once the children were old enough to play outside on their own. It stood, stunted and slanted, at the bottom of the rise the house stood on. Grass ran from the back porch down to the old tree at the edge of the yard, but beyond that were wilder things. Mud that sucked at small feet and shrubs with thorns that tore young skin. It didn't take long for the children to learn that they were not to go past the old tree at the edge of the yard.

Over time, the tree came to know the children. It accepted the position of boundary post with dignity, though the possibility of refusal never occurred to it. The tree felt the vibrations in the earth every time the littlest came thundering across the yard, all reckless energy and boundless joy. Behind him would come the second, brimming with playful indignation, but also a considerable amount of trepidation and real fear dogging his steps. The tree would greet them with a sending of welcome, a message of shade offered and an impression of gentle wind stirring its boughs. They didn't seem to notice, though, so engrossed in their play. Across the yard, the eldest, a contemplative girl, would look up from her book, only crossing the yard to retrieve her brothers when they ventured past the tree.

On a day in late summer, while the tree basked in the sun, it detected the little one rampaging down from the house. He was a tumult of youthful aggression unchecked. His father had taken the older of the brothers on a day-trip, leaving the little one behind at home. The old tree at the edge of the yard felt the little boy's indignation turn to rage as he approached, and tried to calm him with sendings of what it imagined serenity to be. Sunlight upon its leaves, the slow, steady growth of accumulated years. The little boy, unfazed, leapt up and grabbed a branch in both hands and began wrenching it from side

to side. The tree cried out in pain, sending pleas for him to stop, trying to make him understand the suffering he inflicted.

The elder sister stormed across the yard, and the little one's alarm loosened his hands. He covered the distance back to the house before she arrived at the tree to examine the damage. The tree extended its gratitude to the girl, a sensation of security and bountiful life found deep in the ground where its roots reached and spread. The girl stood at the base of the tree for a while, a flurry of reactive emotions leaping from her as she received the sending. She touched the damaged branch, and the tree felt her sympathy and her frustration with the littlest one. It sent her a wave of reassurance, of saplings growing over many years into a mighty trees. She returned the sending with relief and happiness, and the tree knew she understood.

The girl visited the tree often after that, and the tree welcomed her. It shared with her the swaying sensation of a windy day and the soothing sunlight on its leaves. She responded inquisitively to the first impressions it sent her, closing her eyes and breathing deeply as she interpreted. It elaborated upon the first sending, constructing the sensations in her mind with careful attention to detail. The tree was fascinated by her reactions, which ranged from tranquil bliss when it shared the feeling of birds building a nest in the crook of a bough to a kind of intrigued revulsion at the sensation of worms working between its roots. She was eager to learn, and the tree marveled at the interpretations she sent back, and at the complex spectrum of feelings that it had never known that came naturally to her.

The brothers often interrupted their conversations, and the tree encouraged her to join their games. Sometimes she did, and other times she sat in the shade of its leaves and read, and the tree puzzled over the journey that her mind embarked upon. The girl's imagination seemed to expand beyond the horizon and above the sky. New worlds blossomed and wilted as she read, and the tree experienced an expanded spectrum of emotions and sensations with each new book. Amusement at the portrayals of other trees and bits of familiar natural imagery that often seemed caricature-like to the tree's sensibilities. Astonishment at the notion of lands without trees, or with so many that they choked the earth and masked the sky with their canopies. Oftentimes the stories were about men doing things, and the tree would get lost in the abstractions of human action. Not that human stories were boring, the tree at the edge of the yard simply had a hard time keeping up with their pace. At dusk, the girl's parents called for her from across the yard, and the tree realized that she had gotten cold sitting at the base of its trunk and chided itself for being so engrossed with the conversation of thoughts that it hadn't noticed. It resolved to be more attentive with Summer soon to give way to the biting winds of Autumn.

That resolve was oft-forgotten, as the girl continued to spend day after day sharing and interpreting feelings and thoughts with the tree. Before the tree even realized, the first heavy rain of the season flooded the lower side of the yard. After that, the girl didn't come to sit beneath the tree's branches, and the boys didn't come to play. The tree was startled by the isolation it felt after coming to expect them each day. It had spent decades growing there without the children, and only with their absence did it begin to realize loneliness.

Days passed, and the tree focused on receiving. It couldn't feel anything from inside the house, that place was beyond its reach. Sometimes it felt the distant tremors of heavy footfalls on the path near the shed, and knew that to be the children's father. There were other tremors, light and hesitant footsteps, those were the mother's. She hardly ever left the house, and never came near enough for the tree to know her better. Occasionally the father's work brought him near enough to the tree for a sending, and the tree would reach out. All it found was a dense cloud all around the man that made it difficult to discern anything, and the tree was afraid to probe any deeper.

It grew colder and the rain turned to sleet and the occasional snow. The tree was tired. Autumn had stripped it bare of leaves and flowers, but soon its seeds would be borne on the winter winds. It had been weeks since the children had come down the slope, and now deep puddles and banks of half-melted sleet made the tree recognize that it was likely to be without them until Spring arrived.

One clear evening after several days of rain, the tree felt a sending. It had a material form that confused the tree initially, a floating object that slid upon the wind to drift near its branches. The tree recognized the feelings bound to the object as the girl's. The message it contained was a reflection of what the tree felt, a fondness and a loneliness in the absence of the other.

The object, a paper plane, dipped and floated toward the ground, toward the deep puddle at the tree's base. Panic surged through its trunk, boughs and roots. With a great effort, it sent a request to the wind to prevent the crash. The wind, to the tree's surprise, acquiesced with a sudden gust that lifted the paper plane up and brought it into a slow, wide orbit around the tree's crown. A sustained breeze gave the tree time to study the plane and interpret the sendings attached.

The paper plane contained a greeting that the tree recognized with ease and relief, but it was short-lived. The tree discerned, after several orbits of the plane, that the girl was ill, and so were her brothers. Autumn had been no kinder to them than it had to the tree, it seemed, and they were cloistered indoors waiting for their fevers to subside. The tree was relieved to know that she was still there, and still thinking of the old tree at the edge of the yard. The wind was beginning to struggle with the plane, and it began a slow spiral

toward the ground as the tree struggled to unravel the last of the sendings.

Her last message, whatever it may have been, was washed away as a dense cloud of ambiguous sendings eclipsed the tree's perception of the paper plane. A turbulent darkness crawled upon its trunk. A tangle of intense feelings burgeoned into the tree's awareness and coiled around its being.

The father walked slowly across the yard, his attention on the airplane as it circled and dipped. The tree couldn't begin to read the torrent of feelings exuding from the man. At one time it felt fear, another hostility, and another instant brought pain to its attention. Every feeling was explosive and volatile, snatched back and hidden away as soon as it was revealed. The wind fled. The paper plane dropped at once to land in the mud. The father picked it up and opened it. The tree experienced through the man a distorted version of what it had received from the letter. A greeting to the tree turned juvenile and wasteful. An explanation of absence a form of ungratefulness. He crumpled the paper, and the tree felt the malice in the action, but also the conflict within him, simmering. A brief sorrow was swiftly buried, but the tree knew that he worried for his children.

The tree felt deep sympathy for the man. Living with so many feelings in constant conflict inside must feel like being ravaged by swarms of insects. If he were a tree, his bark would appear healthy from a distance, but up close you would see the holes they burrowed through. His branches would be storm-battered and tangled, and his roots would be struggling to grow through stone. The tree sent a tentative sending of the first peaceful thing that came to mind, the wind carrying its seeds away to spread and grow.

The sending was met with a wave of revulsion and animosity. The cloud that surrounded the man writhed and thrashed as the man tensed, and the tree could feel him shaking. The tree retreated. When the man's fury subsided, his attention shifted from the tree to the crumbled paper in his hand, and back. The vague cloud of rage that followed him coalesced as he walked back to the house. Even as the man entered his home, the tree could still feel his malevolent attention.

Months passed and the tree at the edge of the yard remained within itself, making only tentative inquiries outside its physical form to discern the state of its surroundings. The boys returned in winter to play in the snow on the slope of the yard, but their sister did not. They did not receive its sendings the way she did, but the tree could still eavesdrop on their thoughts and feelings. They were morose and melancholy, their fun and games tempered by a consistent gloom that clung to, and confused them. The tree understood from the boys that their sister had gone somewhere. Something was wrong with her, or something had been wrong with her. They had been told, but they still did not entirely understand. They deliberately stayed away from the tree.

One day, the boys went inside early. Their father came out to the old tree at the edge of the yard. He brought tools with him. A saw, a shovel, shears. An ax.

The tree knew what was to come. It felt bitter determination exuding from the man, and other things. Spite, anger, resentment, fear. It sent a simple greeting to the troubled man. Wind in the boughs. The rattle of dry branches. Healthy soil beneath its roots.

He bristled. The tree knew that he was receiving his sendings. He was even more sensitive to them than his daughter. It sent again, a soothing sensation of roots deep in the earth. The slow, rejuvenating act of drinking what the earth provided.

The man hefted the ax and took a step forward. The tree felt the tumult of feelings swell. Outrage, conflict...curiosity? Swiftly replaced by violence. Violence. Violence.

The blade bit into the tree's trunk, and again. A wedge of wet inner wood was exposed as the bark buckled and broke away. The tree sent flashes of its pain, its terror, into the man. It was an act of panic. The man sent back. Hatred. Rage. Suffering. Fear.

The tree fled from the agony, deep into the roots. The pain was there too, a shuddering thud that found it even at the end of the smallest tendril in the ground. The tree fled upward, to the end of its highest branches and out, begging the wind to carry it away, riding upon clusters of winged seeds loosed by the tremors of each impact. It searched for the girl that had understood it, willing itself to find her and touch her mind and beg her to stop her father.

While it sent upon the wind, it felt the snap. The shudder, the descent, and the crash. It could not return. The tree at the edge of the yard had been there before the house, before the family. Borne upon the wind, the tree at the edge of the yard became something else.

On The Death of Travel Writing

Caleb L. González

Every time I read the newest edition of *The Best American Travel Writing* anthology, I notice its corpse-like appearance. This happened one day in a coffee shop as I opened the anthology eager to read the essays that were selected from 2016. Reading the forward by series editor, Jason Wilson, I choked on my hot chocolate audibly enough to make a line of desperate coffee-consumers concerned. I read, according to Wilson, that travel writing may be on the verge of death. I put the anthology down and swatted the annoying fly that was buzzing around the anthology with my bare hand. I opened up my laptop and did some research. In 2017, *Granta* literary magazine bravely dedicated one of its issues (*Granta* 138: Journeys) to the question that many travel writers seem to be hearing on every corner: Is travel writing dead?

This question deserves exploration, since what's at stake is a kind of writing that can facilitate not only stories of trips and journeys, but ones of movement and migration – if we can expand our definition of travel, that is.

In my case, I write about my travels to explain the aftershock of movement. I can make sense of the internal urgencies that I feel inside after visiting family and friends in Latin America and Spain. Arriving in the United States, I always experience reverse culture shock, which feels like a thousand bumble-bees buzzing around my ears for thirty days straight. To me, it means re-encountering the United States as if I'd experienced it for the very first time. Everything seems out of place because I return having adopted another perspective and another routine, which makes me question everything. I often find myself confused and wondering why things are the way they are. I'll never forget the time I ordered a small popcorn at a US movie theatre after recently returning from Madrid. Without even thinking about it, the words rolled right out of my mouth, "Is this a small? Is it for a small family?"

Or when I saw my car in Fort Collins, Colorado for the first time after weeks of getting around by subways, trains, and buses in Buenos Aires. I could

feel an eerie sense of being out of touch with the natural movement of my environment. I remember thinking I'd rather just walk to the nearest Transfort bus stop with my empty green grocery bag. This way of going to the store made the most sense to me. My roommate called me crazy for not "liking" my car enough, but I was nostalgic for the community feeling that *transporte público* brought to my life in the Argentinean capital, not to mention that I also lost ten pounds by simply taking *subtes*, *trenes*, and *colectivos* while still eating heaps of *empanadas* and *asado argentino*. I never minded, not even once, squeezing into a *subte* during the city's evening rush hour packed with sweaty foreheads and a gentleman playing "Stand by Me" on his *guitarra criolla*. I have at least learned that sitting in front of the *obelisco*, I envision what my life would be like if I were to ever live there for a length of time. For me, travel means that I can find my home in multiple places.

I also write about my travels partly because it allows me to explore what migration and movement means to me. I understand what it means to arrive in the United States and what it means to go back. I am reminded about my own dual identity. That there is such a thing as being more than one thing and from more than one place. There's also such a thing as speaking more than one idioma. I can reclaim my identity within a culture that has historically told its people: *you are from this country only, English only*.

After having been asked why I travel, I often wonder if another valid question is not just *why* the writer travels, but *when* the writer travels and under what political and social contexts. Editor Jason Wilson addresses this exact point by saying, "What's important to remember about Travel writing is that it's not just about where one goes, or who makes the trip, or how they travel, or why. It's also about *when* that journey takes place." Whenever I travel these days, I've grown accustomed to my close friends wanting to discuss the latest *política* of President Trump. I'm also asked why the United States has mass shootings. I'm asked about a place like Charlottesville or what it means when a *futbolista afroamericano* takes a knee during the national anthem. I can't say I always have the answers. My friends often find that I, too, am asking the same questions. I *do* know that I've made more friends traveling in 2018 than I ever did in 2015. Part of this, I think, is because we're just trying to make sense of ourselves in a world where the only things we can be sure of these days are the beef *empanadas* we eat on Sunday afternoons in a cold, but not so cold, Buenos Aires. We can at least ask questions together and know that we're not alone in doing so. What does it mean to be educated these days? Why do I feel like an *hormiguita* in a world full of skyscrapers? Is it worth having children? Why is my *café con leche* so *espumoso*? Why is my hair *desordenado*?

While travel may not be the same thing as immigration, movement at the very least is a component of the immigrant experience. This calls for an

amplified definition of travel writing. Or as I like to call it, the Writing of Movement. As I read Gustavo Arellano's essay "The Syrian Baker Who's Bringing the Middle East's Most Famous Ice Cream to California," I can see a clear depiction of Maher Nakhal's ice cream shop, a place that reminds us about what it means to traverse borders and what it means to share a piece of a person's home with the communities of their second home. We can also be reminded that through movement, some of us gain more than one home in unexpected ways. Travel writing reminds us of this. It also teaches us that while travel might be, for some, an opportunity for relaxation, travel for others is an unanticipated necessity. For these individuals, travel might mean a chance at survival or the chance to make a decent living. A chance to breathe again.

I think about my father from Mexico, who travels almost every day along Colorado's Interstate 25 transporting cars from city to city. What might his Travel Essay tell us? Or my grandfather, whose father died when he was a young boy during the Mexican Revolution. As a ten-year-old child in the 1930s, he had no choice but to find work to help his mother out. Taking his donkey, he traversed towns selling coal to the people of Nayarit. He was disparaged by almost all his cousins because the coal often left him very dirty. They were ashamed of being related to him. When he met my grandmother in the 1940s (or during World War II), he decided to travel to the United States to obtain a higher income for his family. He had no other option. In an age of urban city development where agricultural labor was abandoned, he was one of the few allowed into the country under the Bracero Program started by Franklin D. Roosevelt. My grandmother traveled to the border city of Juárez to stay with a friend. She couldn't enter with her husband. Under the program, families were separated at the border. While living in tight quarters with her girlfriend, my grandmother worked and raised an entire household of four young boys – three of them infants, including my father. She waited for my grandfather to get their paperwork through. They eventually settled in a little town in west Texas called Earth, of all places (imagine always having to tell people where you live). I often wonder what their Travel Essays might tell us.

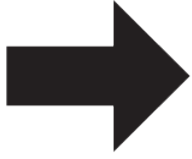
Or how about the families currently being separated at the US southern border? Those who have traversed mountains, forests, and deserts to seek the asylum that they have the right to seek. It's reported that between October 1, 2017 and May 31, 2018, 2,700 children, at the very least, have been separated from their parents. These numbers indicate that on average, forty-five children are being separated from their parents each day upon arrival to the United States. Even though it is not a crime to seek asylum in the United States, this horror is a direct result of specific policies that have been implemented across the southern border. Travel writing might be the very thing we need right

now. If nothing else, it becomes a reminder that our world is becoming more globalized whether we like it or not.

Much of this writing is already being shared in several places. Travel writer Lindsey Hilsum says, “The accounts of such journeys—the dangers of the desert followed by the perils of the sea—are included not in anthologies of travel writing, but police and immigration authority reports. They tell of torture, rape, despair and a determination to keep going that defies the understanding of the comfortable.” Travel writer Rana Dasgupta says, “Refugees—this roving one percent of our species—generate a lot of text. Travel literature, written on cracked phones and sent via intermittent Wi-Fi—and in these stuttering chronicles, the world is not a sentimental object of contemplation. This is a literature of checkpoints and fences, and the improvised gaps through which desperate people pass. It is a literature of essential tools and documents and leaving one’s soul behind.” I wonder then how creative nonfiction might include these stories, or actively seek them out. These individuals are the true heroes of travel writing. Their stories represent boldness in the face of danger and courage amid fear. Their stories also speak of what it means to grab adversity by its neck and fight like hell to survive.

Fortunately, the landscape of travel writing is slowly shifting away from its colonial form, the one that speaks of the privileged individual from the western country setting out to examine the “poor other” by documenting it in a travelogue. Or if *The Log of Christopher Columbus’ First Voyage to America in the Year 1492* is readily available to a readership on Amazon, I can, at least, count on scholars like Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, and Leela Gandhi to blast the seeds of colonialism and racist ideologies with healthy doses of scrutiny that are long overdue. Part of the change in travel writing is the new autoethnographic emphasis on the inward self, instead of the “other”. This is a basic lesson in humility. Before looking at others, I better look at myself first.

In this sense, we’re starting to see a multiplicity of first-person narratives that are reflective and that go beyond a depiction of what was seen. Thanks to the mobility of our laptops and telephone gadgets, we can google our way through the streets of Bogotá and travel about the beaches of Costa Rica any time we want. What is the purpose of travel writing then? It provides a voice and a deep connection to the human experience of mobility, which is something that Google Apps can’t do (not yet at least). Travel writer Morwari Zafar says, “Writing and reading on journeys is about touching your own soul to someone else’s, an act of cathartic acknowledgment that, simply, they exist. In that process, we come to know ourselves and in sharing it, we come to be understood.” I wonder then if one of the most significant things we can do right now is read a first-person travel narrative. Or try our hand at it.



Passing Through Korinza Shlanta



Oaxaca Anonymous

The latest essays I've read have used a first-person travel narrative to connect us with the narrators on the page. That as we acknowledge their existence, according to Zafar, we might understand things not only about them, but about ourselves *through* them. In her essay "The Strangeness of Being a Latina Who Loves Hiking," published by Vox, Amanda Machado discovers her love for the outdoors upon visiting Ecuador, where her family is from. Machado examines the social barriers that exist in the United States between outdoor recreation and Latinx communities. I'm reminded, then, that the recreational outdoors hasn't always been for dominant cultures. After reading Machado's essay, the Rocky Mountains seem larger to me than I had once thought. I'm slowly reclaiming my space within nature. And as I read Shahnaz Habib's essay "India's Wild Heart" published by AFAR magazine I think about the storytelling traditions within my own family. Habib travels to the forests of Kerala for the first time after having grown up nearby, in the urban city of Kochi. Recalling the stories her grandmother would tell her about the forests, she learns to adopt the language of nature as part of her literacy.

I dare say, then, that the "death" of travel writing is a bit absurd. In his essay "Is Travel Writing Dead?" Pico Iyer writes, "Travel Writing isn't dead; it can no more die than curiosity or humanity or the strangeness of the world can die." Through these words, Iyer is reminding us that we are curious and strange human beings who engage in the act of movement every single day. The need to document our journeys is vital for a profound yet simple understanding of what makes us human.

Some might argue that "death" only means change, which tells us that travel writing is only doing what it knows how to do best: travel. It's not a coincidence that the sub-genre is always moving through various forms: Travel Memoir, Travel Narrative, Travel Graphic Narrative, Travel Autoethnography, to name a few. Maybe it's us who mistake its roaming identity for: oh, yeah, must be dead. I wonder then if the term "travel writing" would only morph into another term: Writing on the Move, Writing Across Borders, the Writing of Movement. I'm not sure if the name would ever change though. Whatever it's called, travel writing will continue because as long as we are and as long as we move, we will always find a way to document that experience.

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Gurfa

David Holper

Imagine, like so many who live
invisible lives, you had to carry your water
each day. Five gallons in a jerry can for five miles.
It's a simple formula: shoulder the burden
or die of thirst. In this way, you might
learn the meaning of what bearing
a handful of water
truly means.

Gurfa (Arabic, noun): the amount of water than can be held in one hand.

Waterfalls

Katia G. Karadjova

The lazy winter was still outside.
Somebody, push her in the chest
and make her go away
with all the white quietness
and icicles of dreams
over dripping memories.

Dream of dancing over the rainbow,
sliding down,
and getting lost in the colors.

Burst of fireworks
and
thunder. Waterfalls.

My brothers found a hole in the sun.
My sisters detected a leak in the rainbow.
All the colors got messed up.

The rain pressed charges against me
for dreaming incorrectly.

They suspended the water for my tears.

Balloons

Ayşe Tekşen

Whenever we went to Gülhane Park,
I asked my parents to buy me
one of those flying balloons,
and they always did.
After walking only 10 meters,
when they looked behind,
they saw me crying
over my balloon that
flew from my hands.
It is my confession now, years later,
that I did it on purpose.
At the third time, tough,
my parents started to fasten the rope
of the balloon to my right wrist.
But I always managed to undo
the knot when my parents
weren't looking.
One time, I remember,
the knot didn't budge,
and I struggled both
to hide from my parents' eyes
and to undo the rope,
and I was grumpy the whole outing.
I couldn't stand to see that
a flying balloon cannot fly.
If a balloon couldn't fly,
why, in the first place,
was it called a flying balloon?
I wished I could set all of them free,
but my hands were small
and not enough.
No one knows I am endeavoring
to do the same thing even today.
One day, I promise,
I will set all the balloons free.

Thank You for Coming

Janna K. Trowbridge

Just because someone stops loving you
 doesn't mean you have to stop loving them
I will always love you
Because
I hand out pieces of my heart like party favors
Thank you for coming into my life—here take this
 A unique and special piece of me chosen specifically for you
It's an open invitation, all are welcome
To the girl I flew to the moon with every day on the swings in third grade
 Here—for you
To the boy who turned my backyard into an ever changing landscape of
adventure
 Please—for you
To all who have since left my party
You still have pieces of me that I will remember you by
So, to the boy who first told me I was beautiful and worthy and enough
Who has since gone to many other parties and received many other goodie
bags
I hope—you tuck mine away somewhere safe
That when you need to be reminded that you are beautiful and worthy and
enough
You can take it out and listen as it gently whispers all the things you need to
hear
All the things a heart can never forget

Winner of the The English Department Award

Power Struggles and Grand Narratives

Greg W. Childs

Lin Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton* has become one of the most widely praised works of art in recent memory. Both critics and audience members have fallen in love with this retelling of the founding of America. The accolades and positive responses have come from all corners, even politicians running the gambit from president Barack Obama to vice president Mike Pence. The way that *Hamilton* taps into cultural discourse surrounding race and the founding of America leaves almost all who see it with a positive impression. The founding of America that *Hamilton* addresses, through the story of oft-forgotten founding father Alexander Hamilton, is the keystone of the American legend, and held in the highest of regard by those who identify with the sanitized, white-centric narrative of American history. This narrative places white people at the center of the historical universe, and conveniently forgets that people of color—outside of possibly Crispus Attucks—existed at all during the revolution.

This is what makes *Hamilton* into such an interesting case, as it tells the same American legend that has been told for years, with the only change being that the cast of the musical is almost entirely made up of people of color. This change has been the subject of much praise, because it acts both as a show of diversity and, simultaneously, a show of assimilation, and most viewers will find one of these two praiseworthy. This simple fact is the key to *Hamilton's* almost universal popularity. The play gives the mainstream culture license to keep ignoring the historical narratives that actually belong to people of color, and allows white viewers to be entertained by subject matter containing race, without having to truly face their own role in the sordid history of race in America. *Hamilton's* telling of the story also perpetuates the idea of America as largely innocent and moral, and helps further insulate the American psyche from any real level of self-reflection.

The fact that *Hamilton* is able to function as art that, at the same time, celebrates diversity and assimilation, is what lends it such wide appeal. The casting of almost entirely people of color gives the show a surface level look of diversity, but looking a little deeper, it is plain to see that this appearance is only skin deep. Lyra Monteiro addressed the casting in her article “Race-Conscious Casting and the Erasure of the Black Past in Lin Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*”: “With a cast dominated by actors of color, the play is nonetheless yet another rendition of the ‘exclusive past,’ with its focus on the deeds of ‘great white men’ and its silencing of the presence and contributions of people of color in the Revolutionary era.” Although the people playing the roles look different, the roles themselves are unchanged. *Hamilton* is, in the end, the same story that has been told and retold, and molded into the legend of the founding of America. James Baldwin, novelist and social critic, wrote about Black actors playing white roles, and the cost he saw in this protrait: “What is being attempted is a way of involving, or incorporating, the black face into the national fantasy in such a way that the fantasy will be left unchanged and the social structure left untouched” (108). Many of the stories in the mainstream discourse surrounding the history of America—the revolution, the expansion into the west—have been told in a way that places the “great white men” they center on as heroes to be respected and emulated. *Hamilton* does not step outside of this mainstream narrative. It’s the same fantasy that has lived in the American mind for years. As less reassuring stories of slavery and genocide have become more and more openly acknowledged as part of the American past, it is not surprising that *Hamilton*, a work of art that gives the appearance of bridging the gap between the reassuring old narrative and the upsetting new ones, would become so popular.

Over the last few decades, there has been some change in the telling and teaching of American history to acknowledge a wider range of narratives. This change has become upsetting to people who believe that having more than one narrative of American history is detrimental to the nation as a whole. *Hamilton* addresses this fear by being inclusive of people of color, who have been historically excluded, but it also holds those people’s narratives from the revolutionary era at arms length. What is absent from the play is the fact that America was never a white nation, and that the American experience has always been a multi-ethnic experience. If not for the choice to cast people of color in the roles of historically white people, there would be no people of color in *Hamilton*. The presentation of the musical makes it seem as though people of color have joined the old, white-centric, narrative. This in turn assures white viewers that we, as a nation, have moved past the need for multiple historical narratives, and that people of color have been welcomed into the narrative that has excluded them for years.

Conservative columnist David Brooks argued that as American education begins to give a more all encompassing picture of the history of America, what is needed is unifying story, like *Hamilton*: “Today’s students get steeped in American tales of genocide, slavery, oppression and segregation. American history is taught less as a progressively realized grand narrative and more as a series of power conflicts between oppressor and oppressed.” This argument, that American history is better taught as a “grand narrative” assumes that all populations in the history of America have participated equally in said narrative. American history is a history of “power conflicts between oppressor and oppressed.” Students are “steeped” in these stories because America’s history is steeped in them. James Baldwin wrote: “The story of the Negro in America is the story of America, and it is not a pretty story” (95). This is a radically different way to frame the history of America, and it stands in stark contrast to Brooks. There can be no meaningful American history without including all Americans, and Brooks’ “grand narrative” speaks only to the white population. Reframing the story of America as the story of African Americans in America forces white Americans to see more than just themselves in the history of the country. This is something that, perhaps understandably, many white people are resistant to, as it not only challenges their place at the center of the historical universe, it also challenges their place as the heroes of the American Saga.

The songs that make up *Hamilton* rarely reference race, and when they do it feels removed, and the references to slavery—the main way the show talks about race—make it seem as though slavery is only happening in other places, the same way they have always been in the founding story. The first time *Hamilton* addresses slavery is in the opening song of the musical, titled “Alexander Hamilton.” The song is an introduction of Hamilton himself, and covers his childhood and adolescence in just a few verses. The song is outside of the time and space of the rest of the narrative, with different cast members stepping in and singing the different verses. There is no effort made to link the song to any one time and place, and the sense is that it is only a narration to open the play:

[LAURENS]

By fourteen, they placed him in charge of a trading charter

[JEFFERSON]

And every day while slaves were being slaughtered and carted

Away across the waves, he struggled and kept his guard up

Inside, he was longing for something to be a part of (Miranda).

These lines bring up slavery, but they reference it within the context of who Hamilton is, and serve to build his character, not to actually make the audience think about slavery as part of the world of the musical. It also makes it seem far away, in the Caribbean, not in America. This does almost



Nesting Angelica Sage Armijo Keats

nothing to establish the fact that slavery is part of the world of the musical, as the musical is not set in the Caribbean. Slavery seems far off and removed, like it is not part of the history of the American Revolution, and is taking place instead in other, far off lands. By placing this reference to slavery in the opening song, Miranda is able to both give his version of Hamilton a motivation to disdain the practice of slavery, but also keeps slavery at a distance. Keeping slavery at a safe distance is the same trick that the mainstream narrative of the revolution has always played, slavery is allowed to exist, just not in the same place as the story of the war for freedom.

The song in *Hamilton* that most openly and directly references slavery is “Cabinet Battle #1,” but even this song works to create distance between slavery on one hand, and Hamilton and the north on the other. In the song, Hamilton and Jefferson engage in an argument over Hamilton’s banking system. Hamilton defends his plan by pointing out the fact that Jefferson is only objecting because the southern states rely on the labor of slaves to pay their debts:

[HAMILTON]

A civics lesson from a slaver. Hey neighbor,
Your debts are paid cuz you don’t pay for labor
‘We plant seeds in the South. We create.’
Yeah, keep ranting,
We know who’s really doing the planting (Miranda).

A distinct divide is being cut between the north and south, with the north cast as enlightened and forward thinking, and the south as backward and racist. As with “Alexander Hamilton,” slavery is referenced as happening far away from the world the musical is taking place in, first in the Caribbean and then in the American south. The events of the story are allowed to play out in the same idealized way they have in the American narrative for years, with the founders and their armies as the oppressed, and the royals as oppressors, with no thought given to anyone who fell outside of that paradigm. These songs work to distance and obscure the history and reality of slavery and oppression in revolutionary America, and when this combined with the cast of people of color playing the roles of all white historical figures, what is left is a clever reimagining of the mainstream historical narrative. Instead of getting white viewers to acknowledge the struggles that those outside of their own narrative face, it allows them to think that oppressed groups have joined the white historical narrative, and in doing so ending any need for whites to reconsider their position at the center of the historical universe. James Baldwin explained this need to disassociate from any narrative outside of the mainstream:

White people are astounded by Birmingham. Black people aren’t. White people are endlessly demanding to be reassured that Birmingham is

really on Mars. They don't want to believe, much less act on the belief, that what is happening in Birmingham is happening all over the country. They don't want to realize that there is not one step, morally or actually, between Birmingham and Los Angeles (34).

The white population has never wanted to face the fact that slavery and its legacy were and are not confined to places like Birmingham. *Hamilton* tells the story of the revolution from New York, a place that in the mainstream historical narrative is not closely associated with slavery. This setting gives the audience permission to go on believing that what was happening in the south at the time was not happening in New York. It continues playing into the compartmentalization of American history, giving most of the white population the internal excuse of thinking of racism as a southern problem. *Hamilton* allows white America to see the story of the founding in a way that makes it seem as though there was plenty of space, both morally and actually, between the north and the south. Allowing for this space to exist is what the "grand narrative" of American history has always done. It gives white people space to think of themselves and their forebears as the heroes of their own story, without having to face the fact that these problems are not confined to one time and place in American history.

Ultimately, *Hamilton* allows white audiences to engage with dialogues about race without needing to consider why those dialogues are needed in the first place. The effect of these representations for white viewers is something akin to looking in a funhouse mirror. It is still a reflection of only the white viewer, but it is obscured and distorted, both allowing the viewer to see and not see themselves all at the same time. Baldwin addressed why this type of avoidance is problematic: "These images are designed not to trouble, but to reassure. They also weaken our ability to deal with the world as it is, ourselves as we are" (86). The casting in *Hamilton* may have made the show popular, but the fact that it is a retelling of the same legend America has been telling itself for years robs it of much of the power it could have had to spark self examination. *Hamilton* may make viewers feel a sense of unity, but as Americans, has that feeling been earned? A story that has been designed over the years to give a nation the false sense of unification does not suddenly become redeemed because the people acting it out have changed. The "grand narrative" is a concept that has been used as a way to avoid facing the fact that America has never been a unified country, much in the same way it has never been a white country. As long as the narratives of people of color in America remain hidden, there can be no reconciliation, and America can never live up to the ideals it was founded upon. The nation can only move towards unity by acknowledging and facing that fact that we have many different stories, not by forcing all America's citizens into one, reassuring telling of our history.

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Webs

Edward E. Brock

The glass is heard first, then the thump of the rock on the floor.
We scuttle back into our dusty web and shiver.

The heavy, lead stone thrown through our front-room window gleams with an iridescent coat of spray paint.

This is the second brick this week, both with a less than empty threat, both with a scribbled, red octagon.

I look to my wife and she looks back and we both cry silently while our children sleep.

I sweep the glass into a corner, board another window.

Hours later when the streets have died quiet with night we peer from plywood's holes and see glowing phosphorescent lights buzzing.

The tile around the pool in the courtyard shines a lurid white as the moon lays heavy on its surface.

Dried leaves—the wither of fall—flutter into the dirty, murky, chlorinated water. They stagnate as a bloated rat carcass floats; a rotting freckle among unblinking celestial eyes.

It looks like Mr. Montgomery.

He went missing four days ago under the same less-than-empty, but still dismissed, threats.

I wonder who will have to remove the body this time.

It is dangerous in this jungle. It was dangerous in the jungle my family came from. It is dangerous where all around animals acting bigger, being bigger, forcing themselves bigger jump at throats exposed by cold, lonesome winds. The fields beyond our new village whine with an abandonment and mix with the sound of stolen children.

My young ones whimper in the den of the nest and I hurry back, gutted, to find our littlest gone—passed on to lush pastures, freer greens. Her legs

and arms curl and cradle their empty, hallowed husk.
We lose so many to these sleepless autumn nights.
We lose so many to the fire descending upon our hearts.
We bury her that night, tuck her in with a prayer, and
return to a slandered, slurred door.
My wife and I chat wondering how to keep the candle burn-
ing—how to keep the growing hunger at bay—for one more night.
We are cold.

The next morning, in the quiet dawn, I pull my coat around tight, ready
myself for work, step outside, then find myself face down in the pool's blue,
reflective surface. There is a cut on the back of my head, and a small note
stapled to my chest. My blood sinks to pool's floor. It's undulating cascades
crimson jellyfish in an empty sea.

My partner's eyes are gray, cold, when she finds me floating. We have known
that the changing of the leaves, the migration of the seasons, would mean
the cold breath of winter would come soon.
But as crunchy leaves clog the filter of the Key Inn Apartment's pool, we did
not think it would be today.
No one ever thinks it is today.

The Caravan

Gabriel C. Paez

Prosthetic limbs push across a continent
Broken bones are no match for the determination
To upright history, so long desaparecido
Under black bags
Over faces, with blistered manos tied behind backs
Mass graves as fertilizer for this jardín
With raíces gruesas and thorns like a crown

Move north in migration
Follow the butterflies
Cactus and stone
Woven sombreros worn thin
The sun like a planet riding brown backs
Children whisper in ears
To walk on, adelante

el hambre no sabe fronteras
la habilidad de caminar por esta tierra
Jamás me la negaras
Soy hijo de este único continente
Y sigo en los pasos de mi gente
Lleno a los parques con mis hijas de trencitas
Escucho el cantar de once millones de abuelitas
Que cocinan al aire libre y se ríen
Siempre por donde pasan

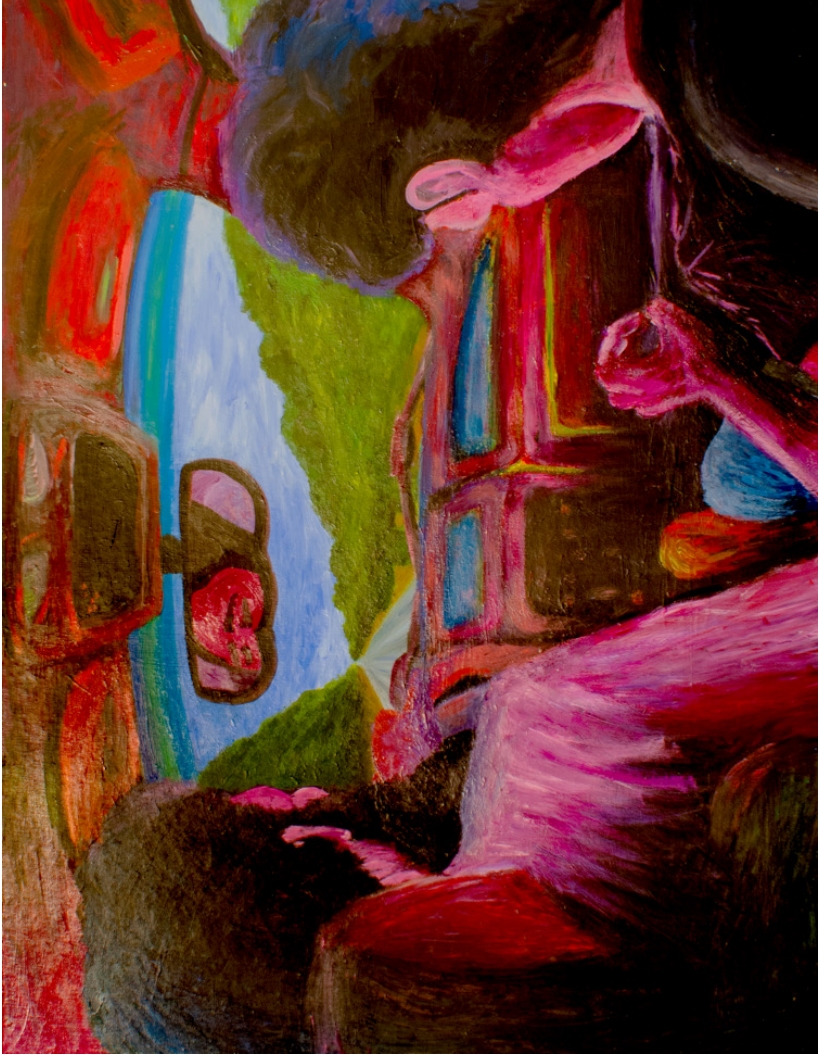
The caravan continues in a rhythmic pace
Practiced by the constellations
Flowing across borders without documentation
Weather patterns more ancient than any nation
Guide towards a rightful destination

The infants José
And Mariana with toasted almond skin
have eyes that follow yellow desert birds
Parents perch under boulders
That stand in prehistoric guard
Unmoved

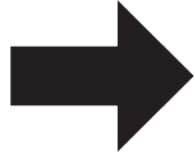
Uncarved by the invisible river
Of wind
Exhaled in prohibition
A contraband breath
A criminal swallow of water
A demographic threat in a can of peas

Broken sandal against black boot
Refugee child against billionaire machine
Arms linked in song against electrified fence
History against illusion
Justice against death.





Homesick Eloisa Garcia-Caro



Fish Camp in Ink

Kathryn D. Johnston

The Middle of Everywhere: Sacred Sites in the American West

Deb Liggett

Within days of putting on a ranger uniform I aspired to be a park superintendent. Some sixteen years later, the new “lady superintendent” would take the helm at Devils Tower National Monument, the nation’s first national monument. To me, it felt like a long time coming, but in fact, it was a respectable timetable in National Park Service meanderings.

My delight in my promotion was leavened by reality. In the first two weeks on the job, someone asked how old I was (39), another how long I planned to stay (three to five years), and the natural history association board president put his hand on my knee under the table at my first board meeting. Shifting my knee out of reach with some vehemence, I promised myself that if the hand-on-knee thing happened again I would make it a public occasion.

Then, in what had to be some kind of an agency record, it took me only eighteen months to get my ass sued. My ass, the regional director’s ass, the director of the National Park Service’s ass and Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt’s ass. Furthermore, in one 24-hour period, in the Letters to the Editor section of the *Casper Star-Tribune*, I traversed the entire political spectrum from a “jack-booted thug” to a “commie pinko.” I remain inordinately proud of both accomplishments. There is something particularly satisfying about getting taken to court and vilified over doing the right thing.



Devils Tower, an 867-foot monolith, is an iconic western landmark. This small Wyoming park on the northwestern edge of the Black Hills was established in 1906 as a scientific wonder. The movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* made the tower infamous, and half-a-million vacationers visit the monument each year—or as I boasted to my peers, “more people than Wyoming has cows.” (This was hyperbole. Wyoming has twice as many head of cattle.) The tower is sacred to American Indians, and since the 1970s the cracked, granite

tower has gained a reputation as a recreational climbing mecca.

Before my arrival at Devils Tower, the crystal ball in the Washington office of the National Park Service divined problems in parks that hosted climbing: conflicts with birds of prey, hordes of mountaineers, parks under siege from climbers leaving unsightly colored chalk and engaging in a technique called “gardening” (handholds and footholds carved out by climbers), and most alarming, the use of electric drills that allowed an individual climber to post a fixed route with pitons and bolts on a whim.

Parks were charged to develop plans to deal with the nascent issues—a directive really designed for places like Denali, Yosemite and Joshua Tree. Devils Tower faced these challenges, but the major issue at the tower was distinct within the service. *High Country News* would later headline the issue as, “The Sacred and Profane Collide in the West.” A fundamental conflict in world views fueled the debate—sacred sites versus recreation.

The Tower holds importance to more than twenty Plains tribes and often predominates in their cultural stories, but for years the only Indian story told at the tower was about Indian children playing in the forest and being chased by a bear. The children jumped on a log and the log began to rise into the sky. The grizzly pursued the children and pawed at the log, now turned to stone, and created the claw marks (cracks). In some stories the children jump into the sky and become stars. Told by rangers with all the import of a Paul Bunyan story, the telling lacked depth. The story of the bear and the children or some variation is present in the oral traditions of many tribes, but to at least three tribes the Tower is part of their origin story—a central and defining role of who they are as a people. The bundle of Sacred Arrows (knowledge) was handed down to the Cheyenne at the Tower. These sacred narratives define not just the past but also guide a contemporary people. To American Indians people climbing on the tower is a sacrilege, the equivalent of climbing on an altar in the Vatican or posting a fixed route across the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

The local ranching community regarded the tower with some pride and picnicked, celebrated family reunions and wedded in its shadow. The business community viewed it as a cash cow. The climbing community embraced the traditional crack climbing and climbers from all over the world come for the sport. The National Park Service had administered the tower as a natural and recreational feature giving short shrift to cultural resources and history. Hindsight is 20-20.



Approaching the granite monolith, visitors see the Belle Fourche river valley lined with cottonwoods. A short road rises to the base of the tower. A 1930s era Civilian Conservation Corps log visitor center rests in a conifer forest. Early and late in the day the vanilla scent of ponderosa pine suffuses

the air. To me, as a child of the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, it always smelled like home. A paved, mile-long path circumnavigates the tower. It is easy to feel reverence. Yet, this small pocket tucked away in a little-populated corner of the West would rise to national prominence. I would tell my staff in some amazement, “Some days we’re the lightning rod, some days we’re the poster child.”

My predecessor had toiled to squeeze funds from the NPS regional office and established a working group to tackle the issues. Representatives from the local climbing club, the Access Fund (a national climbing organization), an American Indian who was part of a coalition on sacred sites, a Lakota (Sioux) elder, the Sierra Club, and a local county commissioner formed the group. What could go wrong?

At the first meeting, climbers who were not on the working group showed up and harassed the American Indian members. At the second meeting other American Indians attended and berated the climbers. Tit for tat. Then a minor miracle. In a less public venue, both climbers and Indians, embarrassed by the behavior of their compatriots (and in their absence), began to talk and share what was important to them.

Why was no climbing allowed on Mount Rushmore, a presidential shrine? To the ironic and gallows-humor amusement of Indian people, climbing is permitted on the “backside” of Mount Rushmore. A raptor closure could be legal for birds of prey, but then questioned for American Indian beliefs? How was bolting a climbing route any different from someone independently hacking out a trail? How was leaving bolts and webbing any less unsightly than leaving prayer bundles? These were hard questions and not all the inequities were ours to resolve. But conversation became possible and respect developed within the group.

At the last meeting I was the new kid in charge. By then the group had sorted through the problem areas. One fly in the ointment remained—the name of the monument. American Indians were angered by the disrespectful nature of the name and wanted to solve this issue under the auspices of the climbing plan.

In my first executive decision I swallowed hard and explained that the name of the monument was beyond the scope of a climbing management plan but promised to pursue the issue later.

My staff and I locked ourselves away and in between budget calls, seasonal hiring and the usual frenzy of park business crafted a plan and put it out for public comment. The plan laid out a range of solutions but the preferred approach called for an array of mostly benign ideas like raptor closures, clean climbing guidelines and a cross-cultural education program. Of note (DRUM ROLL PLEASE), the plan called for a voluntary closure to climbing on the tower during June, a time period of special significance to Northern Plains tribes.

Our US Justice Department attorneys believed the park service could enforce a required closure as a reasonable accommodation of Indian religious practices, but in a surprise response the American Indian elders in the work group posited another path. Talks among the elders in the tribes advocated for a voluntary closure as a “gesture of respect.” Each climber would make a personal choice.

A voluntary gesture was deemed more valuable than one imposed by the government.

The letters, comments, diatribes, rants and philosophical treatises poured in. Some were thoughtful, incisive and problem-solving; some supportive, some opposed; some offensive, some on point, some rambling. And of course, the requisite number of wing-nuts wrote, too. This is what a public comment period looks like to an agency official. The mail provided our daily entertainment.

When my chief ranger or chief of resources would roll their eyes at a letter I would tell them, “We could go back to the bad old days where we sat in the superintendent’s office, smoked cigars, drank bourbon and invented a plan that only WE wanted. You know, the days when only certain people got a seat at the poker table in the backroom. And if you can’t get a seat at the table you don’t get to play.” They were long suffering. They endured my philosophizing and buckled down.

Printed and mailed to everyone and their brother, the final plan was done. Within a few short weeks a lawsuit was filed contesting the voluntary closure. *Bear Lodge Multiple Use Association v. Babbitt* asserted that the park service had overstepped its bounds and was establishing a government-endorsed religion by virtue of endorsing a voluntary closure to climbing. The lawsuit also alleged damage to a local climbing guide’s business.

Mountain States Legal Foundation, a western non-profit whose hobby is suing the federal government, specifically land management agencies, supported the suit. The foundation is former Interior Secretary James Watt’s old outfit and this type of legal wrangle is their bread and butter. Bear Lodge Multiple Use Association was the local cabal of the Sagebrush Rebellion, the western anti-federalist gang.

It was heady stuff. A First Amendment lawsuit. And on the side of the angels.

But things got ugly.

A former superintendent’s wife authored a letter to the editor in which she complained that allowing Indian people to leave prayer bundles in the monument was leaving trash... Indians were dirty... The Indians were never seen at the Tower before, etc. A local climbing guide, the primary plaintiff in the lawsuit, wrote a letter demanding that I control “my Indians,” disgruntled that I had okayed an Indian encampment and Sun Dance. Earlier in the saga, this guide had collected prayer bundles near the Tower and tossed them on the

table at a local climbing club meeting—an action that caused the club to shirk in shame.

Not long after these blips on the radar, the chief ranger came into my office and closed the door. A truism among park superintendents is that if your chief ranger comes in and closes the door you are about to hear something you don't want to know. On this occasion he reported that the local bar talk called for “roughing her up or running her off the road.”

Some of this commotion was just a reprise of events two decades earlier. After the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed in 1978, a group of Lakota from Pine Ridge, in an assertion of their desire to be recognized, showed up at the Tower and set up a semi-permanent camp. Tipis sprouted. They cut down willows for a sweat lodge and demanded that they be allowed to take a deer. Part of the national wave of Indian activism at this time, this turn of events put the National Park Service and the local community in a tizzy. The park closed. An NPS law enforcement team rushed in. Negotiations ensued. The sweat lodge was permitted but the killing of a deer was not. At some point, a local cowboy got liquored up and shot into the encampment, killing a 55-gallon drum. Everyone scared themselves and things wound down. Over time the whirlwind morphed into a very staid Sun Dance held every June.

The bar talk was not unexpected. It was just talk. I took some precautions but I was pretty sure my neighbors would still stop to change a tire, pull me out of a ditch, or help if I broke down on the side of the road. My Mandan colleague at Little Bighorn had been spat on and received death threats. Another nearby superintendent, part of an interracial marriage, suffered men in pickup trucks lurking menacingly outside his home to intimidate his wife. I kept my local sheriff and the county commissioners informed. My staff looked out for me, and I for them.

American Indians tell of a time in the past when the “two-legged, the four-legged and the winged” all spoke the same language. All living beings could communicate with one another. I told my staff that we were just hoping to get the “two-legged” and the “two-legged” to speak with one another.

Devils Tower flashed in the national media. It was a First Amendment knock down drag-out. *The Denver Post*, *Rocky Mountain News*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Rapid City Journal*, *Philadelphia Enquirer*, *Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Indian Country Today*, *National Public Radio*. The list went on. What was the government's responsibility? Were we establishing a religion or allowing the free expression of religion? Harry Smith, on *CBS Good Morning*, commented about the controversy “in the middle of nowhere.” I chided him, saying lovingly, “the middle of everywhere.”

To outsiders it might have appeared that we were fighting a skirmish somewhere off in the hinterlands but nothing could have been further from the truth. Colleagues in the regional and Washington offices bolstered me. A

mentor from Grand Canyon sent a note reminding me that “you do not fight your battle alone.” The Cheyenne River Sioux stood at our side in court. The Native American Rights Fund, the Group of Concerned Scientists, the Medicine Wheel Coalition of Sacred Sites, the Standing Rock Sioux, the Northern Arapahoe, Sissetonwahpeton Sioux, National Congress of American Indians, the Baptists, the Catholics, the Presbyterians, the Jews, the Friends, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and others filed *amici curiae* Friend of the Court briefs on our behalf. My boss dispatched a note saying, “We support you more than you can ever know.”

But it wasn't just the lawsuit. Part of the uproar was the monument name. Making good on our commitment to the Indian community, I was escorting a group to Salt Lake City to present an educational panel to the US Board of Geographic Names. The local mayor, my chief of resources and someone from the Indian community would speak. We were floating the idea that the name of the geographic feature could be changed to *Mato Tipila* or Bear's Lodge or Tipi (the name on some early maps) while the name of the monument would stay the same, an inclusive strategy that had been employed elsewhere. In Alaska's Denali National Park, the peak until recently was named Mt. McKinley and the park itself retained the aboriginal name. Officially (and respectfully) the peak now also bears the aboriginal name, Denali.

The more the mayor of Hulet, our nearest local community, thought about things the angrier she became and she petitioned my boss for my removal. In a nutshell she griped that I was doing revisionist history, wasting taxpayer dollars and giving the Indians special treatment. “I am sure the name change would be a big feather in her bonnet. [A hilarious metaphor under the circumstances.] She is very smooth and extremely good at what she does.” Also “This was only the tip of the iceberg.” In reply my boss suggested that what the mayor was observing was simply American Indians being more assertive than in the past. “In any event we are entirely satisfied with Superintendent Liggett's performance of her duties and intend to continue her tour until its normal completion.”

Part of the hoopah was the timing of a recent executive order. President Bill Clinton had just signed an Executive Order on Sacred Sites, an effort to bolster the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978), which contained no penalties for failure to act. The law was a nice policy statement but really nothing more. The rumor mill claimed I had authored the new executive order. At the same time, I starred in a cartoon that was both racist and sexist in the local *posse comitatus* newspaper, the black helicopter, anti-United Nations rag that was printed periodically. The cartoon showed me in bed with an Indian, the Tower visible out the window, a motto on the wall declaring Your Tax Dollars at Work. I was depicted saying, “What shall we name it honey?”

My staff and I had devoted months to listening, listening, listening. There were terrible ironies, inequities and hard questions but ultimately the upshot didn't seem so difficult to me. In the middle of the whirlwind I penned an opinion piece published in *The Rapid City Journal*:

I laughingly tell that as a small child I was dragged through every mission church in the American Southwest. My mother denies this story. I go on to tell how she would dig in her purse for a wadded handkerchief or tissue and place it on my (then) blonde hair. She denies this account. But she smiles. At that time, I couldn't understand how little girls with tissue on their heads were being respectful. My mother confesses at this point. She explains at that time in the Roman Catholic Church women were to have their heads covered and, although we Presbyterians didn't believe that little girls should have tissue on their heads, we would respect the beliefs of others in their holy places.

When I watch the Toronto Blue Jays play baseball, I stand for the playing of the Canadian national anthem.

Despite these outward appearances, I am neither Catholic nor Canadian.

I was struck when the President spoke at Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day. He spoke of hallowed and sacred ground. We prayed together as a nation, and in the amphitheater there at Arlington, no one flew kites or rollerbladed during the ceremony.

I cry and leave offerings at the Vietnam Wall.

[At Devils Tower] ... The National Park Service stands accused of sponsoring, endorsing and promoting American Indian religion in violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. I argue that a gesture of respect costs us little and benefits us as a people—First People, most recent people, and Americans yet to come. I argue for reasonable accommodation. I argue for mutual respect.



The federal District Court of Wyoming upheld the voluntary closure. Mountain States Legal Foundation appealed to the Court of Appeals for the 10th District. The Appellate Court upheld the voluntary closure. In a last gasp attempt Mountains States appealed to the US Supreme Court. The Justices declined to review the case, content with the ruling of the lower court.

Author's Note: A virtual cottage industry of legal papers written regarding *Bear Lodge Multiple Use v. Babbitt* has proliferated in subsequent years as scholars, land managers and American Indian people wrestle with similar issues on public lands elsewhere in the West. The controversy regarding the name of the monument has yet to be resolved.

Toy-On It!

Glenage DeRyan

You've read the *Toyon* already, but what next? What are you gonna do, read it again? No one's got time for that! Look at all our back issues! Yeah, we want someone to read them, but let's be real, it's kind of a one and done thing. So now that you've finished with your copy, I've got some tips for you!

The *Toyon* looks great on your coffee table. It makes you look well read and literate and shit, but none of that matters if your coffee table is full of coffee rings! No one will take you seriously unless your wood is flawless. So, use the *Toyon* not only to cover those unsightly blemishes, but as a coaster to prevent any more damage. Toy-On It!

While the *Toyon* is a great addition/edition to your bookshelf, it keeps falling over because you didn't level that mahogany leg right. What would your father say? Oh wait, he disowned you because you never learned how to level furniture. Here's your chance to rectify the past. Just slide your copy under the wobbly left leg and you're level baby! Toy-On It!

Humboldt State is an isolated place and it seems every single person has some kinda problem with their car/truck/horse drawn carriage. So, what do you do when you're traveling down the mountain roads of 101 and your engine/horse dies? Well, if like me, you carry your copy of the *Toyon* everywhere, you're fine. Use your lighter, because we all know you have a lighter, to light that big boy on fire and signal passing planes for help! Toy-On It!

Toyon is named for a bush. It's also printed on eco-friendly paper. That means you can bury it in the ground and with careful watering and love, a toyon bush will spring forth, ripe with berries that taste as good as poetry feels. Toy-On It!

It's a fact that people who have literature in their bathroom seem cooler than people who just use their phones on the toilet. Plus, in a pinch, *Toyon*'s eco-friendly pages can double as toilet paper. Yeah, it'll hurt, but think of the street cred. Toy-On It!

Need to send a message across a crowded classroom in a hurry? Does your phone suddenly not have any battery, or service, or that one mineral that makes phones work but is only available in the Congo and is mined in an unsustainable manner both socially and environmentally? Well good thing you can make a paper airplane out of the *Toyon's* pages and send it Lindberging across the room. Toy-On It!

You know the saying, "Kill two birds with one stone?" Well screw that, cause we love the Earth here! So instead, save two birds with one *Toyon*, and use the pages to build two medium sized bird's nests. Toy-On It!

Ok, let's be real for a second, this is Humboldt County, we all know you're gonna use it to roll a joint. But that's too obvious, so we won't even include that suggestion here. Instead roll several joints and smoke the hemp cover to boot. Toy-On It!

The sun is dangerous! It can give you gross wrinkles. Also, cancer. Use the *Toyon* to papier-mâché a giant hat to keep yourself safe from that so-called star. Have fun with it. Maybe you can make a giant baseball cap, or a sombrero, which is Spanish for hat, which I learned from the *Toyon*, the same multilingual journal you now hold in your claws. Toy-On It!

The *Toyon* is proud to feature multiple languages, which is a perfect way to get back at your old language teachers. Run up to Mr. Altch, waving a short story in French or German or Spanish, because he claims to know them all, and make him translate it on the spot. When he messes up even once, you can ridicule him, gaining a moral victory for all the years of pop quizzes and poorly timed dad jokes you couldn't even understand. Toy-On It!

Are you in love? How about just in lust? Well sometimes you want to get to know someone in the biblical sense, but you realize you don't have the right equipment, if you know what I mean...I mean condoms. Well good for you the *Toyon* is waterproof and with a little skillful origami and a few paper cuts in areas you really don't want papercuts, you can enjoy a good smash knowing you're safe from both sexually transmitted infections and sexually transmitted demons. Toy-On It!

Or you could just re-read it. After all, there are some amazing pieces in each issue. Plus, I've slipped in coded messages throughout the magazine, that when correctly deciphered will lead you to a secret treasure beyond your wildest imagining. A treasure so vast it would close the banks, flood the market, and topple the entire capitalist economic system in one fell swoop. That is the scope of the treasure, and perhaps only you, dear reader, are wise enough to find it! Or you can make it into a condom... either way, Toy-On It!

Contributors

Erika Adelina Andrews is a 4 foot 11 inch being of pure energy. She is an aspiring poet and filmmaker. She is the current Member at Large for the Epsilon Upsilon Chapter of Delta Phi Epsilon Sorority, Inc. She is also the Assistant Managing Editor of *Toyon Literary Magazine*. Erika loves hugs, you should give her one.

Isabel A . Arias is a contributor to volume 65.

Angelica Sage Armijo Keats first started doing ceramics 3 years ago when she began HSU. She instantly fell deeply in love with molding the earth. Clay guides her to see the interconnectedness of all that is. The clay pulled from the earth with the capacity to recognize every hand gesture, combined with water for malleability, finished with fire to provide strength. She is completely encapsulated by the elemental symbiosis of the process. She strives to recreate the feeling of interconnection through manipulating high fire clay into organic structures. Angelica is intrigued by the potential of surface manipulation and not bound to any specific rituals with the clay body. Instead she lets her subconscious and hands work together to manifest the feeling of interconnection into the physical, to create sculptures that eluminate light. Angelica always honors the divine feminine within her work, calling on the power of the sacred womb space that nurtures all life, tapping into the same creative abundance that allows life to form and channelling it into clay.

Donel Arrington is a poet, screenwriter, playwright, and musician who lives in Northridge, California.

Brian Michael Barbeito is a contributor to volume 65.

Edward E. Brock was born in Denver, Colorado. He grew up in the foothills of Boulder and eventually moved to Pueblo. When Mr. Brock is not writing or doing nothing he can be found sleeping, eating, and generally just trying to be as much a plant as possible. Mr. Brock would also like to take this opportunity to say he loves his cactus, Barnabee, very much.

Greg W. Childs lives, and consequently writes, in an apartment in Arcata, California with classy wood panelling on the walls and a retro all stainless steel kitchen counter. He's also an English major at Humboldt State University and a Vallejo California native.

Carlos A. Corona Jr. It's just life.

Glenage DeRyan is the name of a person who goes to HSU It's totally not Raymond Carver though, who's still super dead.

Christina H. Dunbar by day is an aspiring Speech Therapist. By night, she is an artist, writer, performer, and blogger. Her body lives in the Bay Area while her heart resides beyond the Redwood Curtain. She has previously been published in the *North Coast Journal* as a finalist in their flash fiction contest, and the *Spartan Daily* where she advocated for transgender, woman's, and indigenous rights. You can follow her at <https://chdunbar.com>

Farnaz Fatemi is a contributor for volume 65.

Patrick D. Garcia Jr. A brief documentation of a large woman rights march in San Luis Obispo, California. Thousands showed up displaying their decorative hats and picket signs to protest the government actions happening then. Women, men, children, and infants proudly marched through the rain in a united display of feminism.

Asha Galindo is a writer and poet originally from San Diego, CA. She mostly writes about herself and understands why you find that uncomfy. Asha aspires to be "the funny one." She lives in Eureka, CA.

Eloisa Garcia-Caro was born and raised in Fresno, California. She's inspired by graffiti, and her family, blood and non blood related. Most of her family is from different parts of Mexico, meaning that Eloisa grew up in a Spanglish environment. She related more to her family members that were into painting and drawing. Her uncle is her biggest inspiration and supporter. She was introduced to different mediums by her uncle, such as painting, drawing and photography. Her work is mostly about time spent in Fresno, whether it was her childhood and after, and even the couple days she visits when she gets time off from school. Usually, she'd take tons of photos and videos when she goes back to Fresno, and comes up with compositions based on the images. Painting and drawing are her preferred mediums, and it's all she wants to do. It's a passion of hers. It's something she's always been doing since she was a kid, considering her uncle gave her a sketch book before she could properly write. She had trouble with finding support from her family about her choice, and caused her to question herself. All it took

to convince her to go through with studying art was one lady back in Fresno. Eloisa painted windows for shops during the holidays, and during one of her sessions, a woman who was clearly on something passed by. For a moment, she stopped Eloisa to tell her how beautiful she thought the paintings were and asked repeatedly if she was an artist. Eloisa said she was trying, to which she responded with “Do everything you gotta do. Go to school, and keep making work, it's beautiful.” Then she continued walking, yelling at her reflection.

Anna Abraham Gasaway Growing up in Gary, Indiana, Anna Abraham Gasaway has witnessed what destruction pollution does to the environment, and what poverty does to the human spirit. She has published poetry in *Last Exit*, *San Diego Reader*, *Mesa Visions*, and *CityWorks*. She performed creative nonfiction in a multidisciplinary storytelling showcase for So Say We All. When not behind a pen, she hike along the beaches and canyons of San Diego and swim at the pool at the YMCA. She lives with her husband, son and boxer mastiff in Linda Vista.

Wyatt Georgeson is a graduate of Humboldt State University's English program. He was born and raised in Humboldt County. His interests include storytelling in every form. In furthering his journey through higher education, he intends to research masculine narratives with the goal of producing work that promotes mental-health awareness and encourages reflection on the topic of masculinity for boys and men.

Caleb L. González is a third-year graduate student in the Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Nonfiction and an instructor of College Composition at Colorado State University. His work has been published in literary journals and travel magazines such as *The Hawai'i Review*, *Wanderlust-Journal*, and *InTravel Magazine*. When he is not writing, he enjoys traveling and listening to music in multiple languages, since his bachelor's degree is in Spanish and Latin American Literature. With a busy schedule, he is slowly expanding his vocabulary to include more languages like Italian, Farsi, Greek, and Arabic.

David Holper has done a little bit of everything: taxi driver, fisherman, dishwasher, bus driver, soldier, house painter, bike mechanic, bike courier, and teacher. He has published a number of stories and poems, including one collection of poetry, *64 Questions*. His poems have appeared in numerous literary journals and anthologies, and he has recently won several poetry competitions, in spite of his contention that he never wins anything. He teaches English at College of the Redwoods and lives in Eureka, California, far enough the madness of civilization that he can still see the stars at night and hear the Canada geese calling.

Olivia Howard is an undeclared freshman at Humboldt State University. She hails from San Diego, has a passion for art, and working with kids and animals.

Kathryn D. Johnston likes historical graphic novels, picking berries, and Latin Mass. She's studied art at schools all over California, and is happy to be graduating from Humboldt State University this Spring.

Katia G. Karadjova is the College Librarian for Natural Resources & Sciences and the World Languages & Cultures Librarian at Humboldt State University (HSU), California, USA. She was born and raised in Bulgaria, Europe. Katia is a Ph.D. Candidate (Information Science), Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Australia. She has an educational and work background in Physics and Documentary Filmmaking and speaks several languages. Katia is an active scholar and her areas of scholarly research include: Culturally grounded approaches to Information Literacy, International librarianship through the lens of human rights & travel literature, and Mindfulness & Contemplative pedagogy. She is a poet and a fiction writer. Katia has published two books of poetry and a book of collected and translated Gypsy fairy tales. In her free time Katia enjoys photography, racquet sports, and traveling.

Jessica C. Lao is a contributor to volume 65.

p joshua laskey currently writes in Sacramento, California. He is co-founding Artistic Director of Theater Galatea and founding co-publisher of Indomita Press as well as Associate World Literature Editor for *The Literary Review*. His published work includes original, adapted, and translated plays as well as original and self-translated short stories and poetry. For his work, he has received the *Toyon Literary Magazine* Multilingual Award in Translation, Multilingual, or Spanish-Language Writing, which was awarded to a self-translation of one of his short stories.

Blake Lavergne is a self taught artist originally from Louisiana and currently residing in California. Blake is a self taught artist creating mixed media Dark Surrealism using any tool or supply that he can get his hands on painstaking using innovative and cross hatching techniques to transmute the idea in his head onto canvas through the Alchemy that is hard work. Blake's subject matter is the worshipping of Dark Art focusing on contemplation of the human condition and death while expressing the struggle of grasping the vastness of the outward universe while trying to simultaneously cope with the inner universe that is our imagination and his art is overall used as a overall catharsis for mental illness. He Truly believes he would not be alive if it were not for his creations.

Kimberly Lee left the practice of law some years ago to focus on motherhood, community work, and creative pursuits. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Sun*, *Literary Mama*, *(mac)ro(mic)*, *The Satirist*, *Toasted Cheese*, *Thread*, *Foliage Oak*, and *LA Parent*, amongst others. She lives in Southern California with her husband and three children, and is currently at work on her first novel.

Deb Liggett Now retired, Deb Liggett, is a twenty-five-year veteran of the National Park Service. Her assignments spanned the nation: Great Sand Dunes, Grand Canyon, Big Bend, Dry Tortugas, Voyageurs, Everglades, Devils Tower, Lake Clark, Katmai, Aniakchak and the Alagnak river. She served as superintendent at Devils Tower and for the four southwestern Alaska park units. She has a degree in Environmental Biology from the University of Colorado, Boulder. An essayist and poet she and her husband live in Tucson, Arizona.

Gabriel Cadena Paez is an ESL and Bilingual Education Coordinator and Teacher at a public elementary school in Chicago which he began in 2013, after graduating from Florida State University with a Creative Writing & Political Science degree. He received his Masters in Teaching from Dominican University in 2017, specializing in Bilingual Spanish education and English as a Second Language. His work has been published by the *Acentos Review*, *Socialist Worker*, and *Chicago Union Teacher*. His personal blog is gpaezblog.wordpress.com, and his email is gabrielpaez90@gmail.com.

Christian Riley lives near Sacramento, California, vowing one day to move back to the Pacific Northwest. In the meantime, he teaches special education, writes cool stories, and hides from the blasting heat for six months of the year. He has had dozens of short stories published in various magazines and anthologies, and across various genres. His debut novel, one of literary suspense, titled *The Sinking of the Angie Piper*, has recently been published. For more information, go to chrisrileyauthor.com.

Heather D. Rumsey believes in the power of words.

Ryan A. Sendejas Understanding one's sense of place is crucial to the human experience. Place could be defined as a physical environment or a niche within social structures, and it is the foundation understanding of the world. This image is a juxtaposition of photos taken at 4th and E St. in Eureka, historically this street has been a place of power and privilege within Humboldt County, that has defined a sense of place for some while excluding those who have been deemed as the "other". The base photo is of Chinatown in Eureka, there was once a community of predominantly Chi-

nese migrants, who build a large proportion the infrastructure for railroads and industry. In 1885, the expulsion of Eureka's whole Chinese population took place after the shooting of city councilman David Kendall. Chinatown no longer stands, but the ill sentiment of defining place for others in Eureka still exist today. Within the frame, there are photos of people who live on the streets of Eureka and their accounts of unjust laws and treatment in Eureka. As time passes the physical environment of Eureka is in constant motion. Unfortunately, the assigning of place for marginalized groups has given rise to very problematic social issues, that imposes an unjust reality for some.

Korinza Shlanta is a senior in the literary studies pathway at Humboldt State University. She recently started a journey in exploring photography as a tool for creative expression over the last few years. When she moved to Humboldt, she had only ever looked at the school online but still felt a deep desire to move north into the trees and away from the stifling desert heat. Korinza has found an intense connection to the surrounding area and has developed her love of plants, music, and books. She is the first president of Humboldt's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta: Alpha Psi Theta and hopes to help students achieve their academic goals and build a stronger community in her remaining time as a student at HSU. As of now, she is currently planning to go to grad school for a Master's degree in library science with a joint certificate in book studies from the University of Iowa.

Giselle M. Strauss works in a wide range of mediums, the artist seeks to express a sense of affinity to the particular cultures and ethnic groups that captivate her imagination and provide her with the visual stimuli from which she draws artistic inspiration. This cultural inspiration leads her to create works that are infused with the patterns, colours, and design elements characteristic of the arts and crafts of specific cultural groups. Apart from cultural works, she also favours botanical subjects, with a special emphasis on plants from the African continent. In fact, the inspiration for all the pieces in this group of works can be traced back to the African Motherland.

Ayşe Tekşen lives in Ankara, Turkey where she works as a research assistant at the Department of Foreign Language Education, Middle East Technical University. Her work has been included in *Gravel*, *After the Pause*, *The Write Launch*, *Uut Poetry*, *The Fiction Pool*, *What Rough Beast*, *Scarlet Leaf Review*, *Seshat*, *Neologism Poetry Journal*, *Anapest*, *Red Weather*, *Ohio Edit*, *SWWIM Every Day*, *The Paragon Journal*, *Arcturus*, *Constellations*, *the Same*, *The Mystic Blue Review*, *Jaffat El Aqlam*, *Brickplight*, *Willow*, *Fearsome Critters*, *Susan*, *The Broke Bohemian*, *The Remembered Arts Journal*, *Terror House Magazine*, *Deep Overstock*,

and *Dash*. Her work has also appeared or is forthcoming in *Straylight*, *Lavender Review*, *Shoe Music Press*, *Havik: Las Positas College Anthology*, *Sincerely*, *The Courtship of Winds*, and *Mizmor Anthology*.

Cody Thomas is a first semester graduate student in the Applied English Masters program from a small town outside of Redding, CA. After taking two years off between his undergraduate at San Diego State University, he much prefers the clean air and north coast beaches of Humboldt to the southern California life.

Janna Trowbridge is a contributor to volume 65

Ashley F. Underwood aka the master of the "Irish Goodbye," traveled to Colombia for her 30th birthday to snap as many photographs as she possibly could. Nowadays, she can be found in her hobbit-hole in the redwoods of Humboldt County or skulking the rafters of the Opera House donned with a mask and a cape. - Mischief Managed.

Ryan Van Lenning has an M.A., and is author of *Re-Membering: Poems of Earth and Soul*, *High-Cooing Through the Seasons* (a collection of haiku, available October 2018), and a new book *Headwaters and Heartrocks* (release date January 2019). His poems appear in various journals and the forthcoming book *A Walk with Nature: Poetic Encounters That Nourish the Soul* by University Professors Press. He is Co-Founder of Wild Nature Heart, guiding outer and inner wilderness journeys and facilitating authentic re-connections with nature and our deepest selves. Ryan lives outside in the open air among the redwoods and rivers.

Kirby Wright was born and raised in Hawaii and received his MFA in Creative Writing at SFSU. He recently hiked the 26-switchback trail down to the Kalaupapa Settlement on Moloka'i to research his late grandmother's life story.

Andrena Zawinski's third and recently released full poetry collection is *Landings*. Her poems have received accolades for free verse, form, lyricism, spirituality, social concern and have appeared in *Progressive Magazine*, *Verse Daily*, *Rattle*, *Nimrod*, *Comstock Review*, *Aeolian Harp*, and are widely anthologized. Long time teacher of writing and feminist activist, she founded and runs the San Francisco Bay Area Women's Poetry Salon and is Features Editor at PoetryMagazine.com

Monk Zhang was born and raised in China. He lived in Canada for seven years before moving to Humboldt in 2017. He is enthusiastic about poetry and jazz music.

Credits

David Holper, "Dépayement" was first published in *Inquietudes Literary Journal* (Nov. 5, 2018). Reprinted with permission of the author.

Caleb L. González, "On the Death of Travel Writing" is concurrently published by *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Courses*, Special Issue: Re-Mapping Travel Writing in the 21st Century, edited by Stefan Jatschka, Nigel Krauth, and Stephanie Green, journal published by the Australasian Association of Writing Programs. Reprinted with permission of the author.

Jessica C. Lao, "The Wordsmith as Worldsmith in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*" was first published in the e-journal *Literary Yard*. Reprinted with permission of the author.

Kimberly Lee, "Departure" was first published in *Indiana Voice Journal*. Reprinted with permission of the author.

Ayşe Tekşen, "Balloons" was first published in *The Remembered Arts Journal*. Reprinted with permission of the author.



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