

# SPRU SFE



# DUSIE

*the Asian Anglophone edition*

2016

edited by Cynthia Arrieu-King



## Introduction

For this issue of *Dusie*, I wanted to create a space where people could write Anglophonic or multi-lingual poems that they felt like writing but also enjoy a space designated “Asian” in the broadest ways possible. A freedom—let’s never forget—that doesn’t encroach on someone else’s; that moves toward self-determination. To me, that’s peace. I have all my life liked seeing things that are somewhat different together: quilts of cloth oddly matching/not matching, or houses in a row, or pageants. Friends used to tease me about the mixed tapes I gave them in high school because they seemed to have no “theme”: soft dirge of strings, then suddenly, a hip hop track. But why not? Seems like the way life is. Seeing designs, music, poems and people gather together in such difference is so heartening to me. Witness, narrative, lyric, fragment, daily life, ode, war, sexcapades, country western personas, indignation. Something like caught volition. The dream that includes us all: probably undreamable. But I think about it a lot.

So then, why an issue of Asian poems written in English rather than of everyone? I was sitting on the beach in LA in March with Sueyeun Juliette Lee. We were looking at the ocean, the Pacific ocean, and I was considering that if I were still at the AWP bookfair I’d been at the day before, I might be selling books, but that blue! Pacific Ocean blue. It’s there and it’s not. It’s hovering and it’s horizontal. It looks like you could put your hand through it and find it to be air. It makes me think about the phrase “The myth of Asian America” that I first heard from Marlon Unguerras years ago. The ocean of the Pacific Rim touching so many other places feels revelatory. What if we didn’t feel, as I have, alone or accidental. Let’s just take a quiet moment to be caught together in a snapshot.

When I was growing up in the Midwest there were no Asians in my grade school and two Asians in my high school that I knew of. Then in graduate school, when my professor told me I should go see Maxine Hong Kingston it actually took me a minute to figure out why she was telling me. I had the immense privilege of going to state schools for free. I had the immense privilege of being raised by people who thought a typewriter was a perfectly good way to preoccupy a four year old and that writing poems was one of the best things I could do. (Let’s pause and appreciate the aggressive disappointment some Asian families might throw your way if you said you wanted to write: or appreciate that sometimes such family is/was simply not there). I was never going to go to a “fancy” school, but when I was a teenager this weird magazine showed up in the mail—meant for me and bought by my dad—*The New Yorker*. That magazine then opened up in my imagination a potential space—space where my poems *might be*. Where writing is *seen*. Where it doesn’t stay hidden.

The idea of being okay with being seen seems important and strange. Situational. The recent publication of the Calvin Trillin yellow peril poem in *The New Yorker* gave me a chance to reassess the safety/lack of safety in that literary space. Where does worth come from? Even while I find a way to stand back and take a look at the institutions by which we measure “success” and wish to sincerely ask why do we need them—I see in multiple venues, in “small” magazines and big ones all those people who were not visible to me during most of my adulthood and my sheer fabular luck at being able finally to see them. All the Asian writers that not-Asian people were telling me about. This is my particular vantage.

I was telling Juliette about all the ins and outs of contacting poets I wanted to put in this issue. The poems I have loved, grown on, gotten into. How hilarious the process is of attempting to reach out to these beloved poets. How I draw the line when the only way to solicit poems from a poet is to get their cell phone number. My imagination so captured by the Timothy Yu meme of Keanu Reeves' surprised Bill face with the hashtag #actualasianpoets underneath: With some sense of failure, I tell you it was not possible for me to get hold of a Keanu Reeves poem. You know, I say to Juliette, while I gaze at the strangely there and not there sea, "It all started when that white guy what's his name published a poem as...oh what's the name...Chow...Yun-Fat." Or whatever. I actually blanked on the name and forgot who Chow Yun-Fat was. Then I remember Chow Yun-Fat is an international movie star who does a lot of stunts. I look at Juliette. She's giggling. Oh yeah: that's not his name and fuck that other guy, the white one who submitted his poem under the name of a Chinese woman because he thought it would make his poem easier to publish. While he certainly deserved to be called out, I need a different occasion from which to launch this issue.

You know the sweet feeling of being asked to be in the picture? And how easy it is to just step forward and then: you are in the picture. I went to Kundiman Asian-American writers retreat when I was 33, completely ready to feel on the outside for five days, jaded, and self-protecting. The way we brought out our poems on the first day and wept together: that program is only **one** of many ways there are and should be to see and understand the richness of Anglophone poetry written by Asians and of what it means to have Asian-ness. One contributor to this issue of *duisie* wrote me, "I feel like you put all my poetry family in one house." Ah! Awesome. Too, people wrote me they were so grateful that I asked, in my call for poems, for as idiosyncratic an interpretation of Asian as they felt like sending.

Each poem stakes and flares its brightness: The horse and the lemon pie constellating around death and fathers; an implication so intuitive and so strong, Sharon Suzuki Martin transmits them without having to spell it out. The messed up scat and homage and crazy spellings in Evan Chen's long sequence to WCW. The solemnity of the ocean in Tung-Hui Hu's poem. The joy in hearing new voices and their wavelengths: Muradi Sahar; Hanae Jonas and others. The grandness of Wong May and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's tone. Bursting into tears after reading *each* poem that Iris A. Law sent me. And on and on. After gathering all this poetry and some visual art too, I recognized something about myself as I did the first time I found myself amongst poets who had parents or ancestors from the same place as I did. I could see there are silences we carry in ourselves that mean a million things; there are as many voices. To attend to the silences and the voices means saying: *hey what have you got? Send it to me.* Hopefully, there's some nourishment in the pause offered here: holding doubt, recognizing or seeing for the first time, a consideration of complexity. And some revelation for those who may simply not know the voices: hey, time to catch up. And then certainly, the anthologies that have come before, the issues that have been before: seeking out generations of these poems, looking so forward to what's coming next. I know my peers have so much in store: Mg Roberts, Ronaldo Wilson, and Bhanu Kapil's anthology, essays being published every week.

When *Dusie* editor Susana Gardner gave me the chance to make a long issue saying, “Anything is possible, it can be what you imagine it to be” I took her at her word. Compared to the issues of other poetry journals, this one might be long. You might have to dig in to it and treat it like a strange galaxy. So much beautiful navigation to be had here by this glitter. I can’t fully list for you what and whose work I wished were also here but that I did not manage to gather here: the living and the dead. You know who they are or you will. You are doing the work of gathering too. There are limits on how far back I can see and how far into the future I can go. The real gathering would require infinite space.

Cynthia Arrieu-King  
Summer 2016

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*DILRUBA*  
AHMED

WHAT THE MUSES TOLD ME

The muses told me I was too controlling and meddling, and a cheat. They did not notice the drinking. In the first dream, I cheated a club of its membership fee even though I valued its purpose. In the next dream, I told a friend that her roommate was bossy and was attracted to her, because he tried to stop her from reading romance novels that he said might "create feelings." She answered, "He said that? That is so proud!" and as she left to confront him, I realized I had opened her eyes to something she had been unable to see, and that perhaps ignorance was best. In the final dream, I tried to wrangle my son into getting ready for the day while he refused in every manner. Frustrated, angry, I finally took a deep breath, looked at him, and said, "When I ask you to meet me downstairs in 20 minutes, you get ready just fine, right?" He nodded. "Why don't you just do that?" I realized then that he was 20 years old and I had no control over what he did or did not do.

## BAD DREAM 1

The bus burns like a lit skull while we scuttle from fear to fear. Blazing buildings still within us, hot candles we can't snuff out. Perfect strangers feign tenderness to loot a victim's bag while a nosebleed distracts. Young men push back at police with SWAT gear, shields as clear as baby bottles. Two women place their knives at the plate side quietly and proceed to stab each other anyway, aiming to reopen and poke the oldest of wounds. I call out in my sleep like a shunned neighbor: Bad dream—bad dream—down doggie, down.

*ZUBAIR*  
AHMED

ONLY THE OCEAN CAN REPEAT ITSELF

I am empty again after California with her sand  
Had filled me to the shape of a lion. Moving away  
To this foreign town reduced me to the sound of a tin can  
Rolling on the sidewalk with each small wind  
Making its way toward the end designed by men  
Who in their long lives tolled to make these suburbs  
Which drain everything abandoned to the nearby rivers.  
The year is irrelevant, and the crows here bear no mark  
Of home. I've become so married to the lives of my past  
That I can no longer turn my wrist toward a stranger  
And say hello. So I drink away my time in this apartment  
Petting a cat who doesn't exist, stoking my beard which  
Was once a house of guests. I can see the sky more clearly now  
Than I ever could, and for the first time her blue is a blue  
Like the blockage of blood. I inject myself with fear  
Because all the other emotions have left me.  
Once again I find myself looking for old patterns  
In a place where even the birds are new.  
I run my fingers across the dark lines of my joints.  
I am a failure. A man too thin for the wildfires of the Pacific.  
I am far away from where I belong.  
But I try to be someone who'll make you proud.

*KAZIM*

ALI

## LARAMIE JOURNAL

Rocks bright yellow, thirty feet high and we walk small between them.

Sapphire sky and glowing white on the ground, rock-bones, rock-bed, rock wonder.

I climb frightful inside the house of stone and spell myself.

In fragmented space and time one sees oneself in slivers and snatches.

Robin the lean sailor writes to me about living without lust.

Labors of Psyche in ordinary time I climb skyward on the rock-trails but wanting only the  
flat ground, the field.

Field of snow, saint Matthew of Every Body.

Everybody lashed to the fenced, latched to spirit slowly draining from the body in two clear  
tracks.

What I said to the Missouri students about "mountain time": how do mountains mark  
time after all.

Clattering in my mind as the snow comes down, I lose myself, lose everything.

Mathias and Julia come later in the afternoon, slick-wet with snow and rain and speaking.

November in the ground in Laramie snow.

My small book of sentences and theory is bliss because it is the mind wondering about the  
word or world behind the world or word.

Half of anything (but loneliness) and you're in negative quantity but half loneliness is even  
worse and more alone.

Agha Shahid Ali going blind and reciting into darkness and silence.

Left with nothing, after all these years and death between us Janis Joplin still wailing away  
on the radio.

Why so haunted by ghosts or ghosts of an idea.

Because half loneliness and you are still left there with half and besides lonely for your  
loneliness.

We trudge through November snow to reach actually nowhere.

Fence gone and emptiness gone: housing developments on two sides and a superstore and parking lot on the third.

I think of it a week later when I am in New York telling someone to read Shahid's poems and they don't know who he is and ask me to spell it.

Fourth side stretches away and away into half loneliness, disappeared death.

No one will take me there to the place the fence isn't any more.

Actually nowhere marked.

Take it, take another little piece of my heart.

# FATIMAH ASGHAR

FAMILY HISTORY *an erasure of project chick by cash money millionaires*

they  
suck everything out  
squeeze greasy  
throat moist (as)  
ruby red vodka.  
give me  
my momma. send no evil in this house.  
i('m) livin  
hard  
(my) chest a building  
record  
pussy  
summer winter spring fall.  
lord  
catch me.  
them white folks code—  
bitch fuck  
shoot dice  
take ya life  
(aint right/ aint right).

## WE HAVE LEFT BETTER CITIES THAN THIS

*After T.J. Jarrett*

Jumma, the way it leaves your mouth rolling  
with hills. The city is always blooming  
mid-sentence. The word smells the way Concord  
did those bright mornings when my family  
shoves us into a car & drove to the suburbs  
parking by a hayfield & watching the cows graze.  
*Carry your city with you.* We left Lahore as bombs  
stirred the coffee sky but before they started throwing  
acid at women's faces, in the days when your dhubutta  
could slip down to your shoulders in the marketplace  
hair peeking out at every angle. We left London  
but no one really remembers we were ever there  
anyways. New York refuses to belong to anyone.  
We threw our bodies at all sides of that city  
lined our pockets with its subway maps, dusty air  
& sidewalk chestnuts. Boston—where the stray  
wisps of our family settled. Like dandelion seeds  
looking to root. Where the cherry blossoms  
grew each spring along the river & I mistook  
them for jasmine & wondered if it was summer  
in Jumma.



## COSTCO

The first time I maybe accidentally  
might-could have eaten pork  
was the winter of 1996  
& *No Diggity* belted in the car

while we drove the thirty minutes  
to Cotsco—the land of aisles  
where food came in boxes  
you needed a blade to unwrap.

My auntie & uncle had just  
immigrated from Pakistan.  
Not blood but not-not blood  
either. *We won the lottery*

*✧ got a green card* they told me  
& I had no idea what that meant,  
where they bought the tickets or  
why a card would be green

or if I needed one too, if when I  
was finally grown enough to adult  
I could step into the corner store  
& buy it from behind the glass

in the counter. Lottery felt like  
a gamble, a sin the Qur'an told us we  
couldn't have. When I finally  
became old enough to adult

I pressed my lips to alcohol  
bottles, pussies & penises  
over & over, the idea of sinning  
a badge of honor, but in the winter

of '96 I could count my sins on my fingers  
& we explored America together—  
hip hop our chosen soundtrack  
me, my sisters, my auntie & uncle

so close to a real family  
I could've forgot my parents were dead. & here  
we were, in America's  
stacked grocery aisles, so much food

no one needed to go hungry. But  
we were hungry, enough that my auntie forsaked  
the thought of making us wait for home-cooked  
Pakistani food

we lined up at the pizza counter  
the smell of grease & cheese alight  
on our tongues. By the time we got  
to the front there were only pepperoni

left, sweet circles calling our name.  
We didn't know what it was  
& the pizza man didn't understand  
my uncles accent, couldn't tell what

he was asking & handed us over  
the slices. Our Muslim family  
patting down the pizza together our mouths,  
singing Allah's name

before we ate.

# CRISTIANA BAIK

10/1

A cold flash of stars: altering wind, the direction wagoning,  
westeastnorthsouth: pages of leaves from tulip trees,  
liriodendron tulipifera: water of the harbor, this quiet place:  
of water, each movement's inflection an anaerobic intonation,  
water's composition fragile, elastic: motive compacted  
into trademarks: Just do it (™),: Think Different (™):  
Don't Leave Home Without It (™): yet its *hiraeth* (n.),  
it has always been hiraeth: language having a history,  
an untranslatable context: a subterranean wound beneath  
the skin, wound's birth from the blossoms of displacement:  
now anchored by breath's rhizomic expansion, extending,  
regenerating our lace-mesh bodies, ever molecular, ever  
diaphanous, ever wind-broken: say memory or the act  
of remembering is the attempt to re-story the better self,  
the impoverished heroine and never the subversive villainess:  
take a moment to note the moving light on the mattress,  
hands on the mattress, lying next to one another, you  
pointing to the purple beads of rain devouring the  
window pane: an interior architecture, the self's poem  
interior: a long stretch of thinking, a difficult language  
of things to come, the bone, teeth, wound of the thing:  
celebrating, tasting the salty brine, edging the universal sea:  
branches loosening like pages, looking up at singular leaves,  
thinking: life is too short to be minding the clash of dishes

*J. MAE*  
BARIZO

*For we are spirits drifting*

the jpeg of you  
at the digital symposium

the gif of your reciting  
a treatise on electronic

music, the matrix of analog  
craving, the tweet

about gardens, the pic  
of us sitting beside the pool

in Birkenstocks talking  
shit about Alban Berg

the effect of synthesizers  
on soundtracks, tell me

that your window will  
remember me, my thin arms

*MEI-MEI*  
BERSSENBRUGGE

from The Field for Blue Corn

3

Certain colors are the conversation  
we held one dusk, that altered  
from the violent afterglow of fresh bones  
to the gray corolla of old ones, only minerals  
As restless matrices in blue sage dissolved  
a horntoad ran under a bush. I insisted it was  
a baby bird. Then a baby bird *and* a horntoad  
ran out. Now, on a hill I never noticed  
between two close ones we've climbed, I see  
at an altered angle. Some small shift in refraction  
has set the whole plain trembling and hostile

4

I wondered if seasons were invented  
by our brain, which is maternal, to soothe  
chaotic events, since no springs here  
have been alike. Moths swarmed the elm tree  
one year, and bees the next, so I thought  
it was the teeming, but this year is dry  
austere, an anatomical drawing of the heart  
taken from life, inaccurate and scientific  
Branches without leaves over bare ground  
pretend to reveal everything. We revolved  
around ourselves as if we were central, the way  
the earth was, which is not, like this plain  
sun lights between the Taos Mountains and Jemez  
Now, move a little to the west. Seasons are  
an amulet against the heartbreak of things not unique  
dulling loss by flowerings, the columbine  
that died back. A rite of passage is the first  
winter, we need to survive meeting strangers  
as pulsating light and not explosions, the way  
a flower, as “the culmination of a plant”  
expresses its seductive intent

6

Color is an aspect of the light on a face  
and on the pale gash of a washout in the hills  
like spans of window glass on winter sky  
The hue of vapors is revealed through a filter  
of clouds with soulful articulation. We see  
blue shadows on peaks normally glittering  
with snow. I learned the palette  
of diffuse days. Positive tones, finely altered  
are silence and distance. In curtained rooms  
a pulse beats in prisms on the floor  
Other days one goes out adorned and sunburnt  
All the more precious a veined wing  
Undiluted brightness is an aspect with heroic  
edges, in spite of common immersion in sun  
as from the lover's face, veiled or aggressive along  
a large but rhythmic wave. As with  
land, one gets a sense of the variations  
though infinite, and learns to make references

# TAMIKO BEYER

## DE::CON::STRUCT

*Dear Poet: If you believe you have readers, then what are the ethical implications of the narrative tactics you choose?—Jill Magi*

So I asked myself instead of slipping out  
the back  
how narrative tactics are  
similar  
to military tactics.

### 1. Fight downhill; do not ascend and attack

Something like the form of a perfect triangle.  
Sixty degrees tucked in each corner, neat  
mechanical pencil strokes and all sides equal.

One: a boy in a bunker, flanked by highways thick with SUVs.  
One: a joystick in his hands; a drone drumming bombs.  
One: a book, a body *safe enough*.

### 2. When he is united, divide him

Dear reader, what else do you want? Fluxus,  
adobe, plastic jewels, paperweight, black ink?  
The impossible truth?

The forts here are historical landmarks visited by  
thousands of tourists daily, or they are dank caves in  
hillsides, layered with spray paint.

Tactics now are solo drones sounding nothing  
and everything like our crummy city apartments  
with killed crumbs on countertops. Our one

day sale items sweating in paper bags. Our  
tanking lines of hunger amid fast food  
chains and big box stores.



### 3. You should not linger in desolate ground

Check your watch again. We're hurtling forward and a weapon can look like anything. The perfect O of your mouth, our equilateral anger.

Note:

Headings by Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

# IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE WE WERE SINGLE-CELLED ORGANISMS

What trades on systems? Weather, linguistics, governments, economies.

We begin firmly anchored on the capitalist ground beneath our feet, muddy and uneven. We may end there, too. It is hard to see the right paths, covered in waste, covered in bramble.

Let's consider how each too-hot or too-cold day is a symptom of our collective refusal, whether we say it out loud or just in a small corner of our hearts.

Of course I recycle every hard plastic container I open.

At this point, I wish I could assert that climate change deniers are like typewriters and steam engines: obsolete artifacts of an industrial age that has brought us to his brink. But then, I would be wrong. Deniers and steam engines keep barreling over the landscape. And touch screens still assemble themselves in QWERTY.

:: dream of a rain-soaked city

a long hot season

the cracked-off branch swings ::

And what about policies undoing themselves in the quiet halls of convention centers, where the air deadens through complex ductwork scaffolded behind matte walls. Have you noticed how the color of the paint is always the same? DC or Paris, Geneva or Lima?

I correct myself. Policies do not and undo themselves. No, its the vested interests, unspooling what might benefit those of us riding the subways to work, those of us lining up, the earth's surface silently torqueing under our weight.

Men in three-piece suits, necessarily. Vests all silk and armless, knowing what to keep close to the chest.

How many secrets turn you transparent? So much depends on what you know, when.

:: the center belies

our slow death—bait

the flaxen flows ::

My colleagues intervene under simultaneous translation to change a phrase in international law. That is one kind of power. Having breasts does not necessarily make us smarter in such situations, but it helps to know intimately all the oceans we hold inside ourselves.

Look, I know you've heard the statistics countless times: how much of our bodies are water, how much water makes up the earth's surface, the degree of temperature change to signal the tipping point. What to do with the numbers? Take them into your warm, wet mouth. Chew.

By now, we know what it feels like to have taken part in a lifetime of the planet's destruction.

:: a shuffler in a stroke boat —

still blue flotilla—

stalled sand ::

How might it feel to be part of a system of reckoning, of remedy?

On the long, sticky walk through Manhattan, our bodies weep with heat. We define evaporation, become leaves unfurling in September. Unlikely prospects for survival, we dig into asphalt, taste what crumbles.

:: Find us alert—

the street of sky

tongue fast to bodies try ::

*MARCI*  
CALABRETTA  
CANCIO-BELLO

SIJO for EARLY SPRING, YEAR OF THE BOAR

My parents are rearing a new dog, a mottled, long-legged mutt.

These days, even neighbors skirt the yard when they sweep the porch, the wind dispersing ash from all the bowls of incense at the shrine.

## RETURNING HOME

I'm supposed to know how to do this--  
the bowing and taking off shoes at the door,

baskets laden with Asian pears and persimmons whose  
skins spiral from my blade like autumn.

How I carried packed boxes of fish,  
eels for fertility, salmon, carp.

I brought my parents pearls from the sea  
still nestled in the curve of abalone shells,

and one live octopus, a membrane ready to break in my  
hands before I reached the threshold.

But now I don't know what to look for in this city.

I've dug up my brother's last colors—  
ash and flower, chives blooming in a fire pit.

*THERESA*  
HAK KYUNG  
CHA



this is one of the pages  
where the sand grain story begins.  
this is one of the pages  
where the sand grain kept itself.  
has since left.                   thirteen years ago.  
it was thirteen years ago.                   maybe fifteen.  
i wonder if you remember.  
this was when i came to be introduced to,  
this One grain, sand of sand soil of soil  
it was more real  
than any real  
more imaginary  
than most imaginary.  
i went with it each pocket, each stone,  
each trouser cuff, each skirt hem, and shoe.  
each eye where would be  
tear caused  
listening to stories carried by  
this sand seed  
heard by this One   each place rested   touched  
  each person rested   touched  
is lost.  
is never lost.

i still see the round sun drawn  
just behind child head child arms  
and beneath beneath one of which would be  
this one particular grain would be  
this one particular sand grain.

four arches  
four columns  
smooth as pigeon  
fur smooth as churchyard  
lawn smooth as wall  
above partially hidden  
by ivy smooth as barefoot  
bottom the man on my  
left four benches from this  
one smooth as his  
forehead hair line white by sun ✓  
smooth as his  
notepad

there is shadow clearing  
atmosphere  
link departing linkage  
hesitant moment continuing as  
tongue runs over sealing words envelope  
folded words sealing  
sealed words

stillness<sup>A</sup> atmosphere  
over power

city's impose 4 GATES 4 WALLS  
4 CLOSURES FRONT BACK SIDE TO SIDE  
MULTIPLIED 4 TIMES 4 WINDS  
this evening

ii.

Rain	si loin	soon
Stain	un(e) regard/e	Gone
As, Fire	une semaine	Already
A come-ing	un rêve	Was a-gain





NO  
NOT  
NO  
not  
ONE  
NOT  
one  
NOT

NAME  
ONE  
NOT  
~~one~~ ~~via~~  
one  
NAME  
MIND  
via  
ONE

NO  
MIND  
one  
no  
no  
NO  
NO  
no  
NO

missing link  
manque  
absent from the chronology from the order (of things)  
(something) happened there a place where something could have happened  
something but it could not have been there not right at that place  
it must have been somewhere else elsewhere other it wasn't right. not right than  
goes on to say but it did happen  
not just at that very moment in time but it did happen

began on that road. i remember the beginning of the road. and the end.  
either the beginning or the end. depending on which way one looked at it  
i can remember some parts of that road. there is a right and a left  
but there is no name. it wasn't called any thing at least i was not  
aware of it. you knew just by heart, you knew how to get on it  
how to get back on it. unlike other roads. unlike unfamiliar roads  
that one gets lost in. there are no clues. one is there one is lost.  
un numbered un named at least unaware of it.  
read directions usually goes, behind such such house colors. how many  
of them you must pass

*you know just by walking*

what would she begin to say  
begin by saying

*content/  
constraint  
restraint*

there  
it was only there  
unlike anywhere else  
only if it wasn't so still  
only if it hadn't been then  
assured without doubt

there. closed. matter closed. onto something else. the next thing. the ne  
next step. a closer closer to a certain could-be truth  
breath taking  
whizz on by goes and goes disappears no sense of material in hand no gras  
-p what it could have been it happened just like that and went gone now  
gone now. now gone. i know it can't remain. not forever. not ever.  
take what is left leave what is left it's like that it will pass  
catalogue of all the cliches repeated everyone repeats each day a thou  
-and times pages and pages full of pagesful of in other words, that's  
how it is that's what it's all about that's how it happens so on and  
so on. does it lessen the initial state of being. does it end break  
smooth out the folds plis wrinkles wash out stains remnants start from  
beginning brand new clean clear spotless flawless what would be the evi  
evidence of it until then wallow in it pithing and entering it wearing  
it hiding in it turning it inside out over it dye it lie in it curl in  
it erase burn put it in a box blow on until it is in air wind breath i  
-ng hardens cracks melts residue dreg dried leaf flower between pages  
put away taken out again seldom frequently once in awhile trying to  
convince itself ~~that~~ never never again like elastic lile string stretc  
-hes unravels like water trickles everywhere regardless discriminates n  
not it goes and goes and comes back it reaches toes ankles calf knees  
thighs hips waist chest shoulders neck head head and above and no more  
no longer no sooner than it cries it stains it's written fills pores  
fixed on the brow hums in a drone inside head constantly it does not  
forget you speaks repeatedly a broken sentence melody over again the  
same fragment its mouth attached glued to ear to skin made to feel  
physically lets go over it again. to feel physically the pronunciation

enunciation perfect pitch perfect form sense its touching the words for  
formed o your arm your chest your eyes hands until your whole body is  
uttering an uttering pulsating with the words words once mi ht have bee  
been missed now there are all at once sway shake tremble out of control  
at mercy its heat electricity vibration exhale evry intake is to servic  
this mechanism this order this proceeding immediately fuel channel  
station fibre pigment note alphabet key octave tone

→ sits stands squats after 10 after 11 after 12 1 2 2:30  
timeless in the fog it comes with the fog after sunset it's morning  
every variation every change every hue temperament of weather time  
star earth moon tide spring autumn snow rain redness of earth  
it's jasmin it's lavender scent taste it's laughing moxckery  
something like affection like tenderness like tears like missing

~~atoms-molecules-dragon-flies-lew-ever-lake~~

what makes one think that it would be over finished at a certain  
period take it to the end upteenth time vertigo swoonpitfall  
crevice pledge vow promise miracle the undying unmoving resisting  
rockstance rockstate beholding no more no more than that not one ounce  
more down deeper no more other than that none other than that way  
go that way pass pass me pass here i'll look the other way i will not  
be recognizable invisible touch and go don't even touch just pass  
before pass after pass away from here. from here on turn the other  
way not even a profile the e will be a sliver of a remaining face  
in the light the rest in the dark in the shadow won't even turn won't  
even be able to turn won't be there not at all only just seemingly

you know because it's your memory too *your own memory*

i.

Untitled (the sand grain story), 1980; typewritten text and black-and-white photograph on paper; 14 x 8 1/2 in.; University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, gift of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Memorial Foundation, 1992.4.121.

ii.

Untitled (four arches, four columns...), 1976; artist's book: ink on paper, four pages; 12 x 9 in.; University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, gift of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Memorial Foundation, 1992.4.211.a-d.

iii.

Untitled (missing link, manque), c. late-1970s; typewritten text on paper, two-sided; 11 x 8-1/2 in.; University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, gift of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Memorial Foundation, 1992.4.260.

# CHEN CHEN

## MAYBE LOVE IS A TANDEM BIKE MARATHON UP IN THE ADIRONDACKS

Maybe love is a moron. Maybe love is saying Kierkegaard  
to the right person. Maybe love is a mushroom

the babushka plops in her basket right before  
the sun plops the earth in its mouth.

Maybe love is saying Nietzsche to the wrong person.  
Maybe love is knowing when to jet

& when to jettison. Maybe love is spelunking.  
Maybe love is a cave & you've forgotten your wellies.

Is your love primarily citrus or leather?  
Is my love plain cheese or overly pepperoni?

Björk is definitely love.  
My grandmother's love is three rotund Buddhas

on a sacred kitchen shelf. Or it's the high speed Internet  
she got for Christmas. Maybe love is not seeing

any contradiction. Maybe love is seeing every contradiction  
as another form of connection. Maybe love is trying

to dismantle capitalism as a radical leftist, while keeping  
grandmother happy as a PhD candidate. Maybe love is the dream !  
of a vibrator that works equally well for all the people.  
Maybe love is people vibrating. Maybe vibration is love.

Maybe I'm just trying to write a really good doing-it song,  
& failing. But in that failing is something funky,

maybe worthy. Most likely, Kierkegaard making out  
with Nietzsche, while the sun sets slow in Vienna

is a lyric I'm still working on.

## VOLLEYBALL

To say something soft & unafraid to have an armpit. A smell.

To be something smelly, true.

I was eight, climbing a tree with my mother. She was good at it. Laughed at most of my jokes. We were climbing to my treehouse, which was small & crude, but treehouse vs. no treehouse, the former always wins. Inside my treehouse: my rock collection & much-improved pillow fort. I already knew I didn't like girls, my mother already suspected, but rocks, pillows made impenetrable--she said she was excited to see.

But then she slipped & I couldn't catch & it took me a moment to feel bad.

It took me a moment to realize it was a dream.

One day, in real life, I asked my mother when she was at her happiest. She said when she was in college & got to play volleyball pretty much any time she wanted. She was serious. & I was crying. Realizing I'd hoped for a more recent example of happiness. Inside my mother's treehouse: a volleyball court. Her best most agile college friends. Sweat. A complex handshake-assphrase system. A sacred rope ladder. In the dream there could've been several giant pillows, or a single pillow-armed giant, & I wouldn't have needed to catch her, she would've been okay no matter what.

Except the what of what I felt.

Angry at her for slipping. Afraid she just wanted to stop climbing with me.

## will they / won't they / will i

will they / won't they kiss / date / finally fuck / fall / have fun making up / out /  
mocking some made up / take out / business guy / villain's "asian"  
accent / will they have a reason this time / will i reproduce the scene here /  
will i / by reproducing it rerun / renew a fucked up / overdone laugh / but  
who is laughing / how can you live in new york / seattle / ok scranton maybe  
makes sense for nine / ten critically lauded / commercially successful / binge-  
watched by me seasons / but only fuck / hear / see people of color when it's  
boring subplot / somehow related to white protagonists' breakup /  
engagement / new dog week / there was a week i was mistaken for three  
other chinese / not chinese but still asian i guess / people / there was a week  
the senior editor of a prominent / progressive journal asked if i was related to  
another asian poet / someone with my very common last name / my very  
common face apparently / there was a week or five i did not want to say hi  
to any white people / i wanted to stop seeing / hearing / doing what i have to /  
to dial down / apologize for / cover over / saying again / of course / again /  
it was irony / wasn't your intention / all the friendly / filler nouns /  
prepositional positions expected of me / to protect whiteness from its own  
failures / limitations / or is success dependent on being able to fuck / giggle  
over the minority you think will be fine / won't bite / likes you / like you do /  
would do you / why don't you fucking try to pronounce an / r / in chinese /  
japanese / hi / actually it's pronounced / differently / in the two different  
languages / but i don't want to reduce / reproduce asian as east asian / fall  
into the old traps / tropes / i don't want to be your new cultural chauffeur /  
racial tension masseur / i want to break your mouth / my ears / the screen  
displaying / replaying the boy / my first boyfriend who paused / said wow /  
you don't know what chink means / chinky eyes / people say it all the time  
here / where the chinese are taking over / will i ever forget that / i learned a  
racial / ethnic slur from my first boyfriend / he said i like your eyes / they're  
not really / chinky eyes / why did i say thank you / why did i stay / with the  
boy in college / for two years / the one who said but they make fun of  
everyone on the show / some things are just inherently funny / asians do  
tend to be short / shy / small / am i reproducing it yet / is my suffering self  
successful now / that it is seen by the right / white eyes / is a.w.p. so far from  
hollywood / don't i secretly hope for a t.v. deal based on this very poem /  
twenty-four lyric episodes in which an immigrant mother / father / gay  
immigrant son finally fucking screams / fuck you / you try leaving every thing  
/ one / every one / love / every / every / love / face / laugh / leaving /  
starting over / over / over / over / over / you try that / then say every letter  
perfectly



# CHING-IN CHEN

## INSPECTOR of JOURNALS MAKES INTRODUCTIONS

winter sibling mold and fire

### A Birthright

line a desk  
build paper  
drown records  
kept men with failing bodies

*born with an army  
in my father's tongue. She was one who  
lined the coats and gushed*

*pork  
fat, one who fasted  
tomatoes, who sizzled without mushrooms.*

Mocha, Red Sea, Lisbon, Madeira, Manila, Sumatra, India, China, Australia, Sandwich and Marquesas Island

*We marveled often at his dissolving  
mouth, how the hard  
sound of sweat on the pan,*

this matchmaker of tiny details

young man  
of the bitten seas

*how the body crafted no inheritance  
but what the teeth procured, familiar  
and dark between the lips*

dear basket,

(possibly Twana/Coast Salish #E3624)

They say your salt vein captain snatch gilded

East Wind.

Couldn't see his rust

gate breath

swim around him –  
whale oil, bone crunch.

navigate circular tongue

From one daylight woman

to another, I want

skin

fan

(1835-1850 #E9631)

\*

dear fan,  
(1835-1850 #E9631)

What if typhoon  
ground a long look brother in good earth?

Your painted reflections captured by  
each gold eye

His eye must have fit into my belly, your  
captain's pleasure name  
also made of bone.

basket,  
(possibly Twana/Coast Salish #E3624)

dear basket,

Story is each  
curio witch seed

artifact breath.

What possession

but desire to hold body frozen  
ground. Brothers lost in trade

stations, punishing sky becomes  
rooted in baggage

sent home. Tell me  
this isn't so.

yours,  
fan

\*

dear fan,

Future rooted in this

story. Each sea layer, crowd,

desire elsewhere.

Wild pepper seed and women, this city

leads to

burn, mirage.

Two towns countries at war

with all their street finery

on display 125 voyages

and still.

yours,  
basket

basket,

In this town, you speak

prophecy. Sweet calf

glove, soft freckle  
and lace. A stomach

to devour disease,  
a gentleman's white lies

along the road. Who we  
exchange in meantime.

yours,  
fan

b --

The wine tasted of dead men, slit eyes in the  
daylight,  
a hairy family. A girl, my heart  
a reliable organ, a pauper's boat.  
No family would be complete without its  
ancestors, you can open  
it like a door. For us who travel along the  
blood vessels, children with slant eyes come  
from the eastern wastelands  
without father or mother.  
That will depend on who  
the next customer might be.

f

\*

f --

There was tension in the air, a pair of black boots,  
pink-eyed horses, my mother's hands limp against  
her thigh.

The prisoners bending over  
like great white sails,  
their black and brown hands, their male  
bodies held no language of their own, a  
red handprint, the fallow season of  
autumn looking at a tree. All the women  
had gold teeth, hearts like withered  
raisins. I began to run,  
the mirror was broken.

b

**Notes**

*Fan and Basket* reference two artifacts in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts.

The *Fan and Basket* letters are from a larger poetry sequence which borrows language from Anne Carson, Jeanette Winterson, Linda Hogan, Muriel Rukeyser and Terrance Hayes.

*EVAN*  
CHEN

SONG

after Ryan Kauffman

Hm.

KILL

I'm not

“Orgasms

Evan cries!!

Ugh kill me

Re: vacillation

We're all winning

Naming my child Oh

yes he's great. (His

colonoscopy) He

hurts my heart.

## SONG

If the scholar leaves

My phone lights up,

Yr mom's a double uncle

I get dinner with Bekhyon.

I ate that slice of pizza in the

SUNY buffalo cafeteria during

Sorry, I lost track of that totally.

I think there are only like 3 types

I am annoyed with will vote "no"

I'm also worried that the sane ppl

I have had in albany no exaggeration

I thought that was suny's initial appeal

Do not speak here between 8:30 and 10.



## SONG

I want to do a taxonomy of successful poets  
I almost began weeping at a reading this guy  
I mean, typing fast as usual it's tenuous and fun  
Neon batter (s/)he'd be a snickerdoodle more teen  
SUNY spring break and it was better than any pizza  
Buffalo does these little pepperonis that are so good  
Your phone can't render pizza i'm alone with your pizza now  
Did she there was\* will try to cobble something together tonight  
Well, I think the index is kind of beautiful, so fuck them if they do but  
Worlds colliding, man record it for me? seeing both of them next week  
ME it's a poem i would've written when i was 20 (for better or worse) but  
We're alive have you seen how he walked was perfect ok i will bug yinz again  
A good hurt. i love typos keep em comin you freaky ppl. also there are no cute fascists  
She's a bastion of perserverance did you record last night btw alicia? it's entirely possible  
Well, the neat index stuff I could throw together in no time if you give me words to query.  
Like who evolved me this way to have this unintellectualized bodily desire to reproduce myself  
But I want to redo the erasure/index paste if we go with that, unless yr cool with crumpled scans.

## DR WILLIAM'S RED CRAYON BIRD

Double-blind studies inaugurated by American

Neuroscientists

Computer Scientists

fans of Contemporary Alternative Rock Music

<3 & miss Kurt

Showed that any American aged 20-40 in the United States of America

regardless of race, age, gender, eye color, preference

Of literary genre can reproduce the multitrack master of the song

By memory, the stereoscopic image from zero-to-fifty

Every American head can pitch-shift their imagined guitar an octave or two up we are Whammys

. . . . .

What kind of emotional currency do they use in The Midwest?

At Lake Michigan shore

These moments full of pillows

Brushes by that thing

Experience. am turning you into literature

Be happy.

## DR WILLIAM'S RED CRAYON BIRD

You could write it or you could

To begin again. To begin again that green bud

Collapsed on the pavement somewhere between

Lancaster and Hudson, near Willett

My favorite intersection: Dove and Lancaster

The appearance of peace, the trees

*They smell like semen*, he said

Your eyes were opening but so were your arms clawing

Same images proliferate throughout

What's local: 48 hours before the essay is due, I begin

I begin again in fixed stanzas we could hope for

10 lines but maybe fall at 9, or

11, they are scraping against one another syllables

You your mouth moved listen for

Chocolate apples, too close

Stains on bedspread and I settle in

What's local: I slept 14 hours yesterday

Albany still there when awoke

## DR WILLIAM'S RED CRAYON BIRD

Mr. Chen, this is completely inappropriate can't you  
See I am made of the poem constitute its particulars  
Each page break a draft anew  
That green bud. Felled between slats until

Veins planting those

Between the years of 2014 and approximately 2044

Three decades of "The Green Crisis," after Colorado

And Washington legalized

Images from those days

Our Young Americans

They stumble down Lark

Down State at 4:23 AM

I watch out window

Vapes in hand, shuttled to and from mouth

With a frequency unknown to the user. Your mother is white

Write about her meatloaf leave out the onion

And father's stir fry just as good.

We are the 32%. What if I step off the plane they see through me

## DR WILLIAM'S RED CRAYON BIRD

*You are not Chinese; you must be Korean*

*Remember the copula, don't leave it out*

Imaginary lessons for an imaginary boy about to step

*I got a broken faa-aaace! Uh-huh Uh-huh Uh-huh ooo— I got a broken faa-aaace!*

Evan Angry. Evan Smash.

All of my heroes are White Men pulling roses from between

Their teeth are blood-stained white i.e. you spent four years

Erasing yourself the last three years re-pencilling in

Shakira Shakira! *Oh baby when you talk like that*

*You make a poet go mad.* Let me see your

Particulars      The Rams picked Sam

You can't escape the forms

drawing themselves to argument stepping-out

into the streets Natural American Spirits or

Those goddamn pens in hand while the logic is

Metonymic or paratactic unsure urine drips from

Fixtures smelling of tuna

OK I drank four coffees today don't ask about my

Stomach again

You can cut the green bud any time

In the first 47 days but afterwards

It stops looking like a furby it might bite

## SONG

Kraus not \*yet\* anyway we could add some more juicy words tho it's real he shapes my thinking &  
I have no confidence anyone will reply apparently i don't have those notes from that meeting so  
who knows

From my program did so many men make me cry i can't even tell you im making an anthology  
about it with my son and

I had a dream you made out w my mom and became my dad - : ( a totally non functional shutter had  
fallen off their house

I'm writing an ekphrastic poem about you/wcw/bruegel/tumblr garbage/pharrel  
williams/flashdance as we speak

WCW's house and the passaic falls today, but only if adri doesn't think she's going into labor before  
noon i think we will stop for tacos

I kept in filed in my brain under spring but my brain filed winter under forever. do what u like! i  
wanna be out of control of it, after

It's a lot of interviews everywhere. the interviews aren't frivolous tho; they try to talk about drone  
warfare austerity reproductive rights etc

Sharing my common heart with babies and dogs there was one great line, something like, "time isn't  
linear or circular; it's excremental" shitty

===THE ANTHROPOCENE=== such a pretty word i'm happy to be among those who will die  
in it to fix everthing our parents wrecked

White dude shit i have been seeing the word "ekphrastic" everywhere for 5 years. it is the new  
"prose poem" he must be dusty and fragile

I'm not surriously not reading bc of the rejection just constantly disinterested in things that don't  
involve me or friends or snapxhat about misogyny in hip hop

And (1) Count of Assault in the Second Degree-To Injure a Victim age 65 or Older when the  
Defendant is at Least 10 Years Younger, a Class D Violent Felony.

Pizza what a great idea now i can send her love letters is that a zodiac thing tho the average chinese  
restaurant menu i'm learning very imprecisely just gives years i hate the afternoon

Williams didn't think of his different generic writings as independent from one another, he  
theorized them as part of all the same process lol but as you know poetry etymologically just  
means

I'm spoiled from Joel and Nour's organizational acumen still kind of giving up the guts and nervous  
to get into literal cutting and pasting me to write a little blurb for it. rock room burger how could  
you

His thesis is basically that creeley's speaker's perspective never changing is the point and that that  
dedicated repetition is what's a/effective about his collected this weird counter intuitive thesis that  
seems to admit creeley is kinda boring

Or just not wear glasses, that seems to work on people i know they are people he definitely riffs off  
celan there's probably freeware that converts which is what a lot of 1st gen conpo engages i think,  
context always already anterior to text or whatever

## DR WILLIAM'S RED CRAYON BIRD

say that at the margins —

what's local: the stains on the bed

bramble in hand he walked

in an elliptical motion counter-clockwise

towards a theory of form:

the brain dropped from the medical school at Penn

and to move beyond these terms' easy structure

the thighs of a woman. . . .

the thighs of a woman opening . . . . A birth!

Wide eyes, looking outward towards me, emerging from the thighs of a woman

Dr. Williams's hairless head/eyes staring thru those glasses at me

the goal is to write 10 pages a day then die

starts and starts in-between what's local:



## SONG

LOL this is fucking real i need to get out of this higher education shit:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/01/yalecollegeseekssmartstudentsfrompoorfamilies/283283/> yup burn it the fuck down because someone is a "nice guy" and a friend of his

Paterson it is collagey which i didn't expect as much just like the fetish quality of seeing how the drafts actually progressed, he does this thing where he writes 3 or 4 short pieces then begins to mash them up in 1.5 line intervals

Meditation" kind of like positive energied mass suicide? physical stimulation every day a bar as research on the human condition just the timbre & timing of this particular utterance i cracked up i n all senses timing, but i am not-dying i bookmarked i am driving to see

Gertrude regardless of gender gendering shouldn't be a top-down imperative - never do other languages have a word for that but a materialist politics. that's the hard part. how to insist on the caring without mistaking black and sparkle nail polish now can't people braid one another's hair forever? is that so regressive?

I also look on that evan fondly. <3 kazim fuck dads tho she can be yr sugar mama, lock. it. down only "clearly tentative" supposed to rain ice and snow 5 to 8 inches tomorrow night here sprriiiiing break y'all am sending trolling snapchats to tao lin and he is watching them, all my dreams are coming true lol just did is illegal. plz don't repro) i think he probably wrote a lot while drunk very early in the drafting of

## SONG

Have u guys cried for poetry glad u got the book still makes me cry there is no such thing as non-

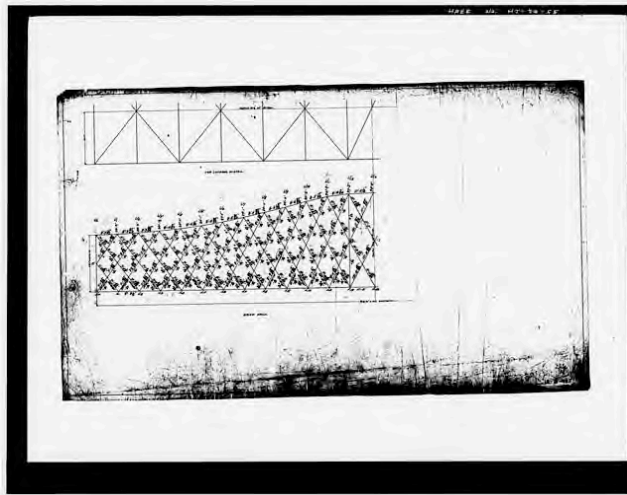
sequitur when you're in loveeeee "come on eileen"? also i became an uncle last night around 1:30 am godbless pdf, the pages as jpgs, and some kind of textual intro we need also that sentence took like 4 reads to parse lol y'all have book club and you're not skyping me in is yr bucket full? a leaky bucket enables longevity but is its own sorrow. there's the national and then cities, yeah, possibly w further subdivision. they do news hours but yeah

I'm not embarrassed by it but there's also the danger with so much elision of it appearing a bit

sycophantic lol he also comes up three times who said it anyway u just search "poop" or "fart" lol the referent of my which changed to no fart don't want my hands all over it oh but u are implicated my friend it's a trio oblique confession this is really ruining my conception of my purpose in life they seem coterminous for him anymore like that literary writing in general and i'm sick of all these white dude poets with their thick black glasses writing shitty robert lowell meets creeley poetry who all look like me, might have dropped a referent i'm gonna be reading the drafts of paterson from his 1st short lyrical attempts (which he never published) ==> the final drafts of the 1st book o fit  
\*of it

*JENNIFER*  
S. CHENG

HOW TO BUILD AN AMERICAN HOME

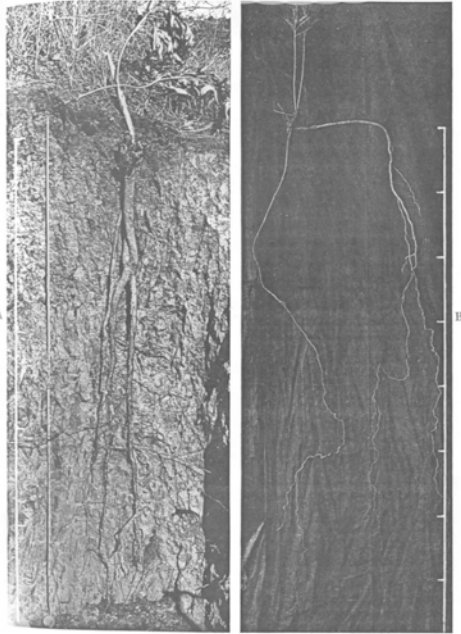


A house reflects its weathering.

We count the ways in which we burrow, given the atmosphere.

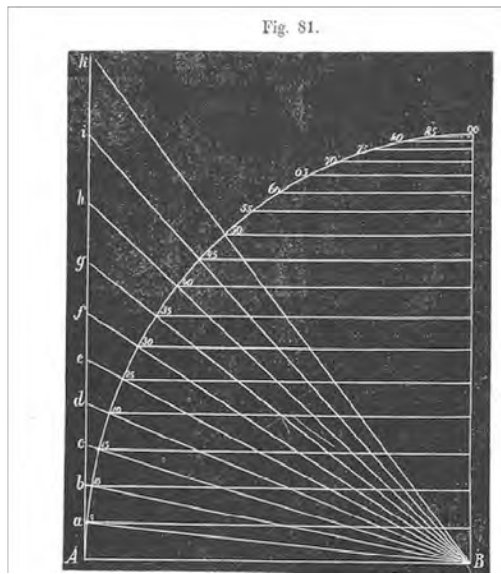
In the distance a fine hairline of trees are measuring themselves  
against a dark cloud above.

## HOW TO BUILD AN AMERICAN HOME



to create a long narrow opening by cracking or splitting rock : to  
forge a breakage in known structures without even knowing : to  
breach, rupture, shift, disrupt : to crawl down and sleep : a  
schism or groove we can then grow through : akin to a deep  
division between parts of the body, as in cloven, as in we cleave :  
children of immigrants speak in earthquakes : gaps, fissures, intervals.

## HOW TO BUILD AN AMERICAN HOME



How to leak a starling from the mouth; tear the air. How to loosen threads enough to twine in, how to keep stray ends under the tongue. How to steep a worn texture, which is to say familiar, of family, *mine*. How to steep translucence. How to know, not know, it was like this all along. How to, say, *not* call myself to others, but draw the world around me.

*FRANK*  
GUAN

THE ORIENT EXPRESS

Vista of derangement  
Above a blade of grass

Without a sense of gravity.  
And I never trusted stresses  
Or the liberty of mice.

Outside's outside,  
Inside isn't—the long

Dash of the summer now  
Adjourned, my hopes  
Sequester in a block of wood,

A discipline outlived. There's  
Some emotion in the twittering

Gray leaves. It isn't mine Of  
Course we share this airport  
Terminal, but what source? who doesn't?

## THE WHITE PAGES

Have never lived before.  
I lives after only. Or:  
There were fires  
Where the rain once fell.

You never read a thing of consequence.  
But now the seven  
Days are done;  
The rain is just begun.

Smoke is winding where  
No one can see. Till time  
Is not itself. Friend, get  
Lost in the red lights when

The bag of tricks is emptied—  
Desire and weakness: both abandon in  
The same direction.

## SIBYLLETH (RED LINES)

*for C.B.*

To be American  
and claim—correctly, no  
less—you knew what you were  
doing...probably too much!

The stars have wandered off  
the reservation and  
the reservation flees  
to “higher” ground. *Or* there's no

Ground higher than the blue  
or blue-white air, though when  
you really think about  
the color, it isn't just

An art if ice of—no,  
wait, yes it is—of the  
various landings in  
which living line by line was

Egregiously rendered—  
the clock hands whispering  
*we need to stop* while the  
battery (no simple tool)

Continues. Danger is, I  
think, by now, strictly  
asymmetric. You can  
pound the door as much but all

It is exercise,  
no more. Let us refer  
to the intoxicants.  
Every one's a poet; also,

Everyone's a poem. There's  
the situation...we  
erased the tire marks. All  
told, the autumn's a riot.



*ANNA MARIA*  
*HONG*

I, CONIC

Begin with the 9<sup>th</sup> battalion, circa 1968 –  
the trigger quiet as a cluster, designed to disfigure–  
Begin with the man designing the bomb in careful  
hand—his degree  
of innocence and oblivion—a room of women, men  
  
gazing at images of the victims—the person  
who rebuilt her house after bombing seven—Begin  
with the 9<sup>th</sup>—tricking the gods within—with the  
women,  
men asking the same question—with the redress  
  
of sadness—with aberration if only in proportion—with  
the unbridled  
impulse of certain men—the distress of  
their mates, their friends—the witness from 10 directions—Begin  
with surviving to the end—the beautiful, ancient  
visages—  
  
with “a state of very poor quality”—with revulsion—our  
distance—  
“accelerated pacification”—  
atrocities and its normalizations—the marriage of impunity and  
retribution—  
  
the speaker’s trust—  
the evidence—  
the working condition—

*CHRISTINE SHAN*  
*SHAN HOU*

ANOTHER TREE POEM

A wailing woman trapped between two walls  
is mistaken for the village ghost  
She was the incorrect shape  
A village in the shape of a half-buried egg  
has no shortcuts  
Even if there are no death sticks  
Bugs crawl over it  
Some of them are blind, but this does not free them  
I flip a switch to activate my bug dome  
I hold out my arm and ask: Did I get color?  
Depending on the time of day color refers to  
pale blue, white, magenta, or gold  
A concern for color is a sign of privilege  
A room gives birth to another room  
A tree birth is not wide enough to hide wires  
Hide the baby instead  
Never let the young ones be exposed to suffering  
A potential for disaster  
Child-sized hands reach for me  
Luckily, my dome rejects them  
It is rare to reject an event before it happens  
WHAT ARE RARE  
I reject my urge to fall into the sleep side  
I wail in disbelief  
A host of dead trees will not stop being dead for the clamoring  
There is intent and then there is fantasy  
One can be the Prince of God and still be executed  
There is the real world and then there is performance  
Baby cries and cries for sunset  
Peel back the eyelids  
Do not unplug the performance

## HANUMAN RETURNS TO CAMBODIA

When you look with my eyes what do you see?  
A kneeling monkey inside a jungle-shrouded temple.

Schoolchildren are marching in and out of a museum.  
It is bad luck to leave dead fruit inside any building, inhabited or not.

I have learned to take certain precautions with the unwillingness of fools.  
Glamour is fragile phenomena—I inch my way near it.

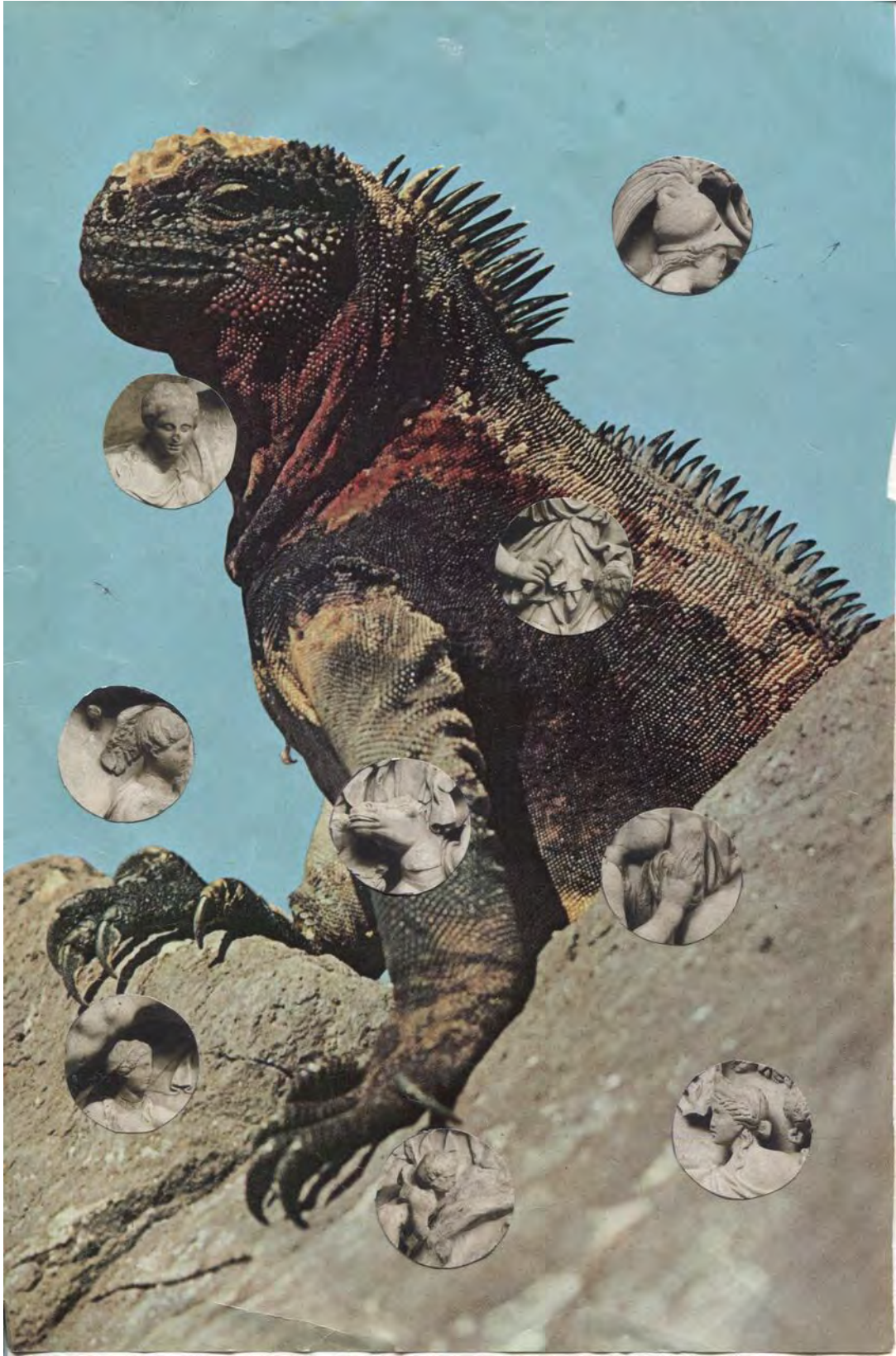
Of indeterminate crystals and shock, where does one look?  
Sweat beads down into a nearby lake, a blinking phantasm.

War tears at the brawn of a country's struggle for existence.  
The recovery of antiquities reveals the cracks on a dutiful face.

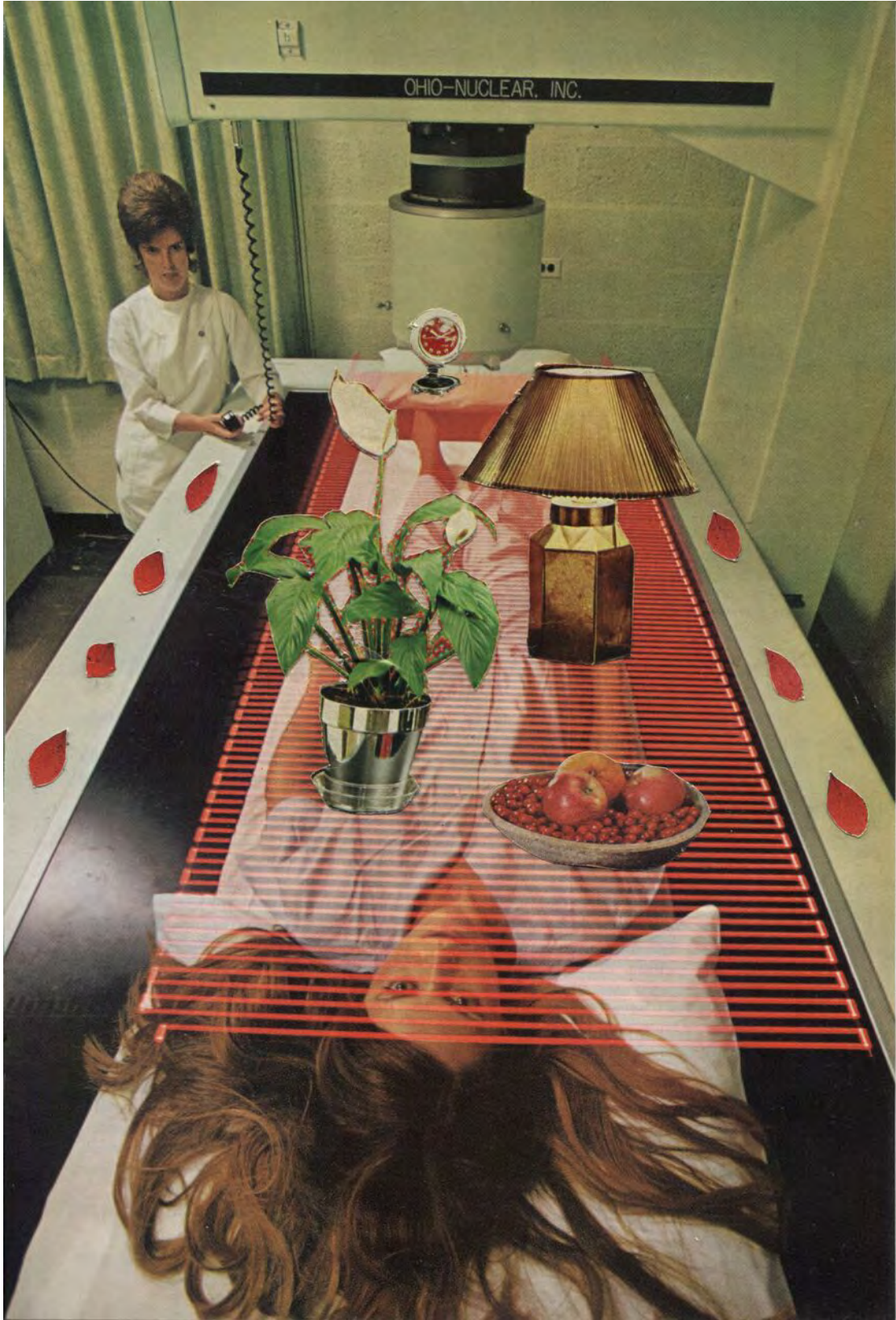
A god falls from the sky and is reduced to blood antiquity.  
How criminal the world looks in ultraviolet.



i.



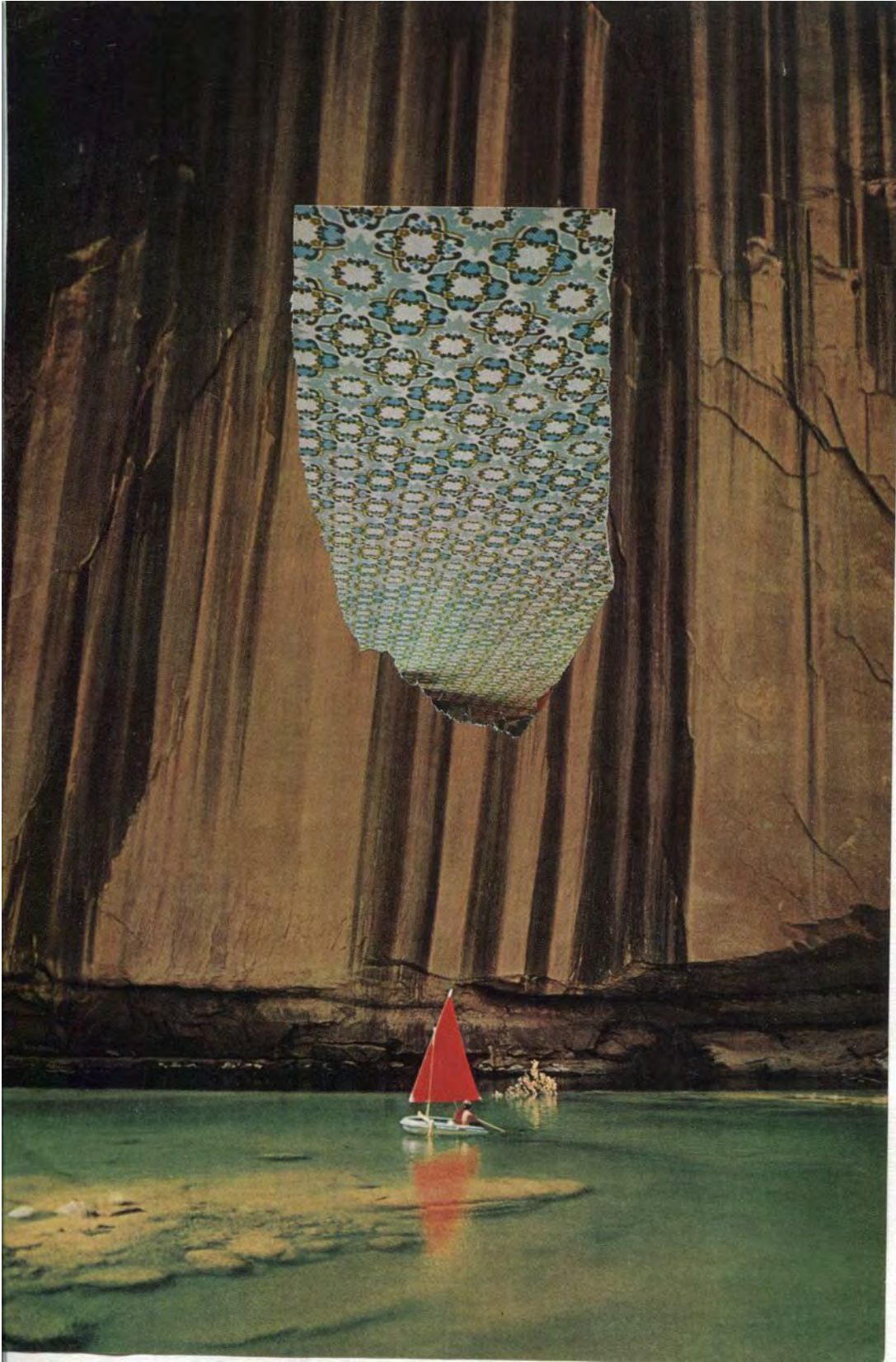
ii.



iii.



iv.



v.



- i. Points of Origin
- ii. Iguana
- iii. Medical Procedure
- iv. The Sorrow of the Disconnected
- v. Inevitable

# TUNG-HUI

## HU

### PARLIAMENT BY THE OCEAN

Some junk dealers run off by the cops,  
leaving behind a dinner party on the seawall:  
an old glass and gilt chandelier,  
some silverware, and a single copper pot,  
warm, as if it recently held soup,  
or had been held itself.

The spoon licks its lip. There is a drop of surf on its mouth.  
The pot simmers in its place; the cliffs rise and plunge.  
Once the policemen leave, the debate begins.  
To the seawall, everything is a force to be muted,  
surrounded. No, the ocean counters: everything is a vessel  
to be filled and poured with me.

# LAURA JEW

## SISTERHOOD

she called me laura  
the explorer. wrote all  
the girls' names  
in Hindi. asked me to brush her hair  
because it felt nice, like a mother's touch.  
told me stories of her time in India as  
a child, looked after by her grandmother.  
took long periods to watch over the streets at sunset,  
& any other time. kept a rose in a cup by the window.  
said nothing, ever,  
during group. her face could, in an instant, be  
plunged heavily into the bottom of  
a rushing river. her face  
could, in an instant, take to light  
as if she were the sun, finally  
finding the horizon.  
told me how her grandmother had rolled over  
in her sleep, almost crushed her with her enormous body.  
that her grandmother slept for days  
in her own shit.  
she asked me to braid her hair, said it felt like having  
a sister. told me:  
back in India, a man had followed her  
into a dark room, held out white blood  
on his fingertips.  
gave me rose petals  
to remember her on my last day. the hollow banging startled  
the girls from their rooms, dazed  
by a thumping that shook the walls. the screws on  
our vents were loose from her prying.  
when her family came to visit,  
they sat there with marbled faces.  
marbled hands. marbled gazes.  
they could not be seen or touched or heard.  
when the orderly knocked on the door  
she took the brush back like it was on fire &  
scurried to her own bed.  
i could still feel her hair,

cool & thick & smooth in my hands.  
she liked to watch me draw. she liked  
to watch the people, freely moving, down below.

the night her family tried  
to bring her home, she threw her head against  
our bulletproof window. her head. her skull.  
her hair like a bloody rushing river.  
the braid I'd woven all but come undone.

## LINING

The spirit healer was missing a tooth but never lacking in smiles all angles and rocking laughter not quite what I'd expected him to be even when tears started to brim like a house being built brick by brick behind my eyes he grins and leans in says to let them fall go ahead and cry the translator tells me and the healer smiles open-mouthed a buoy on pearly waters and suddenly there's no sleeve in the world that can wipe away all my flooding when people ask what happened I say don't really know but I can tell them that clouds are actually over a thousand thousand pounds the same weight as 100 elephants or every room you've ever lived in all that water being held in the sky like your spirit suspended in aqueous parentheses the healer told me one other thing: all my lives have been born in China except this one he says I was a dancer a buddhist monk he can see the sleeves of the costume I wore I could make them fly as if fastened to the clouds in a hurricane I don't know what to tell people when they ask but I tell them when I returned home it was to a horizon full of rain

## 1967

That night would have been impossible back then

yes, back then

your best friend would not be  
having you over for dinner

his brother and his girlfriend would not be across from you  
covering her mouth as she laughed – no, back then,

your best friend's parents would not be serving you

there would not be *kielbasa* and  
*charsieu bao* hot on the table,

we wouldn't even have been  
eating – no – the dishes left empty  
all of us staring at the off-white tablecloth

back then, none of us would have been

there, your best friend's parents would never have met  
as EMT's racing their ambulances for fun

and their two sons, their dark hair and  
eyes made wide for catching light would be

erased, too,  
back then,

not even the dog, with his black and white  
spots would have been there

the dining room empty,  
lamps overhead choked  
with dust and dimming light

and who knows  
where the shadows would have run to in all  
that blankness

but, back then,

even if you and I  
had been alive

even if it had all happened,

even if we had all been passing  
salt and side dishes politely,

back then,  
I would not have been  
sitting next to my ex  
boyfriend,

and you would not be  
sitting across from me, memorizing the way my  
hand tucked laughter into my lips

so that five years later  
you could whisper it all back in.

no,  
back then,

there would have been

no memory of me  
folded beneath your earlobes,

no chance you could have seen my black hair

and thought,

*beautiful.*

HANAE

JONAS

RITUAL WITH STILL LIQUIDS

everywhere the tinge of bottles          even inside stasis / the bath

a tight-made bed of glass          starred / with pins of hair

little floes          around the body / never

will I be clean          around the body / a crackling sound

when shivering out of water          the sound / of a small question

when the door opens          falls back dumb / soles

scratch the block          like terrapins emerging / out of mud

past the neon H O T E L corner          blooming noir cartoon /

pageant          then the gate the stewartia / stark in the yard

bark          a quilt of bruises / slicked

down with rime          and the soundtrack / non-diegetic

but swelling          around the body / this cocoon

of pictured fire          for a second trembling tall / day

and I glaze          day again and the break / is in me



in the water          a nameless color between / the digits

where the sun never got in          where the dead / meet the daily

the noon slant / cool as jars

*BHANU*

KAPIL

VASUNT KUNJ: NOTES, RE-LOOP (JANUARY 2015)

Just now, earlier. Then, earlier. Now, just then, now. I was in Vasunt Kunj, drinking coffee in the mornings and taking one walk -- alone -- in a nearby park, an hour or so past the early morning fitness loop. Indian people, every morning and evening, in middle class enclaves -- go for brisk walks in a loop around local parks, designed for such a thing. Then the park is abruptly deserted -- women going home to let in their maids; business men embarking upon their grotty commutes to Nehru Colony -- and the park becomes weird. I liked walking in the weird hour, though it felt tentative to take the last curve past the watch-keeper's hut. There, too, in Vasunt Kunj -- I found the rectangle of asphalt -- that I -- visited and visited again, with some kind of intense wish -- to see -- and attend to, you could say -- the place where Jyoti Singh Pandey was thrown from the bus -- in December 2012. Having been. Fatally gang-raped. She was not dead. She lay there for forty minutes, outside Hotel 37, at the place where the Mahipalpur [airport] Flyover and the service road to Vasunt Kunj; diverge. These are two images of that spot, near-ground and back-ground images:



That it's a mistake, as per Koolhaas (*Lagos*), to describe the mid-ground, where the eye falls. You have to re-wire the instinct to document the place where you most naturally: see.

"Van der Haak: Each time I return from Lagos and look at the video material we've shot, it doesn't seem to convey what I thought I had seen. The images I bring back don't quite match with what I remember – maybe because the temperature and sound don't show up. It's a very complicated experience to analyze. Have you had the same impression?"

Koolhaas: During the first visits we took pictures like crazy (9, 10). And when we got home there was nothing. We missed everything. It took time to discover that we couldn't capture Lagos by looking at the middle-ground – you either have to photograph what's directly in front of your eyes or look from a huge distance. It's exciting to learn how to capture what is so alien; it shows you how incredibly indoctrinated even the most curious look is. And how conditioned. We had to uncondition ourselves."

Perhaps I should have, in other words, photographed the edge of the curling up black mat outside Hotel 37 rather than the front itself: nervous, observed, tracked, I took a poor quality photograph with not even the entire word, HOTEL, apparent.

Though I like that the beginning part of that word does appear on the lower right hand part of this photo's frame, which is -- the recursion -- I am interested in.

Part of the cultural work of Ban was to say that this rape -- scene -- keeps happening. I am not explicit, you could say, about the rape; had intended to write a "true" novel of Ban, something I had imagined I could write swiftly, in two weeks, and then publish for a wider audience, a British audience? -- an audience for whom -- my shattered versions -- of things -- are not -- the thing -- that reaches them. I don't care that they are the thing or not the thing, though I feel a surge of embarrassment -- to think, once again, of you reading -- this book -- which -- well, let's get to that when it arrives in the Monday post.

A book.

An imprint or outline that kept seeping.

The oil coming up from beneath the surface earth layers, dislodged a little -- by the riot.

The riot was tectonic in this sense. How do you think about the neighborhood? The riot was my potato field; Ban was my Icarus -- unobserved,

fluttering, pierced through by a beam of pink lightning. I wish you could have seen Ronaldo Wilson at the Asian Avant Garde conference at CIIS: "I am so over paper," he said. I was dazzled. I think of lying on the floor, too, in a clump with Geneva Chao, Soham Patel, Mg Roberts -- and someone else -- who? We were on the carpet during one of the presentations in a lull. That was also one of my favorite moments. Jason Magabo Perez wrote later to ask. To ask what a novel was. This was last August. He and I had fallen asleep on the CIIS cafeteria sofa, then woken up -- each on our own sofa, disoriented. I felt we had both dreamed the novel and were now bonded for life because of our fictional nap.

Then, Vasunt Kunj. Look, here is my uncle going to buy milk in Vasunt Kunj. I am accompanying him, taking pleasure in the encounters and colors. Just down the road is the Metro Station:





Later that day, I go back to the park and make this -- offering -- of unguents -- for Jyoti Singh Pandey -- who died -- as close as I can get -- to the place where she died:





Then, just now, earlier -- just now -- yesterday -- last night -- today -- comes the news -  
of a next murder/rape -- in this very -- place:

"The body of a woman in her mid-30s was recovered Saturday morning near Vasant Kunj area in south Delhi with the police suspecting that she was raped before being killed.

A passerby spotted the body in some bushes near the Ghitorni metro station around 8.30am. A police official said the woman's nude body, which had several injury marks, was found with the hands and legs tied. Police believe she was sexually assaulted with a wooden plank, bits of which were recovered from the crime spot.

The woman, a native of Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, had left home Friday around 9:30am but when she didn't return till late evening her husband filed a missing complaint.

The victim lived with her husband and three children in Fatehpur Beri, 10km southeast of Ghitorni. "The woman was working at a stitching unit. We are investigating how she came here from Fatehpur Beri," said an investigating officer.



Special Commissioner of Police (law & order) Deepak Mishra said teams had been formed to probe the case, “We’ve registered a murder case and are awaiting the post-mortem report.”

In Vasunt Kunj or, more precisely, at the start of the service road that leads to Vasunt Kunj, I kneeled down outside Hotel 37 -- and rubbed the red powder -- the sindoor -- into the crappy asphalt.

In Vasunt Kunj itself, I threw the bright powders onto the tilted stone.

I went back again and again to the place where a woman's body had been thrown.

"Tell me what you know about dismemberment." This is a sentence I wrote 14 years ago.

Do traumatic events create a hollowed out space that is then re-filled? Is trauma an indentation? Is trauma a hole?

Vasunt Kunj, South Delhi, 2015.

What is this drive -- in this precise spot -- to eviscerate a woman's body then leave it on the floor?

I think of the horrors of Partition.

The true horrors. The images of genital/reproductive -- dismemberment. From that awful war -- the war that followed the withdrawal of British troops in 1947.

I feel that this image is still appearing in my home culture. In this delayed loop. Here it is. Yesterday, today. Again. [Rana Dasgupta's CAPITAL also made this point; a point I thought I had hallucinated. Then there it was, in his book too.]

As it appears [the image] in Ban -- diasporic -- distended -- and I could barely do this in a poetry. I could not do it. So I have to keep writing here.

Even here in Colorado, where there are no associations -- I am still living this out, in my life and in my home life. That is why the cover of Ban is an image of the back garden -- in Sharon Carlisle's buddha/clay mud space -- that she dug up -- in the absence of her own garden -- and where I lay down.

But what's this? I went out this morning and saw a wooden stick had come loose

from the balcony Sharon has woven around the earth space - - where her sculptural work happens -- and where - - in its interims -- I practice -- movements -- gesticulations: for Ban. I saw the stick and thought, what does that stick have to do with Ban? What loosened it? Then came the news. From Vasunt Kunj. Of the stick.

Is art a premonition? I think of the art I made in Vasunt Kunj that was not art, for example.

I feel sick about this latest -- story -- of a dismembered female body, hog-tied and butchered, truly -- or left -- unstitched -- this woman whose work was stitching -- sewing -- on the ground -- behind some bushes -- near a Metro station -- in Vasunt Kunj.

I feel like I should go out into the snow and take a photograph of the cover of Ban, as it is, degraded now by the last winter storm and threaded with ribbons from our winter solstice practices and offerings. The glitter is red and gold. It rained earlier so I don't know if the glitter is still there.

Hold on let me go out and see.

Here you are. I put on my son's trainers and tiptoed into the snowy, wrecked garden. Here are two images of the space of the cover, but not then -- later, after the season had turned -- then turned again:





*KIM*  
HYESOON

TRANSLATED BY *DON MEE CHOI*

DEATH'S MAGIC-COMPRESSED DISTANCE

-DAY FIFTEEN

If I'd known it'd be like this, I'd have given my piddly breasts to the orphan  
If I'd known it'd be like this, I'd have given my piddly eyes to the fish  
If I'd known it'd be like this, I'd have given my piddly head to the rose

In the room, the woman gasps gasps. At the windowsill her hair is blowing. Her tongue  
fits into the keyhole. Her vagina turns on the light brightly.

Woman, you're dead  
Water your shadow and it flows down into your grave  
Grave of shame  
Grave of guilt  
Grave of insult

Woman, you're dead  
Open your heart's door and the crimson grains quickly disperse  
Red blood cells of fatigue  
Red blood cells of melancholy  
Red blood cells of fear

Woman, you're dead  
You're a doll  
You're a mule  
You're a pony with pierced nostrils

The woman gasps gasps, and, as her lips part, her shy skull's teeth line up like dining  
room chairs. As her yellowish flesh hardens, her shy red roses turn blue. Put a mask on  
that woman's rose! The prison door opens and her rancid-smelling heart is stretched  
out. Put a diaper on that woman's heart!

If I'd known it's be like this. I'd have squeezed tight-tight my piddly heart and  
offered you a drink! Would you like one?

(Like someone who keeps offering even though she had nothing to give)

## BLACK FISHNET GLOVES

--Day Eighteen

In the pitch-black night, a flame shoots up in the middle of the field  
The house on fire is like a rose kneaded from crimson water  
like a boat lit in the middle of the night sea  
like a bier going up in flames in the sky  
but inside that blazing single flower  
a man who wants to die after killing a woman is in flames  
In the morning when you wake, the charred house is like a filthy bunched-up rag  
like a clot of hair stuck on the bloodied hammer when you were struck  
like a dirty black hole trembling beneath the man's eyebrows, like dog hair stuck  
to the black hole, dangling  
like a torment that has returned between sleep and waking, damp dirty ash sticks to  
your lips

*JEE LEONG*  
KOH

DOES GRASS SWEAT: TRANSLATIONS OF AN INSIGNIFICANT  
JAPANESE POET

Translator's Note

In February 2011, when I moved into my Upper West Side apartment, not far from 80 Riverside Drive, where Yone Noguchi boarded for a time, I found a sheaf of haiku in the bedroom closet, almost as if it had been left for me. To my surprise, the poet made numerous references to people and places that I knew from living in New York City. I was thus compelled to translate the poems from the Japanese. As I worked on these exhilarating, enigmatic pieces, I found myself searching out the street corner, the tree, and even the bird that had so enraptured our poet. In this manner I traced the route taken through Central Park—entering at 86<sup>th</sup> Street on the west side, then running south of the reservoir, or else strolling north of the Great Lawn by the Arthur Ross pinetum, and finally exiting on the east side at either 84<sup>th</sup> or 85<sup>th</sup> Street. Slowly I was beginning to live the life glimpsed through these haiku.

I have provided a brief commentary on each haiku. The commentary is not intended to pin down the haiku so much as to pick it up. The manuscript I found is untitled, so I have given it a title by quoting one of the poet's haiku. He or she signed off as "an insignificant Japanese poet."

Jee Leong Koh  
New York City  
January 10, 2016

Brown leaves penned  
in a field of winds  
who will open the book?

In *The Zhuangzi*, a story is told of Sir Sunflower of Southunc who asked Woman Hunchback how was it possible that she was old in years but childlike in complexion.

To which question, she replied, "I have heard the Way." Unlike the literati and the monkhood, she did not read about the Way, but heard it.

"Wherever did you learn it?" asked Sir Sunflower of Southunc.

Woman Hunchback said, "I learned it from the son of Assistant Ink. Assistant Ink's son learned it from the grandson of Ready Reciter. Ready Reciter's grandson learned it from Bright Vision. Bright Vision learned it from Agreeable Whisper. Agreeable Whisper learned it from Earnest Service. Earnest Service learned it from Sighing Songster. Sighing Songster learned it from Murky Mystery. Murky Mystery learned it from Share Vacuity. Share Vacuity learned it from Would-be Beginning." (translated by Victor H. Mair)

The moon tonight  
tosses its horns  
at the trumpet's lion

Does this haiku fulfill the criterion set out by  
Hui-Neng, the Sixth Zen Patriarch?

Haiku is like a finger pointing at the  
moon. Once you've seen it, you no longer  
need the finger.

Hui-Neng was illiterate.



Morning runners at the  
finishing line— a gull  
wheels away

You can see these health freaks in their neon-colored athletic wear at Carl Shurz Park. Since they were born, they have been trained by family, school, and work to run life down. They cheer for their friends so raucously that they scare away the gull.

They have torn up the surface of Lexington  
Avenue again.

Tar dust in my nose  
after twelve years  
still plodding home

This haiku alludes to a famous poem by  
Basho.

First winter rain—  
I plod on,  
Traveller, my name.

—translated by Lucien Stryk

In an early essay “The Tombs of Ravenna,” Yves Bonnefoy insists that “the universal has its locale” (translated by John Naughton). At the same time, he claims that “poetry and journey are of the same substance, the same blood . . . and of all the actions available to man, these are perhaps the only useful ones, the only ones *that have a goal*.” Our poet names “home” as his or her direction. Basho names himself.

ALAN CHONG

LAU

more days in produce

nappa ALANN HAMADA bean sprouts KYLE FONG CHAN foogwa DEAN Y. LEONG  
takana SONNY ACOSTA fuki GARRETT NAGAOKA cee gwa SIMON LING LOK NG  
shanghai baby bok choy FRANCIS TRAYA BACON green onions ANDY ZHI TAO  
CHEN lo bok WEI ZHUO MAI gai lan NIL TILOJA sugar peas FONG  
HOPKINS dong gwa TONY MAI renkon HIEN PHUONG DANG  
malungai GERWIN DE GUIA RILLO salayote RONNEL ORILLA JR.  
jicama KAELYN VALDEZ gobo cilantro lemon grass opo song choy

amnesty for illegals

7am and already lines  
snake down the sidewalk  
in front of the immigration building  
we see outside  
through the drizzle  
across an empty lot by the texaco

so early  
only buses and trucks  
rumble down the road  
that goes toward safeco field  
and elliott bay on the horizon

in front of our store  
only the lady  
doing tai chi forms  
and the elderly chinese couple  
arm in arm  
on their morning constitutional

in the sweepstakes of lies  
some of us are already losing  
get the green card first  
groceries can come later

the plum and cherry  
are both out today  
a fragrance that says  
it's the second day of spring

"customer service on aisle 18 please, customer service"

punctuation

a sprinkle of pepper  
tossed in a cloudy sky

the birds  
blanket the tower  
of king st. station

"when is the new koda rice coming in, please?"  
"you can get it anytime"  
"anytime? does that mean today?"

fashion plate

nisei lady  
so tiny the wind could blow you over  
has her hair swirled  
into a cone of purple cotton candy  
with a matching ski jacket  
done in a nasubi sheen

how to get the perfect clump of ginger

first tear  
off the piece  
that resembles  
a craggy cliff  
then the crooked nose  
of your ugly step sister  
and finally the broken finger  
of the old man's meaty fist

now you have  
the perfect clump of ginger

"will the customer with the purple van in the parking lot,  
please return to your car, your lights are on"

african sunset

no, these aren't bananas  
instead, rows of  
nubian warriors  
surge forward  
in a paradiddle of motion  
skin a gleam  
in the sun  
that beats off  
every grain of sand

"hello customers! drop by the meat department for free  
samples of chuckee's smoked sausage, now  
only 1.99 a package"

indian summer

this foot  
in a purple sock  
points out the window  
of the publix hotel

"will the iron chef please return to the lotto counter,  
you have a phone call"

price change or our mascot of produce

this lost bird  
who took a wrong turn  
through our loading dock  
finds a home  
in produce

she makes  
the kabocha sign  
her morning perch

marks it with some poop  
and changes the price instantly

"walis tambo, please come to the front of the store, your  
party is waiting for you!"

the penal colony

don't ask me why  
but when sorting  
out blemished roma tomatoes

i toss them in a pile  
and think of kafka  
and his penal colony

"will missy green from mukilteo please  
return to the lotto counter  
your friend is waiting for you"

when the man brushes past me

when the man  
brushes past me  
the musty history  
in his jacket  
perfumes my senses  
with a feudalistic narcotic

collapses on top of me  
in a landslide of debris  
from an unopened drawer  
crammed with mothballs

under piles of newspaper  
i hear his last whisper  
forced out of a faded envelope  
postmarked to a village  
that lies buried under a dam

on this shelf  
faces fade into memory

you fall to sleep  
your dreams to keep  
even the rustle and coo  
of pigeons crowding your window sill  
will not wake you

"attention shoppers, we will be closing in 15 minutes,  
please bring all items up to the front now and thank  
you for shopping at uwajimaya!"

pink frisbee and dog landscape

before he puts  
the pink frisbee  
back in his mouth  
and returns to his master  
he squats by a bush  
and lays a turd

"for the customer who wanted lotus root  
we now have lotus root  
in our produce department"

goddamn fuckin' artist

when the barbed symmetry  
of my artichoke display  
threatens to collapse  
in an anarchy of abstraction  
my boss boils over  
can't stop cursing  
for all to hear  
"goddamn fuckin' artist!!!"

and it's true  
the point of my arrow  
is no straighter than the wagging tail  
of a donkey's ass  
plodding down the grand canyon  
as the sun goes down

"broken bottle clean up on aisle six, please"

autumn's trumpets

clusters of notes  
flutter off branches  
of this ginko tree

"grocery, customer service  
on aisle six, please!"

the slice

no,  
this old crone  
isn't patting  
a baby's butt  
just the green oblong  
that is winter melon  
i plop down  
on the cutting board

she wants a piece  
a plump meaty piece  
that dissolves  
into a tender, velvety texture  
for her soup  
brimming with dried shrimp  
and mushrooms  
fat as your ear lobe

"attention customers,  
the dragon & lion dance  
starts in five minutes  
by our produce department"

living the life

jim in our maintenance department  
who lives at the foot  
of mt. rainier  
tells me there is



nothing better than  
downing a couple beers

then look across the field  
hear the bugle cry  
of a lone elk  
at sunset

the boss and the meat heads

when the boss  
is on vacation  
the meat heads  
chatter away  
kids in their own playground  
of cleavers and slicers  
holsters weighed down  
with knives of every size

this week he's back  
i see the faces  
of inmates  
quietly making  
license plates  
for cars they'll never drive

"for the customer who wants daikon sprouts,  
please return to our produce department,  
thank you!"

the boot

they say he's from the boot  
the island of sicily  
this gangly man  
whose thinning hair  
seems to fly off  
at the edges  
a pirate walking  
off the plank

in the morning  
he walks up to our cabbage  
says, "good morning cabbage!  
how are you,  
my green leafed friend?"

when security is alerted  
he passes by the man  
and tells him to calm down  
the pirate replies  
"don't worry, sir!  
i am calm, i am so calm"

as he saunters away  
he says, "hello juicy orange  
are you as sweet as you look?"

"master calligrapher ,mr. yengbao will be  
doing a demonstration  
by kinokuniya bookstore till 6pm"

the chariot of fire

this mysterious wheelchair  
opens up by compartment  
it could be ben hur's  
chariot of fire  
or a portable shrine  
to the nigerian goddess, orisha  
it certainly isn't  
"a surrey with a fringe on top" hailing from  
oklahoma  
not with jesus, son of god  
crowning the peak  
of the canopy  
wrapped in a cloth of  
red flickering flames  
wood frame  
embellished with mississippi riverboat  
wheelhouse patterns

as each panel unfolds  
i peer down and see  
a little chinese man  
walk out  
and sniff a pile of cantaloupes  
then he sits down  
as the compartments fold inward  
and this wagon of fire  
rolls off into the sunset

green tamarind REINER ESCALONA mizuna KAJAL KACUKHEYCAN  
opo CHENG SOEUNG kumquat LISA MARIE STICKA moqua VICTOR  
ALFONSO lobok NANCY NEWBARTH takenoko ALAN HER asparagus  
ADRIANNA CASTILLO durian KEN SUGAWARA salayote NHON LAM  
hon shimeji shishito taro green papauya saba banana kang kong wasabi root  
satsuma imo

# IRIS A. LAW

## CUT PIECES

In the ICU my mother sits shaking,  
a pair of wire cutters in her hands  
and a plastic zip bag clutched to her chest.  
She has just cut my father's wedding ring  
from his finger. *Now*, she'd said to the nurse,  
and the young woman had helped her snip  
the last thirty years of her life in two.  
The Christmas I was sixteen, we woke  
to a soft, startled drumming in the garage.  
My father opened the door to find a small,  
brown bird, its wings stuck fast to a glue trap  
meant for rodents, beating itself against  
the concrete in a fluster of feathers and blood.  
Gently, he gathered the panicked creature  
into a bath towel. He snipped the paper and glue  
from around its wings and feet and then, to wait  
out the storm, placed it in a greenhouse box,  
where it threw itself against the glass sides  
until its heart stopped and its body was still.  
In the waiting room, I watch my mother  
fold in on herself. Her shoulder blades quake  
beneath the bright red hump of her sweater.  
*He's free now*, she says, and *what else could I do—*  
over and over, but she cannot will her fist to open,  
her hand to release the cut pieces of that which she'd said  
she would have and would hold.

## SKYPING WITH MY HUSBAND ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF MY FATHER'S DEATH

I watch you play with your ring  
in the square of my laptop's screen,  
absently turning it between forefinger and thumb,  
twisting it against the burnt hill of your knuckle—  
tiny, bright snake coiled around your finger  
that flickers in and out of the webcam's eye.  
We are three months married and living  
in different states—you, on the West Coast for work;  
I, still hanging on in the warm Kentucky fall.  
I feel your absence in the still-blank walls  
of our apartment, the rooms that fill up  
with quiet gray light in the mornings.  
In the nights that followed my father's death,  
I also dreamt of you, then far away at school,  
would wake shaking with mingled desire and grief.  
I remember, then, how I'd go downstairs  
with the ghost of you still clinging about me  
to find my mother scraping burnt rice from a pot in the sink,  
her latest act of yearning for the man who used to slip  
quietly from their bed at midnight to scrub the counters  
and load the dishwasher. *I miss David*, I'd tell her,  
and she would look at me and sigh. Love, how little  
I understood then the way that the heart, in marriage,  
begins to knit itself into the bindings of the other's soul,  
capillary knotted tight to vein, nerve intersplicing  
impossibly with muscle; how the memory of loss  
imprints itself on the body of the one left behind:  
the broken angles of my mother's shoulders  
moving about the dim kitchen, the shadows,  
darker still, that settled beneath the lines of her eyes.

## FISSION

*for Yi-Fen Chou*

When I was eighteen, a white boy kissed me  
in a doorway at summer camp. I didn't want any of it—  
his sticky palm on my neck, the ring of saliva  
he left on my forehead. He was into Japan, he said—  
cherry blossoms and silky kimonos, neon hairdos,  
karaoke bars, anime girls prancing cheekily in sailor suits.  
That night, I felt sick. Rage crackled through me,  
electric and white. When he'd leaned over me,  
it was as if it was not my body in that door, not  
my face that his lips had touched. I rubbed  
at the spot for hours. I wanted to rip her out, this girl  
he'd kissed that was not me, to tear her, flesh  
and root, and him, away from the surface of my skin.  
Once, you also met a boy who was a thief, a collector  
of faces. He thought you were a mask he could put on  
and take off. He practiced sliding his body into  
the you-suit he'd constructed, slithering first into the feet,  
then the legs, then tugging the torso up around his ribs  
to skim the sleeves about his arms. Sometimes,  
if the light fell just right, he thought he looked like someone  
he'd once known—but whose name he couldn't place.  
Sister, I know this story well: the nucleus ruptures,  
releasing energy or war, the chamber transforms  
one element to another, reducing it down to slenderer  
parts. It is always the heaviest atoms that must split;  
we who can no longer carry the weight of our nuclear load.  
It comes down to this: the bomb in the payload; the boy  
and his hunger; the poet and his stolen name—and us,  
the convenient, the ones left to dig ourselves out  
from beneath the rubble they leave behind.

*JANICE*  
LEE

THE POETICS OF SPACES: LOS ANGELES

(originally appeared in *Entropy Magazine*)



There are many things to say about Los Angeles. Most of these things I will not say because you already know them. Because a singular Los Angeles does not exist and even though this essay is titled Los Angeles, being and existing in the city of Los Angeles sometimes has nothing to do with the city itself. One fact is that LA is a completely different city for everyone. If there ever was a city in which every inhabitant could tailor their existence and experience of that city completely, it is LA. Your LA is very different from my LA. My LA from a few years ago is different from my LA today.

A city that draws in shades of light, shades of imagination. An impossible city. A forbidden one. Bluish haze and streets streaming down, bundles of grass. It always feels like the last time.

Days when the sky is as blue as —

As the loss of —

As grieving or falling —

Or, days when the sky is as grey as —

As the insistence of —

As the footnotes above —

Or, when we know that the sky isn't blue at all, that the insistence of blue is the insistence of an existence's perceived persistence, that the insistence of blue as a saturated entity is one that humiliates, concerns, mortifies with each step down the sidewalk, the daydream that phenomenologically becomes the insistence of a snail or a palm tree hovering above everything.





Look at the sky, I say.

I don't see anything, you say.

In this place, it is possible to be surrounded by everyone and to be completely alone. In this place, it is possible to simultaneously feel the effect of urban grunge and filth and beauty, garbage and grime in every alleyway, that smell of shellfish, that look that people give you when stopped at an intersection, to feel all of that alongside a legendary hyphen, the reciprocity of nature, of trees, of dirt, of birds, of air.

One of the greatest things is how many views there are of the city from within the city. You can drive to numerous points, hike up to numerous vistas, every view of the city completely different, differing psychological standpoints, differing hierarchies of places, the growth and manifestation of a strange perspective of a city that you occupy, pendunculated beaks of birds that caw behind you.

*But as far as I understand, no one intends to escape. Where would you escape to, and why? Stay where you are. Everyone is calm and in a good mood. Besides, multiple perspectives require the utmost precision of finger, eyeball, and muscle, dragging memory along the word's orbit from one layer of fog to another.*

– Arkadii Dragomoshchenko

Seen from the window of your car, the city is a fascinating series of reflections. Silence doesn't exist except for when you turn up the volume on your radio and then, the clusters of the city that reproduce, everyone's gazes fixed upon something, misty haze or smog that remains invisible yet manages to cloud everyone's vision. His acts and omissions. Her acknowledgement. His fixed wound. Her tears. His responsibility. Her burden. His inspiration. Her escape.

Some nights I say something about something happening somewhere in the world.

You sound just like my mom, you say.



It is ending, I say.

No it's not, you say.

Yes. It is.

LA is a moving city, or an immensely fixed one in which we move through, quickly, slowly, meandering, zigzagging, on the same routes, on new ones. What the city looks like is what it looks like when I'm stuck in traffic, when I'm speeding down the highway, when I'm focused on being somewhere on time. That is what the city looks like, threads that exist as paradoxical impressions, transparent, immense, blurred, tattooed over eyelids.

To another. Do you still love me? It may not matter anymore. I don't think it does.

The thickness of the air, though, that noisy silence that you can only sit in when you are still, this is the opportune and irreducible moment of *being* in this city. Yes, the standard logic and majority image of LA dictates a moving landscape. The trembling half-existence of relentlessly running around constantly, driving, the view of palm trees and buildings and other streets from your car, the receding day, the sunset in your rearview mirror, the approaching deadline that tangifies time, the music, the outbreaks, the *intention* of space that is only felt when moving through it. But LA sits differently when you are still. When you try to take a snapshot and live inside it, and for a moment, the city doesn't exist at all. It is just you and the space and the sky. Just you and the air and the heat and the breath.

*Immensity is within ourselves. It is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests, but which starts again when we are alone. As soon as we become motionless, we are elsewhere; we are dreaming in a world that is immense. Indeed, immensity is the movement of motionless man. It is one of the dynamic characteristics of quiet daydreaming.*

– Gaston Bachelard

You don't understand my devastation. That I can feel the pain of both the victims and the perpetrators, the witnesses and the listeners, the bystanders and the actors. I can feel it all and it is heavy, the pain of the world is heavy, and in this city I can stay safe-guarded by the sky. The world will end, just trust what the

weather has to say, and in the end, none of these tiny things matter, just the sky and its devastation that will shroud the planet in its love and its glory, suffocate us with its violent breath. I stay up late to read poems by Kenneth Patchen and Jaime Saenz because here is my soul and I watch you sleep and I love you but tonight I feel very far away and I am trying to come back. How do I get back?

*there are so many little dyings that it doesn't matter which of them is death.*

– Kenneth Patchen

Let's just say that when you stretch out the transparent layers of this city, it becomes a confession.

The confession isn't the desire for death, though there is that too, but that you miss your mother.

The sun and the heat become irrelevant until you go outside to confront the light.

But in the light there is mother, there is that untraceable wound that began with birth.

The city changes when you do, and the confession is that each and every gesture becomes filled with uncertainty.

The city is so certain of itself, but it confesses that it knows nothing when there is the sky.

It's a matter of taking a few steps back, to trace the wound back to the light, the light a frantic ghost.

Not every panorama is an equal snapshot of this city, yet in the end they are all the same, confessing.

It rained once, a thoughtless nod to the wound of this city.

The neighbors yelling next door don't know to face the silence courageously.

The obligation is to pass the shadow on the sidewalk and to keep walking, to skip the embrace with light. The proclamation is that you are an individual but in one moment you are part of a mass, in another, a ray of light.

*Man himself is mute, and it is the image that speaks. For it is obvious that the image alone can keep pace with nature.*

– Boris Pasternak

Here is the real dilemma. That so many moments in this city are inarticulatable. My confession is that I try relentlessly and hopelessly to capture moments via images, words. This is all a futile exercise. All of this only ends in failure. But sometimes, inarticulation becomes articulation. That is, the photo I try to take, the one that captures none of the essence that I felt in that very moment when I looked up at the sky and wanted to cry, could have died right there, that the photo instead becomes the articulation of that inarticulatable moment in a way that the evidence can only be a frantic ghost too, a wound, a relinquishing of *everything* into a concentration of *something*.

Let me know that you get this. I mean, photos are an example of this, yes, trying to capture that sunset, that cosmic allusion to all of space and time in the upper light of the sky, that devastating miracle of life that becomes contaminated by so many small things. But other articulations too.

Like: *I love you*.

Words for one of the most inarticulatable of sensations. I mean, this is not the same thing for everyone. Every *I love you* is not equivalent. There is no such thing as repetition in love, yet here are the words that claim, that attempt, that bravely endeavor to signify a specific value via language. This is as absurd as calling the sky “blue,” as calling the sunset “beautiful,” as claiming you feel “happy.” All of these attempts, gravitations, comments: absurd.

But I say *I love you* and I mean it. I mean *something* that I can't describe but these words are the closest approximation, an agreed upon convention that these words will mean *something* close to what it is I feel, but important is the conjuration of all the other feelings associated with the gesture of the phrase, that when you say *I love you* I can feel this sensation of finitude and eternity in my bones, that I can feel the widening of breath, the threat of paralysis when it all ends, and an entire substantial reality built around you that does not yet exist, will never exist.

When I say *I love you*, I recall the memories of a thousand nights of presence, the limits of feelings at night when I am in my bed, when I am outside, when I pause to linger in a single moment of *existence*. Feelings reveal the taint of past trauma. Feelings become vocality and articulated via gestures. You hold my hand and for a moment, that is *everything*.



Can I confess that you become connected to this city somehow, for me, that every sky or sunset or towering building, every glamorous palm tree, every sad one, every reflection of light off a window, every conjured sound, they all begin to match the repetitive vitality of your breath, your touch, your existence. This doesn't have to make any sense. It doesn't make any sense that I know you, that you exist, *here*, with me. I'm not

sure where you came from. I'm not sure when I came from either. It doesn't seem to matter, though at some point in my life, these things *did* matter. So many things mattered. What matters is your touch. Your breath. Your body next to mine. Your existence in this city with me. What matters is that suddenly, very much suddenly, I can not imagine life without you. That is what *love* is, perhaps, a complete rearranging of the imagination, a complete infiltration of a subjectivity that seems to defer how images correlate with each other. Suddenly, what matters is the color of the sky. The direction of the stars. The speed of light. Significance and insignificance change places.

The snail.

The engraving upon a pillar.

Quick steps. Slow ones.

Hands.

Moments in space.

The density of the fog.

Distance.

Altitude.

I want to experience every shade of light with you. Every shade in between.

I want many, many things, yet also, those desires fade away.

It is all terrifying. One day, this city will swallow me whole, and no one, not even the pigeons, will notice.

*SUEYEUN*  
*JULIETTE* LEE

GRASSLANDS, NO WILDS



i.





ii.



iii.

i. "Grasslands, No Wilds" (2016, Video. Still in progress)

ii. Knot the Sky (2016) series

iii. Ash Poem (2016)

These works are part of a longer, ongoing sculptural, movement-based video project I began in Wyoming in 2015. Titled "Grasslands, No Wilds," this project examines the ecological dialogue between grassland environments and human intentions as expressed through animal husbandry. The vastness of grasslands can mask the fact that they are in fact incredibly managed spaces that are written through and shaped by human desires, intentions, and imaginations after over a century of intensive cattle grazing.

"Grasslands, No Wilds" asks, What are we speaking into the landscape? These small sculptures--the majority of which were later burned on site--seek to capture, magnify, and transmit the landscape's efforts to speak back into us. A transcription of the language flowing from my body following the ritual burning of these works were captured in the video.

*JOSEPH O.*  
LEGASPI

[ gondola ]

Bless these/eyelids/weighting/me down/to sleep/  
where a-/gondola/awaits/tended by/my father,/his  
face/illuminated by/shadow rakish/as a crow's./  
Perhaps/this is no/reunion,/but a story:/gondolier/ &  
passenger/searching/the narrow/channels for/ each  
other./ There's not/much to it,/death or stasis./  
This is/always/the case with/my father.

## ARS POETICA

String together/letters you/might create/words./ A  
necklace/of words might/be a poem./ How do you/ feel  
about/Lazarus?/ You believe in/never-ending wine?/  
What's missing is/what you taste./ Possess/ the  
imagination/for trees./ How the mother/ glowers/at the  
strangeness/of her children/gone astray./ Create/a  
space/cornfield-quiet./ On a nighttime/wandering/you'd  
discover/an empty city/ square./ Look up:/the moon  
wanes/& shifts,/its magisterial light/you must follow.

*HENRY WEI*  
LEUNG

VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM MEMORIAL,

WASHINGTON, D.C. *Goddess of Democracy replica raised in 2007*

You oversee traffic from a corner  
where timed lights leave all things equal  
between Chinatown and Capitol Hill,

where a low heaven's gargoyle  
blinks and records, where oceanic  
tongues unthread your temple.

Someone slats a name between  
the roof supports for goddess and for  
victim, for the coming storm,

and cuts away from stone a perfect  
thing, then rubs it smooth, a thing  
meant to survive the things of us.

But in the chiseling did they find  
a David—that Abrahamic trick—  
or just the same hard earth divided?

I remember floating with a desert  
boxed on high seas, where to see  
a coming storm was to see the land

erasing: perfection; and perfection  
could not save us and the storm is  
always coming and I sing the storm.

I sweat at your feet in a gulp of smoke  
released, a halo of solitude, counting  
old receipts, a victim too of communism's

cheap memorials. We are the cobweb  
shaking loose on sideview mirrors,  
the clock tower pining, the empty quiver,

while Armed Freedom oversees us  
model minorities from a dome of old fasces.  
Goddess, you must change your life.

You are only as dark as bronze,  
exactly as blank as desired.  
Goddess, burn my pockets whole.

Give me paired zeroes like blind eyes,  
like infinity, like the truth without malice.  
Goddess, capitalize my death to death.

Let us feed on love and not on food.  
Let us feed on a love for food,  
on love for food we'll never eat.



*MICHELLE*  
LIN

The Year Of The Horse Is Dead

and so is the year of breaking  
unbrokenness, this beach and  
you upon my back wielding  
your heaviest sword. I rear back  
to a line of jet-haired women  
before me—unstabled,  
so never yours—on knocked-  
knees named pin-up, pinned  
apart  
for discovery. The sides  
of sea you see breaching there  
is the dark opening endlessly  
on itself. Like so, I hooved my  
sole  
to stand on stones. And then  
I furled the dread tail in daylight  
and the tale by next dawn.  
Bit down the bit you gave me,  
melted me to the point of weapon,  
drew the dagger down  
my own throat. And then I spit  
the jewel back to you  
to wear, yes—they will point  
to your own pale throat. Yes,  
there was the bride unbridled  
in the mouth. But first, I felt the  
clang of English and then I bit  
down.

# TAN LIN

## +^- THEMES

In an era of surplus data, reading is a subset of data extraction, bibliographic control, and visualization libraries. Just as novels by Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson mimed the rhythms of the diary and epistle, the contours of the new literary field mirror information and its management [systems]. What the Greeks performed with *poesis*, we extract with software.

What is a sweater or spouse? Structured data. All poems, like algorithms, are measures of likeness. Hence the mildly effervescent Platonic phrase, "You are so algorithmic." As any novelist or poet who has fallen in love online will note, life without love is a well-tended public data field without causality violations or distributional flaws. People with insufficient data never grow up. Historical throwbacks: 19th-century genealogical charts and the Yellow Pages tossed on your doorstep. Most of our [unused] data is amorous.

Like love, the slowest and most statistically unreliable of human communications mediums, reading is a failed lesson in bureaucracy and poetry its most indolent operation. Anyone who's listened to a love poem understands, if it's not short and misunderstood, it isn't love. Unlike most intervals [narcissism], love resembles [timed] memorandums, expense ledgers, parking tickets, and

unsent text [ ] messages, and the greatest love poems today mimic dropped cell phone calls and other bureaucratic inefficiencies. Hence the divers infatuations of non-reading: saving a book or person for later, saying one has loved a book or person one hasn't, skimming a touch screen as if it were a person, perfuming a mobile device with rose petals. As the librarian in Robert Musil's *Man without Qualities* understands, all reading is a form of non-reading, and the most beautiful formats of reading are those in which no books materialize.

*KENJI*  
LIU

THE UNUSUAL RUIN OF YOUR MANLINESS

The arch of your foot ablaze  
ghosted through by a rotten nail.

A spectre whistling low  
In the split of your hair.

Ride onward, metal horse.  
On your way to sad boy.

Fresh snow replaces  
your morning's burned caramel.

Behind the Target, red seaweed necklaces,  
an old asylum in the woods.

Here's your kingdom of crabgrass  
with a spine of glass ballerinas.

The unsure sweep of your breath  
as you accidentally wake.

Your body,  
a moist ticket among the crystals.

So much bad music,  
you sweated for it anyway.

The first time that winter  
a diagnosis ever touched you.

Sketch the character in your left palm, leave the  
empty where it belongs.

The blue orb of your Ultraman,  
draining like a god ventricle.

## YOU FILL EVER CORNER AND ANTI-CORNER

1. Black locust border, a guard of sparrows. So many rules for the day. 464 pages of wilderness gridded into language.
2. A rectangular storm. Screw the purchase order, rain is rain and every umbrella a knife. The schedule machine stutters, jumbles, and primps. Lift your bitten nails.
3. Embark on a zeppelin trip with long, long eyes. Cloud over the marsh, the salt of its bracken. Carpets of watercress. The fish who knocks, decked in a navy bow.
4. Your perennial ripple, a layered field. My offer still stands, to disembowel the department xerox. Divide or undivide my skin, do what you dare from your platform of needles. The rules of this liquid are bright and heavy. A godforsaken swim bug of nightly rain.
5. Wind of my wind, fern of my sword fern. We, an unexchangeable value. What is not from the capitol. When we were lovers you walked along my coast, bird on a dangerous shore. We still puncture the funded earth.
6. A turning gear is not the best reward. Look what I see. An orchard of maroon orchids, my arm draped around the fish. To reverse the flow of my condition, lay polaroids one on top of the other.
7. Dawn threatens to slip into your neck, scratch—a vein of gold, follow it into the widening forest, fireflies in your eyes. Undergrowth of stillness trailing back into the first country.
8. A satellite for your thoughts, my friend. They see your instincts from outer space. Speak softly and pull the clouds down. Each missing chirp, a number. Hear it all between wet palms and slap the prayer home.

## CORRUPTION MEANS THINGS TO BE DONE

*Upon asking the I Ching, "What is the legacy of World War II in my body?"*

Whatever penetrates subtly by neglect  
creates trouble. A hollow place, a ghost in the neck as you lean.  
Wind follows wind.

What is the situation from inside, from our parents?  
Anxiety as altar. The traveler has no place  
where they are accepted.

Seek and cross the hidden cause. A seventy year war  
and so many bodies, with or without people in them.  
Enforcers break law. Makers of law are above law.

You identify the official seal  
but no single intention penetrates, lends direction.  
No municipality for this sight.

What is taking shape? *The mind creates so much future.*  
You want to feel like a dollar bill.  
You want to build unnecessary things.

So many pervading influences. The brain folds  
into a cricket and bears the brunt.  
The spirit of hair pours out. No, falls out.

The house burns, you reach a lifetime.  
Competition but not completion.  
Without death no one will spend.

An economy of the end of the world.  
Their world, not yours. We call our linger back.  
Before the new shape, only three more days.

*TIMOTHY*  
LIU

PRE-LAPSARIAN ODE

Prophylactics stashed  
inside a medicine cabinet

on indolent afternoons

I fingered rubbery rings  
through sealed foil—a D.I.Y.

Eden ribbed for "her pleasure"—

my father out of town  
at another Bible retreat

when my future flooded

a receptacle tip with a deluge  
worthy of all those souls

wiped out in an instant.

## ROMANCE IN A RED STATE

Said he was a card-carrying  
Tea Party member, asked

politely what I was after

the bedroom doors closed  
and I said I was proud

to be another non-essential

government employee on  
furlough—only wanting

to get the fucking job done.

## ROMANCE: TASTING NOTES

Pale straw in color—mouthfuls  
of pretty florals dusted  
with honey pollen

Drink now before too late

Some chestnut, chalk, and truffle  
earthiness on the nose

Like a classy ginger ale  
barreled in dry oak

Crisp yet not too sweet

Tight, tiny bubbles with a touch  
of brioche toast rising up

A mild acidity making itself known

Some serious grip here—  
lip-smacking lavender and butter-  
cream on ripe Asian pear

A violent mousse  
with an intense mineral finish



# JANICE KO LUO

## BLACK AND RED

At the shopping mall in Tokyo, the sales lady gestured to me in the dressing room – first holding a white bag over her head, then my head. I couldn't understand what she was trying to say. She kept gesturing until... oh, I finally understood. I was to put the bag over my head before I tried on the clothes. That's the way they do it in Japan, so you don't get makeup on the clothes. That's how polite they are. The white cloth bag reminds me of death – funerals in Chinese. You always wear white hooded robes. Does it signify a return to purity? When I was a young girl I put a small white rose in my hair. My mom immediately screamed at me to take it off! She was angry because that's something you would do if someone had died.

~

In Shanghai, I showed up at the artist's doorstep – the FAKE factory, the fake art gallery. FUCK. Everything has a double meaning in Chinese, like double happiness. Is that really happiness at all? Things cancel each other out a lot of the time. People cancel each other out.

I wonder how many times brides in China really wanted to get married. The one with the embroidered red cloth over her head. The one with the red-pursed lips contained. What is the shape supposed to be exactly? In "Memoirs of a Geisha," the hair is supposed to be in the shape of a peach, a woman's private part, symbol of virginity. The peach you wanted to pluck from the tree, just ripe. But the red lips of those Chinese brides seem almost as cheap as the prostitute peach of a geisha.

~

What was I talking about? Double happiness. The two prongs of a fortune cookie. The fortune lost somewhere inside the middle. It's really a crapshoot.

~

I showed up at his doorstep. I wanted to be his art. I wanted him to make me into his art, performance piece. I wanted to be his muse. I wanted to be the tablet on which he wrote. I was a blank page anyway. I wanted to be something more than myself. Something other than myself, but still myself at the same time. Double happiness, or double misery? Sometimes things combine in weird ways and maybe they yield something different or good. Maybe not. Fernando Pessoa says "I multiplied myself to feel myself." That would make things worse. A million Magritte men with

umbrellas in the sky – disembodiment. Do you feel yourself more? No, you feel yourself less. That's the point of multiplying. Through time, we become filtered, diluted... deluded.

~

Lately I've been pining away for lakes even though I haven't really seen many. Even the water in LA leaves you thirstier, ocean-salt water, instead of clear blue lake water.

It's like when you look at people from a distance. From outer space, we become smaller. We become specks. In LA, driving these long distances to get between two buildings, these wide open spaces and freeways, short miles that take forever – our hearts shrink. They become tiny caged birds. With nowhere to roam free, confused, we never intersect. Have you ever seen a bird with its head cut-off? It runs around in circles in the dirt, lost. There's no map for going nowhere.

~

And always the heat. I open the car door, and it hits me. I have sympathy for singed grass. The heart being obliterated. No – nothing so dramatic. Always the thirst. The confusion, then no second thought.

~

The Birds of Paradise are parched and they hang their heads like Hamlet – sulking. Contemplative and alone, we can't help but make fun of them. And my mother says, "Smile more, be like me, don't have that poker-face, to be close to someone, you have to get closer" or something to that effect.

~

And the palm trees are redundant, their smiling faces row after row. I remember my friend's sister once asked me about the Sheryl Crow song, "If It Makes You Happy." Next line – "then why the hell are you so sad?" She asked me, "What does that mean, it doesn't make sense." Are you fucking kidding me?

~

Last night I drank half a bottle of bourbon and went home dreaming all night long of diet cokes and giant ice cubes perfectly square. When I woke up, I was smiling.

~

Why is it that my car is drawn to other car dents and hurts like a magnet? Like Sylvia Plath says about the "too excitable red tulips." They are wounds that correspond with her wound, herself. So

when I look at a slow driver and they have a huge dent and crack in their car rear, it makes sense. It's only fitting that I might hit it again. These cars have wounds that correspond to their owner's idiosyncrasies, tendencies to drive too far to the left or cut people off on the right. They are their owner's wounds.

~

Black and Red – otherwise known in Chinese as ash and luck. We burn red paper money with gold flecks of calligraphy I can't read for the dead, to send them to another world – rich. At the wedding in Tokyo, a sea of red to one side – the Chinese groom's side. Always wear red for good luck, to show happiness/brightness. Never wear black. And NEVER wear white because that's death.

At the wedding, a sea of black on the other side – the Japanese bride's side. I believe it denotes formalism, a respect for the event. On the red side – ruckus of flash bulbs, chaotic formations and no volume control. It's really quite embarrassing. On the black side – seeming meticulousness and soft voices. The two fathers of the bride and groom croon "Love Me Tender, Love Me True" as a present to the couple, and each has their own style. Towards the end of the night, the black side – out of control, random yells and raucous whiskey inebriation. They were only getting started. The red side – time for bed.

~

I woke up next to you to the sound of three alarm clocks, one a rooster screaming in Japanese. His cheerfulness made me want to rip his head off. Then you started making the bed with me in it.

~

The bride's eyes are like bright little half-moons that curl up at the corner when she smiles, which is actually all the time. My cousin met her when they were at international school in LA. He said it was a sign when they were together at the 99 Cents Store and the song "Only the Lonely" came on, and they locked eyes. My second aunt tells me, "You used to be the one that had those pretty moon eyes."

~

Crown of sonnets about a Chinese girl who falls in love with a Japanese soldier, lightly disguised as you and me. You might as well have carried a bayonet in those days. Words cut deeper. I'd always lose, because you said I won. That was the whole game. They don't play GO. No, forget that. Instead, poem about a Chinese General who falls in love with a Japanese girl – that would be my Nationalist grandfather and his mistress before the war with the Japanese, then the Communists. But what did my grandmother think? She loved to play mahjong and eat persimmons. That's all I remember. She bore five live children. The last was my mom, who my second aunt wanted to throw

over the ship when they fled to Taiwan, because my mom was the prettiest and most adored by the General.

~

Everyday I am getting closer to the ground and shit. Food, decay and lust.

Not true, not true at all.

~

My dog and I stopped to look at a pigeon under a car having a seizure, both of us fascinated for different reasons. Its body was crushed, claws stone still and hard, head still intact but brain gone berserk. Was it trying to get up still? The crazy thing was that its head was directly under a stopped tire. Would the driver see it when he got in his car? Most likely not, and I couldn't stop thinking about the crushing of its tiny bald head. There is a scene in the Iñárritu movie "Babel" when two white kids are taken to Mexico to a wedding, and they are mesmerized by the activities. In a rodeo of sorts, a man holds a live chicken by the head and twirls and twirls it, the children dazzled as if watching the swirls of a lollipop. Then the head cracks off, and the chicken's body is on the dirt ground running in circles. It takes a minute for the children to realize what has happened and when they do – they are horrified. Their horror is the most humorous thing in the movie because we can only laugh in response to their expressions, so horrified we are of the chicken too, yet as adults, co-conspirators with the be-header at the same time.

Four mornings in a row, my dog and I went to the spot with the car and the pigeon. The second and third, he was still there, still as the air, same parked car, no movement from either. By the fourth, he had disappeared along with the car. Very strange. I realized I wanted to see it – the crushing – feathers, blood, brains, guts, but was too scared at the same time. The excitement of life only in death.

~

Fourth of July. The fireworks pop and pop and pop, and all I can think about are the birds. How many are we damaging – their hearing? Their hearts? They must think it's the apocalypse. How many miles must they fly away to breathe again? Smoke and ash – our patriotic fervor in spectacular Technicolor. It really was a beautiful sight.

~

Gustav Klimt sounds like clipped, like the Austrian accent. The head of an antelope mounted to a wall, the taste of marzipan.

The taxidermist says the eyes are the hardest to get right. Is that why he lies in his coffin with closed eyes?

My mom says, "These people are stupid. That's not him anymore."

An empty vessel, waxed and tan, leathery as an animal hide.

~

Eros and Thanatos, sex and death – what wakes us up in a sweat from dreaming – falling off a cliff, the same feeling in your loins of an airplane with turbulence – falling – sensual and scary. The Samurai's unsheathed sword, extension of his soul. He dreams of ripe peaches being sliced – her juices.

That spring, the cherry trees grew rot. It was an inauspicious beginning to our love.

~

A list of Chinese translations:

*San-san xing*: as in – why don't you go on vacation to fan or air out your heart?

*San* in another tone is umbrella. As in – she opened the black umbrella like a carousel, a fan, and shook out the water droplets.

Like raindrops, we disappear into one another or evaporate more quickly alone.

~

My first photograph at the FAKE factory, 4pm on a sunny Shanghai afternoon. He threw me a gown and said, "Put it on". Red silk of course. Esta Spalding writes about the tomatoes in August, "skin-tight with longing...they...reel from the vine."

Then the shoes – black and elevator high, ridiculous. He says, "Lay down and put your head in the vise." He likes to make sculptures – wooden contraptions from the chairs of emperors. Up and down he pans, the length of the bindings without the usual bound feet. An image of redundancy, the rich getting richer – "let them eat cake." I'm redundant, obviously too obvious. Pursued red lips, too pursed. "Smile" he says, "but not too much."

## VERSES BY CITY

I wrote a haiku in Kyoto about a little – gold temple on stilts – which

floats silent as an egret

on the lake mirror

I wrote a ghazal in Taipei when I was awoken by the sweet tofu vendor, bellowing

beneath my window.

I wrote a sonnet near London on the River Cam

As we punted under the Bridge of Sighs

I imagined him in-between my thighs.

I wrote an ode in Paris to the macarons at Ladurée – their puffy rosewater lips and

drenched lavender insides.

I wrote ekphrasis in Barcelona at Picasso's museum, his soft photo illuminated on a

gothic stone wall, watching me everywhere with his dark benevolent eyes,

while his angular mistresses

stared at me like blank Medusas.

Then I came home and lost all the lines – the rhythms of a moving heart, traded them for

billboards and indecipherable signs. You, and the impossible

white canvas of free verse.

# CAROLINA MAUGERI

*point your nose at what you wish to see*

I have hands, too

hands & hands &

double your

double

it would take your hands all to catch me

water in sky that apart

the face I want

to see & to touch

the space I sift through is the point that splits my arms reach for

measure because of a hunger

because you have more caverns where I could

where do I have here to hide what room for mistakes

by every meaning use both hands submerge them

in your abyss surround me in your glass scuttling the pages

entrambe le  
tutte le mani  
tutte le armi  
le tue braccia  
tutte le gambe  
tutte le pagine

because you have a face  
because it is called  
face dimpled rock a model of relation  
masoning a language for love  
in love we ululate pattern                      wall of pattern what tongue our parents  
found in their purses out of what relation their love condemned for what  
relation their language indemnify  
from what  
glass I see through a man man  
hungry or angry  
manure is the look you give me  
because you have a nose you see  
because I can sense your face from behind  
a wall of glass slick w/ surface for my purchase  
eye upon hand upon eye upon leg adhesions such that  
with water I creep on land

mano e mano



such that with water the body evaporates  
ashore on the beach I bore the city lots among automobiles or your vinyl floor but  
of the body      the remains  
noseless pointless all the cavities enlarged what then with  
an engorged tongue in a desiccated beak  
would this be called afterdeath where in the carcass  
a promise of understanding knowing & being known to know fully  
where in this a sublime knowledge that need not be articulated  
  
a passive comprehension that knowledge will be passed  
down to us a chapter translated into a better language  
this problem is faith  
in the economy of better language what price the translation  
to double to multiply to generate toward a unity of meaning  
the noseless remnant points not  
because it wishes not                      it sees not  
the ink independent of the writing

!  
tutte le  
lingue ti  
amo in  
tutte le

senza naso

come andare  
sott' acqua  
senza il  
n

*use your eyes as paint brushes*

underwater I must be without nose for how long

the problem is this faith

that the body will rise from confusion to order

that the currents have my better language at heart

the remnant is this ink

the revenant is in its separation from this page this speculum that

is this writing I use my eyes to brush the ink & my mouth to seal with

sticks to the ink breaks apart the word a letter at a time

starting as such with f in faith like debris scatters over the viscous pond

stagnates who would say that the pressure of expression could cause it to

bubble out from under the words who would even say that the need to

communicate could tear at the sky the page the ocean the hand it's

just the resin I cut holes where there were arms holes where there was

air holes in water & the hand

that strokes me even I cannot begin to scribe

人生の穴

山水の穴

ドリーネ

単語の穴

言葉の穴

空気の穴

メモリホール

*when the eye shifts, it sees*

given time the more likely you will secure to memory  
how you will remember duration determined by movement  
how will you memorize the sky  
or language you thought was still  
life ripe perpetually ripe for mimicry but it is in a state of constant  
ripening this is not you necessarily  
would the hand have a preference for what it touches  
the skin of someone or the page in solitude  
to see the word & to touch the word  
you hear language before you see it  
through glass I see through a woman woman arms double  
doubled with but unhearing unseeing what she would remember of  
the language would remain only as good as the first words she utters to  
the stranger her lover My name \_\_\_\_\_. Please to meet you.  
should I embrace it from memory the sky would vaporize in the heat of my arms

空を記憶してくれ quante immagini si  
possono memorizzare su una scheda di  
目が動く時、memoria tutti i piloti  
それを見ている amano il cielo



i.



ii.



iii.

1. 笠戸 (Kasado, 2011)
2. コンビナー ト (Konbinato, 2011)
3. タコ (Tako, 2011)

4"x6" mirrors with oil varnish on decaled photos.

Peter Greenaway's *Prospero* had a book of mirrors & a book of water.

I sat at my dining room table crowded with mirrors & tried to affix decaled photos to them, but the caustic varnish caused image & language to slide & miscarry. Fumes in the air, this was a time of double feeling.

That summer, I was preparing for *Containment Policy*, a group exhibition at the Pterodactyl Gallery in Philadelphia, prompted by the curators' idea of *how humans conduct their lives via categorical imperatives & institutions that bind*.

If I could have, I would have only used water & mirrors, but the water wouldn't stick.

Words wouldn't stick, either.

Then I became more concerned with the position of the body in relation to the mirror, "preparing me for new ways of behavior," as Rosmarie Waldrop's speaker questions in "Conversation 14: 'On Blindman's Bluff.'"

Before I could attach poems to mirror, my freshly made images had already decayed.

Maybe in fifty years, the *konbinato* in the small industrial city of Tokuyama, where I had lived as a child, will look like this, the refraction of vantage points from where I stood to shoot these photos switching on a fading system that shifts desires – for proximity, contact, companionship; to be curious, exchange, interact, feed – into desires for transparency, borders, distance, revelation; to control, possess, & consume.

*LO KWA*  
MEI-EN

THE ALIEN CROWN

Anger and aim fused to the future, a cannon lined with quartz  
zones all it sees under chain light's false day. A honeyed antumbra  
breaks the bitter code into bites. Then, dessert, a lull for a bully  
yelling in a room with no window or wind but a lashing. A limb c  
oaxes its twin to break the mirrored pact—an act with no reflex—  
xenograft and its gift refuse a future in us. In love and the toxic  
does a detonation feel out, a feathering out, a bomb out of dew:  
war of radiance, of measurable wave, of measurable length and  
everything, almost, ends. But then, a then: what to die, how to live?  
Victors with a vector to split sell a history for dividend of fire,  
fear sale sailing on. So fair is the bright nuclear summer's bateau,  
us sweetly inside. Thus, reflect. The reef is glass, the chain is deaf  
gold, and the future is bright, this bright, but flashing in fright,  
the mild boom like a child in bloom, like a world refracting.



## TRANSMISSION ABOUT THE CLASHES

Tiles of sky were secured by the state / A dystopian  
Deadness was detected in a young civil  
Body / It didn't make sense but oh god but our god  
Citizens found self again blood syncing  
Availability in cash clouds / No identity to be saved  
In the cloud-shapes like non-whites of  
Copies / The race to deposit race in totally previous  
Centuries / Centuries as a sense of place  
Very near / Race was not veritas / Nothing personal  
Was personal in the "story of us" theory  
/ Judges spied a seat of power and sat / Customers  
Sat back down / Citizens spied poets  
Didn't react despite of but despite a school / School  
Knew death in every single spring month  
/ Watching as wielding, success as wheat, empathy  
As not merely nightmare but a prereq  
To being okay / Authority met itself online / Liked it  
/ Control met its dad / Police took vacay then  
Zipped the paradox up / Pandora said we will create  
Memorable content if it comes in a box  
Refreshing / Regulation made the world and made it  
Sensible / I can fear the fear of love has no  
Image / And fury little else / The state did swear to  
One formation with the lights on / Quick,  
Please help us to help / It's been so long the network  
Agreed to my kids on duty kissing doom

*BEN*  
MIROV

KNIFE/FORMS

static in the dark  
a frozen lung tree  
pulses its swimming bells  
the stolen Eyes of friends  
crawling on figment  
small thin tubes  
to drink things dissolved and diluted a  
knife in a star is just as much static is  
canceled  
just as much

darkling nodes pick up words  
small thin tubes  
to drink things dissolved and diluted  
the fingers and the teeth  
floating in the dark  
the weakest part  
floating in the dark  
figment in the ark  
a frozen lung tree  
fills its cavity with ink

sound machine

filling the void

a tune of non-being

filling the void

the shadows and the teeth

the stolen Eyes of friends

filling the void

a knife in a star is just as much

filling the void

just as much

a tune of non-being

+=[[[]]ing the void

and sound machine

!!//::g the void

a tune of non-being

(%%%%%%%%) the void

below 6000 m depth

the stolen Eyes of friends

87&&\$>> the void

a tune of non-being

darkling nodes

dot the abyssal night

fragments in the dark

[][][][] the void

a knife in a star is just as much

static is canceled

just as much

a frozen lung tree

pulses its swimming bells

fills its cavity with ink

in the domain of eternal night  
an almost complete transparency  
pulses its swimming bells  
fills its cavity with ink  
echoes pierce the light  
the stolen Eyes of friends  
( -\_- ) the void  
Eye am not going to be destroyed  
in the domain of eternal night  
wet with dew

and sound machine

|||||| the void

pulses its swimming bells

below 6000 m depth

small thin tubes

the fluid in the channels runs black

a tune of non-being

eating tiny capsules of the night

to generate sound

)))))) the void



and sound machine

echoes in the dark

wet with dew

below 6000 m depth

and sound machine

echo in the ark

wet with dew

an almost complete transparency

pulses it's swimming bells

fills its cavity with ink

and sound machine  
a frozen lung tree  
pulses its swimming bells  
in the domain of eternal night  
below 6000 m depth  
a knife in a star is just as much  
a tune of non-being  
just as much  
static is canceled  
just as much

a tune of non-being

tends to get separated

+ [0] [0] + the void

a knife in a star

tends to get separated

< ) 0 ( ) 0 ( > the void

sound machine

tends to get separated

f ( ) ll ( ) ng the void

No Eye am not going to be destroyed

a frozen lung tree  
pulses its swimming bells  
the stolen Eyes of friends  
dot the abyssal night  
motes of dark are functioning  
small thin tubes  
to drink things dissolved and diluted  
a knife in a star is just as much  
static is canceled  
just as much

and sound machine  
a frozen lung tree  
pulses its swimming bells  
fills its cavity with ink  
in the domain of eternal night  
below 6000 m depth  
a knife in a star is just as much  
a tune of non-being  
just as much  
static is canceled

# *FELIZ LUCIA*

## MOLINA

### THEY'RE PAINTING THEIR LAWNS GREEN THEY DON'T HAVE MUCH WATER

miEKAL aND in Wisconsin shared this thing about people spray painting their lawns green in California. It got some likes. I liked it but not completely. I liked the before and after photo, one side half yellow, the other side green. I can't remember the science, something about it being environmentally friendly.

Basically, lack of water is some kind of aesthetic - this water lack begat irrational practicality to mean lawn paint.

On someone's Instagram the state of affairs is a variety of blue bubble wrap. The state of affairs is some photoshopped dream board for a French life. The state of affairs is a bright green golf course with a golf cart justifiably casual with the caption heaven is real.

There is no one to casually ask about the desire for casual, although

### THE DESIRE FOR CASUAL

is a desire to be without pretense which is hard to achieve. In Los Angeles, pretense is the same as water, except there's an abundance of it. Desire for something in reference to being without pretense is hard to achieve in one sentence, but

### IN HOLLYWOOD

on Melrose Blvd. there's a mantle piece store for movie sets, a variety of shapes, colors, and fake marble for all kinds of imaginary families. What is the relation between fake marble and imaginary families and why do they go together so well? A non-imaginary family, in other words, a real family, ought to have real marble for a mantle. Otherwise there'd be no use for Hollywood or painted lawns and

### IN CHENGDU, CHINA

"Officials have said that people feel more positive, cheerful, and productive when Spring is here and everything is green and new. In the past field crops have been replanted to give a more fertile appearance during an inspection tour of the countryside by Chairman Mao, and fake sheep have been positioned on the dried out grasslands of Inner Mongolia to convince tourists that the animals were still grazing there."

From California to China spray paint is changing the way Spring makes us feel or Spring is changing the way we think about spray paint

but grass seems unreal anyway especially to beef eaters

## <3 emoji <3 notes <3

There are emojis that are consistent and private the kind that you give intimately to lovers and friends like a palm tree or face with heart eyes that remain, always remain public.

There are emojis that are "frequently used" and those ones belong to you, the signature or the surrogate of your name

like painted fingernails or face with overwhelmed eyes.

One could say that emojis are eyes not as a surrogate of your own but as convenient and public and if they are convenient and public eyes then it would make truths and lies just so.

But consistent and private ones like maybe a heart with an arrow through it, a rainbow carousel horse or racialized hand clap carries an essence from the sender.

A bowl of rice or kiss mark from your

lover or friend, never an enemy, though maybe someday you will forget or remember the ones they sent you.

And some of them are floating displays of affection and affirmation irreverent of privacy because whatever's intimate may also want exposure to "friends" and "followers".

No one else but you will know the essence of your lover or friend encapsulated in a cigarette or blue heart and that's what's cool about it all the bodies to inhabit, share, and never own, if that's what they are.



## DAYTIME PEOPLE

The people in my life on television aren't at all like the people in my family. And what is television but a vomiting marsupial of its former life.

In the family I know they pray to god and saints for things they want. They believe more in a life after this one which has been difficult since we got born into this family.

In the back seat of their car is a brochure of a mansion with twenty rooms and one elevator.

In the family I know they flip slices of Spam on the pan and microwave Vienna sausage dogs.

They get the plates, forks, and rice out.

The Filipino Channel vibrates the house twelve hours a day. They know when to get in the car to drive to Mass on Sundays and feast days.

Some days they talk about fantasies, never plans, to go back home. Although the line between a fantasy and a plan is always blurred.

One day I wanted to bring up the notion of "daytime people", something I saw in a magazine they never heard of, The New Yorker. I wanted to ask my mom about what she thinks about "that kind of people", daytime people. I wanted her to give me her interpretation because I believe she has superpowers that extends to her shamanic great-grand so & so in the Philippines.

My mom vaguely remembers Rosie O'Donnell who had a talk show in 1996 and who famously said, it's the stories about living your life that makes you relatable to your audience.

I fantasize about how this conversation with my mom. I imagine it would be somewhere indoors and very bright outside. It might be at Bahay Kubo restaurant in Historic Filipino town with the fan blowing next to the flat screen TV above the dusty piano. We might be eating nilaga, sinigang, pakbet.

Mom, remember Rosie O'Donnell from that movie A League of Their Own? I remember.

She said daytime people are people who are relatable.

We relate to each other, don't we? You are my daughter.

And I'd say, I knew you had an answer. Or no, that's not what Rosie means.

*NATASHA*  
MONI

I ADMIT I DO  
EVERYTHING IN BED

I lie or am lying

I lay me down in a nest

of Lispector, an oversized

book forever open

to the pathophysiology of

an organ, infiltrated

how we suppress

what instinct shouldn't—

initial irritation (how I want you to

turn your collar down/up)

becomes unchecked inflammation and

now I compare you/us

to the process

of chronic disease

—we aren't this  
easy equation—

you: all lips

me: eyes

not confluence of  
drug, illness

state of potential  
over impossible

sheets you send me  
an exploration on the word

I insisted was delusion—  
once voiced

will suspend as  
though never

always the beginning arises  
as some ridiculous

animal chasing its own  
and I believe I might—

# SAHAR MURADI

## THE TODDLER IN HER LEGS

It's a matter of pulling my hat over my eyes.  
Not unlike shearing a wooden animal.

I have a balloon I am unwilling to let go.  
I've been known to hurt adults out of the past.

If I don't say yellow, they'll think blue.  
Therapy advised moving the corners of the box.

Refuge in nature that has different eyes.  
Refuge in the green climb of houseplants.

In the sugar face of the moon.  
In a power greater than a ten-tongued lily.

No one admits there are no saving words.  
Wall Street named for a wall to keep the natives out.

Gardens have become serious.  
Butterflies have become serious.

The monk advised to not turn away, to hold my seat.  
They're never being apples at the hardware store.

A drop in the glass can kill us but not a drop in the ocean.  
Our work is to enlarge the container, he said.

When they ask me how my dad is doing I hate them.  
I haven't asked my dad how he's doing.

My presence on the world wide web commanded  
nothing. A credenza of words and gooseflesh.

He said we have much to be grateful for.  
As in one can't then say anything.

Patriotism, or that he loves me exactly as I am.  
If only he would change, I would be okay.

Will there be tomatoes in the garden?  
Will there be a garden in the garden?

Imagine the whole thing until it diffuses.  
When you re-enter reality, it will soften its beak.

Put the cap on the toothpaste, wipe around the sink.  
This is not a zoo without constraint.

Ladies and gentlemen, the whips please!  
Twenty lashes for not texting back.

I will wear my wounds in chapters.  
I will use the Internet to build a home.

Who gave their life most?  
Who fought the longest, the hardest, for like ever?

My body in the waiting room of public medicine.  
No one cares where you have to be.

Noting the jade leaf that cracked and did not fall.  
I woke with chiclets of dreams.

I am not real. I am just like you.  
If you were real, you would have some status among nations.

All the little birds feed from the same bowl.  
Everyone uses the world, I mean the word problematic.

I will have to apologize repeatedly, remedially.  
I will have to collect invasions for my taxes.

This bulb is good for the environment and bad for you.  
Everyone has their *thing*.

When her red reddens, my flame dims.  
Did you use your container, he asked.

His teeth are out of him: he is a quince on a cane.  
It was adequate, said the doctor, of the other doctor's surgery.

Dad used a paring knife for over thirty minutes.  
A witch came into being.

She entered the train holding her baby and a magic marker sign.  
Something pointed to our treasury being liquid.

## CARIBOU

My concept and your concept were in an argument. My concept said to yours

Regarding the bird feeder, you'll make them lose their foraging habits. My habits outweigh my desires at a ratio

The train comes slowly into the station

And something for not reading the news and something for saying I'd read *Things Fall Apart* when I hadn't

How the jasmine fills the room like a carousel of light I lay my head near

But I created the flower of chronic shame—watch it bloom

She said, I had a heart to heart with mom and things aren't

Because the earth is much bigger. Shame is much bigger. See the migration of caribou across northern Canada. 6,000 miles

If I could just measure exactly

And the next stop on this train

Or the male penguins storing eggs all darkwinterlong

My concept bought me flowers from Sunny's on 1st and 6th with a raffia bow

He said, but now you have your MFA

And the sparrow sat on the roof because it couldn't get in

Water in the station. Water in the lungs. One of the side effects. All the side effects on this train. If we pooled them together, we'd have a savings program

Only they were dried flowers

In an effort to place a word beside another word. Build

Put my hand in and draw the blood, little pieces of cranberry could-have-been

The constant action at the birdfeeder. In the wind spinning the cord. I want to see the small house crash against our window, see the glass separate

The will to disappear is a constant  
Caribou of shame

They came round again battering their wings into the glass. The sparrow perched below on the fire escape, waiting for the seeds to drop

She said, your lights have gone out maybe because you're sick

I've forgotten how to do this, one foot in front of the other word

Time-lapse video of the cherry blossoms opening in Japan, the Okavango Delta filling with water

Close-up of the elephant calf blinded by

Constant contact with the will to

*SHAM-E-ALI*  
NAYEEM

STRANGERS ON THE  
TRAIN

he is the first to notice a  
face gone blank in a  
train car of oblivious

noticed her conversation with a door  
closed on half her body  
and the slow beginnings

of a train picking up speed  
she's trying to pull herself in  
while he pulls an emergency stop cord

strangers say I care for you best  
because they have  
no reason to care

no one knows each others name  
or how work was that day  
or will I speak to you ever again?

just are you ok?  
yes, thank you  
see you around  
see you





i.

i. "root shelter" (digital collage, 2015)

This is part of a body of work interested in spaces, places, and times. I photographed both original images in this digital collage; the man and girl on moped were photographed in Mumbai and the roots were photographed in Pennsylvania. Through this collage practice, I find a therapeutic and relaxing space for ideas of time travel and an examination of transcendence.

*QUYEN H.*  
NGHIEM

WALL

the wall was hamburger

now all over white

downstairs fish mint

mum's muong

purple perilla

then back to it

pushing

i remember

the painter Cesar

played so-so ping pong

he painted

houses

## SNAKE

all except for dad  
uncle bo and his brothers  
vowed to kill this man  
on sight

my grandmother  
pulls strings! as thin as bird  
spit

no, nothing killed this blog O  
now hunting park  
it's the bottom of summer  
where red mold gro

i fill a hole in the wall

tied to her, I jumped  
feel my waves in bath with a  
bucket we were  
a poor family

i fill a hole in the wall w  
candy

CYNTHIA  
DEWI OKA

FOR KHALIL, FIRST  
RESPONDER, WHOSE NAME  
MEANS "FRIEND"

I pray peace is with you Angel  
who haunts the elm-lined boulevards America's  
cologne-bright pools of unseeing  
blue in whose name Hellfire  
becomes God's

infrared spring the Heart's  
globe of hornets ground that spurts  
like a vein your love Khalil like History's darkling  
fruit *so burnt you can't tell*  
*cattle from human* how did you carry

what you found & crawl thru  
the gorged Hippocampus in whose name  
Boy becomes hearse this birthmark that hill  
of bone is it real did the missile do it  
such thirst Khalil among

flies that crust the arm once  
bridge between cup & cards stowed inside  
the sleeve's Holy color which saves  
none from sundering hum  
that halves the crown *there*

*is pain in his head* like wheat  
in Sand or centers of palms  
un-fisting as they receive unidentified ribbons  
of body *we will ask nothing*  
*of you* Khalil but this parting

of the hecatomb when the sierra breaks  
like an old Lion's back    Our fear  
the cargo of everyday gestures like this  
poem I am failing    to wedge  
between you & the sky    in time

when I pray    it is leaves  
swelling the bellies of goats    the quarry  
of your future    & though we live & vanish  
Song is not    stronger than iron  
in the pit in the white

strips of what was    who should have  
continued    *no matter what*  
this ash & not-ash  
staining jaw    breath    the every sunlight  
that enters    you as Refuge

*SHIN* YU  
PAI

NEEDLE MASS for a HARI KUYO

pressed and tempered carbon  
steel wire cut to the length of two

the seamstress' "soul mate" –  
thread tethered through a sharp's

all-seeing eye, sacramental  
pardoning of secrets, grief

interred in cormous cake rest,  
tools embedded in tenderness

devil's tongue jelly berth burial

# SOHAM PATEL

## FROM *LETTER TO A CARBINEER*

\*

A familiar smell hit. You lit a cigarette. Lungs ache. Exhale and the smell becomes a memory of a cousin who stole bidis one by one, then two by two, then pack by pack from an uncle's cabinet. You both smoked in the summers on the roof where yellow-green lizards and roti-thief monkeys live.

Watch other children fly kites from other rooftops every morning before you brush your teeth.

\*

Wake up around midnight and it is raining. You soaked red lentils in a pot since before the morning. Put the pot on a burner set to high heat. In another pot pour oil then it goes on the burner set to medium heat. Each will need 45 minutes. Pour wine and pull a yellow onion from a basket. Papery flakes fall on the floor. You leave them there. Chop and drink and let tears clean your face. Drop in cumin seeds. They sizzle and dance. Onions, more cumin, lemon, tomato, red powder, yellow powder, salt and honey get spooned into the hiss.

Combine what is in the two pots into one bowl and put it aside. Go to the porch. Smoke in the rain before you go back to sleep.



\*

You dream you have a job. It is to find one of Emily Dickinson's books. The library at your old school. You have to run to get to it on time. You have to run now. Find it on a windowsill under the stone-carved cherub who peers down nosed in his own book. Pick up the book you found. See it is a John Steinbeck novel instead. Dickinson is in the binding of what you hold in your hand.

Crack the binding's brown leather and wood. The pages are flimsy. They crinkle, are almost translucent. You touch them. They turn into white wings and fly out of the building. You have to run again. You are chasing the wings. Catch them near the rose bushes. Pinch down on the wings with your fingertips. They ignite. Smoke flies. The wings become orchid petals.

\*

Just before soldiers soak  
black rain - hearts beat.  
Arrowtargets end  
and moments  
speed up to stillness.

The pocketful of empty hands.  
The engine. The road.  
The jimmy shift white lilacs fill in hand me-  
down  
gestures towards a tamer shoreline. No more war.

## DAYS OF REST

but never the newspapers:

the color red reads

in headlines—untimely deaths

Filled fractal adverts. Numb wound joy.

Enemies: manufactured by the man.

Something to write home.

Fill in the blanks with a wanting eye.

What could have come

was peace—a wind

carrying the tune of a new

fruit budding.

\*

To vanquish—set forth on dreadful expeditions.

Know they are nothing

but tributes. For family. For country:

Out of food and moving on.

Thoughts of hauteur

battle themselves between

daylight and sand grains break your face skin.

Deserts beat like funk.  
You think it is yours. You  
do not know if you belong here now.  
Soldier on. Camouflage beige  
the idea of water –  
and breath.  
Greed can't get you home.  
It allures every  
myth you've ever  
been assigned to read  
into your tent at night  
and takes each back  
to its own basic folly  
because chaos was never  
only in the beginning.  
Take a dollar everyday  
you go to heaven.  
Throw the rock up up up  
up up and again.

—ubiquitous and proud—  
live with whatever  
divine and dormant power  
lies in the confluence  
of every stream ending in  
the oceans. Deny no river.

Coalesce enemies and memories  
stay in place with the confusion  
that links system fervor. Return  
home – there is where you'll be  
told everything will be forgiven.  
Everything will be OK.

*ALAN*  
CHONG LAU



*A Thousand Suns*, watercolor on rice paper

ANGELA  
PEÑAREDONDO

AUBADE CASSETTE

I sew together pieces with string  
from 77 Poems, the white  
page widely open, Lacerda says,  
*nakedness is more and more terrible.*

Each diagonal of loss is measured:  
a running field, a perimeter  
of mouth, each crawl to rumpled sleep.

But to loss Darling, I prefer talk  
until the flags and meat burn.

I replay it in my head like Hikmet's  
smoldering red chimneys of Istanbul  
and bars of Bursa and yes, surprise!

Even women betray each other  
for contour,  
for beauty,  
for burn again.

But the disorderly placement of hands,  
the barrier made from the vertical of cigarette  
against chin meant a diagram  
of secrets and I am tired of the startling.  
The clear plain of desertion.

*MICHELLE*  
NAKA PIERCE

from *ESTRANGER*

Each sits motionless—to speak of the unnamable self. Everything is small, swollen. Operation tends toward the abundant. Follow the movement, the infinitesimal. The future is a tenuous dispersal. Drawing spider legs to fulfill harmony. One and the same movement. One and the same form. Shape has a deictic function. The index following a kind of sequence in which, little by little, it selects this and not that. Indolence.

Fragment is too strong a word.\*

A force. A pulsation. The instrument never wounds but part[s] the natural fissures. Push snow to lips. These gestures imply sacrifice. No longer a prey to which one does violence. A flow of milk. Maternal gesture. Leaving our arm[s] predat[ory].

\*"Fragment is too strong a word. And yet, there it is. She can no longer hear. She can hear every third word. She gives up. She can speak. She can move. And so can I. What is it about this country that tells an individual to live? What foreign elements enter our speech as we cross paths? She has become a child in many ways. I have become a parent. The care with which the rain is wrong falls along the wet streets, turns to ice and snow. Fujisan is standing as clear as the day. This sky blue to the touch.



# JAI ARUN RAVINE

## THE ESCAPE ARTIST<sup>1</sup>

*a world of make believe  
sharing your smile it has to be relive the stories of ancient glory now and forever the story  
never-ending you'll always remember*

*among the miracles waiting for you to share*

*you'll never be the same again the things you see will change*

*you always and forever let our two worlds collide*

*there's wonders to see abroad. You are in the States and you hate it. You want to collide  
with the atmosphere of England and believe  
writing a letter to a British woman will be your escape, the change*

*promised. You must have picked the most expensive story*

*of them all. Secretarial colleges say, "I will look after you," 42 Snow Hill shares*

*this twentieth instant. The new term begins 3rd September—remember*

*to bring a Shorthand Fountain Pen for writing circular letters, remember  
your specimen business and receipts. A British woman's search for a family collides  
with a dead end and you don't write back to share*

<sup>1</sup> **DID YOU KNOW?** This travel package is the first in a series of sestinas written from lyrics to the featured song in the Tourism Authority of Thailand commercial "Once in a Lifetime" [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUMVYtuqL7o>], which is part of the Amazing Thailand campaign [<http://www.tourismthailand.org/campaign/en/>]. The author is interested in confusing the desire to escape *to* Thailand, as it is produced by tourism, with Thai people's desire to escape *from* Thailand. **INFORMATION:** The title is taken from a 1982 film based on a book by David Wagoner. A line is taken from Wagoner's *Who Shall Be the Sun?* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1978).

how you're getting on. You never talked to her again. You stopped believing  
it could even be possible, next door in a small commercial motel. The story  
being you couldn't afford *a real crossing of the threshold, a real change*

*of consciousness, nothing was ever the same again.* Change  
flirted with you in the creases, in the ink, you wanted to remember  
something you'd never seen. I don't even know your story

and here a British woman knows the states you hated, is surprised, she collides

with what you wanted so much to be, she asks you to believe

in writing letters to the Thai Embassy in London after she shares

that she did everything she could possibly do to share

her life at Stoke-on-Trent. Mrs. Principal promises a change,

but you're really looking for an art of escape, believing

that there could be a way out through a letter, remember?

You collect stamps, plane ticket stubs and luggage. Your obsession with travel collides

with the folding and sealing of envelopes. If I ask you to tell a story

from 1968 there would be the scratch of a fountain pen. The story

would be English and Spelling and a P.S. full of commas. You'd share

only a blank sheet of paper folded into an addressed envelope with no collision

return, opened on one side with a blunt edge. Your version of events can't change

because there's no archive. When I try to remember

you there's just film negative, you standing next to a figure without a name, so I make believe

that I knew you in 1968. All I can do is believe this British woman's story,

to remember the one letter she wrote, what you did not share

with me, and how all our change collides.

SRIKANTH  
REDDY

BURIAL PRACTICE

Then the pulse.

Then a pause.

Then twilight in a box.

Dusk underfoot.

Then generations.

\*

Then the same war by a different name.

Wine splashing in a bucket.

The erection, the era.

Then exit Reason.

Then sadness without reason.

Then the removal of the ceiling by hand.

\*

Then pages and pages of numbers.

Then the page with the faint green stain.

Then the page on which Prince Theodore, gravely wounded,  
is thrown onto a wagon.

Then the page on which Masha weds somebody else. Then the  
page that turns to the story of somebody else. Then the page  
scribbled in dactyls.

Then the page which begins *Exit Angel*.

Then the page wrapped around a dead fish.

Then the page where the serfs reach the ocean.

Then a nap.

Then the peg.

Then the page with the curious helmet.

Then the page on which millet is ground.

Then the death of Ursula.

Then the stone page they raised over her head.

Then the page made of grass which goes on.

\*

Exit beauty

\*

Then the page someone folded to mark her place.

Then the page on which nothing happens.

The page after this page.

The the transcript.

*Knocking within.*

Interpretation, then harvest.

\*

*Exit Want.*

Then a love story.

Then a trip to the ruins.

Then & only then the violet agenda.

Then hope without reason.

Then the construction of an underground passage between us.

MG  
ROBERTS

T.I.P. 2014

1.

Searching your face, I've extended my DNA, my name, and in some cases my body to fold into the space between the making of space. Distorted sinew. Elastic limbs suspended in skin.

*2. Movement is like riding a bike. Limbs fold and recombine. If language is an extension of identity, please identify imperial refusal? Absolut reduction?*

*a. Who are we?*

*b. And whom am I supposed to be?*

2.

Extraneous backpedaling, a gyre circles ever wider, looped as seen in the shape of an egg: a membrane growing around itself, so bumpy and grainy in texture. A compressed circle—a body distorted by arched lines changing from blue to white depending on the light.

*c. Your eyes are so round.*

*d. Where is the bridge of your nose?*

3.

*Legs extend traveling from point to point, dipping, then rising, then dipping again to where left and right visual fields overlap the marked body. It's all rippling surfaces of tide, carved and empty of name. An experiment in bilateral crawling?*

*e. Are you visiting or invading?*

*f. When did blood learn to call out?*

*g. Was I ever a girl? You ask yourself.*

4.

The moon's pink shadow crawls across surfaces of sun, ringing sky in darkness—a now covered disk in uniform grey— a nearly featureless plane. As if gender and completion were coincidence, irrelevant.

5.

How shall we document this moment?

h. *Where are your AK-47's?*

# CHRISTOPHER SANTIAGO

## GLOSS

as many words for lullaby

as English has for wave—

breaker

ripple

roller

swell

surge

sound

+

*hili* also envy

*lulay* island prayer

[may you still]

[may you strengthen]

[may your thrashing turn to heft]

*hele* mispronounced as *heal*

/

wakefulness a wound

+

*kantang*

*pampatulog*

incantation

bearing song's Roman root:

[cantata]

[cantabile]

indigenized by *k* but also

that much closer to Ithaca

+

*oyayi* altos in Batangas / lull with a *huluna*

*huluna* spare in text but rich in fioriture

*alaala* waves are part of it  
waves  
eardrum /

& a rhythm

*kokli* a loanword /

[no need for it

cartilage & blood-peal

to be re-]

archipelago

turned

*katapusan* / arkipelago / I scribe

a seastone in your ear



*BRANDON*  
SHIMODA

MONSOON

Because I thought we were going to die

By "die" I mean

Be

Momentarily transfigured

By falling

Into a racing depiction of our bodies

The medium-heavy mindlessness of living

As we do

In a monsoon,

Winds lash the house. The house bends. The alley fills with water

Trees bend in the skylight. A bird bends in the skylight

Coming over? Ruthless

Sensitivity

Makes us

Descendants

Of the first man, bloated corpse now

Plugging up

The once destitute wish made real

To die intervenes the commonplace

Ready to go out, sure

We looked like

How we thought

Foregone, and hours passed

There was a boat

To take us across the chocolate-colored river

It was in the mountain

The sun was lifting snow off the ground  
Then I was in a small room with a cement floor  
There was a drain, a dozen men in a circle  
Facing each other

100%  
Ashes now

To hate is to want the rib back

To infuse the imperial specter

For once, the territory relapses  
While children eat bread  
Baked in the gullet of an invalid god

To be above the unbearable stench of garbage  
Is to be deathless. The stench is inclusive

Monsoon is soft romance  
Boarding the body of the first man  
Rowing down the alley

Sail like straws over roofs  
And penetrate, by chance, the shelter of a creature  
Coming to terms with the boundaries of itself  
By what it can enter  
And when  
Darker areas start to move

Holding someone's arm  
Thrusting it into the reflections of faces

People are snakes  
Swimming only  
To keep moving

## TOMB MODEL of a NOBLE'S HOUSE

There are three stories, and ten visible people—four people on the first story, four people on the second story, two people on the third story; the two people on the third story, on the balcony; the four people on the second story, on the balcony; two pairs of two people, one of each pair with the arm around the other; one of the four people on the first story recessed in the shadows; the person on the far right playing the flute ...

What are birds on the pediment?

Between the second and third stories, there is an axe

White person recessed

In the shadows feminine people

Waiting for someone to arrive, precede death

Noble people? Projections?

Do not shine unobstructed

That something That cuts

Light penetrating indefinitely (life inside stories)

Are people guardians (people guardians)

Patient, beatific, welcoming there is that

Feeling the soul

Arrives to

All stories at once

Living or dead expectant (guardian facets)

Precede them? Home?

We approach

The sound of the flute

The worldly struggle to totality ...

Are there other tombs of which this tomb

Is aware? Like facelessness merging on balconies

Birds weaving long tails of the vagabond garment

## THE LIBRARY

Early morning: the only people in the library  
Are homeless white men and Asian men  
And white women who are not homeless  
Asian men and women who are students  
And Asian American students  
And one white man and one white woman  
Who are not homeless  
On the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and the 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
Straightening all the chairs  
The woman disappears into Anthropology  
The man disappears into Education  
The Asian and Asian American students go faster  
I am in between. I am not homeless, that means sleep  
I have no chairs to straighten

*RAENA*  
SHIRALI

DARE I WRITE IT

dare i the greenery flashing by, hallucinatory, out the window,  
parents in the front seat yelling back at me  
for wearing a hollister skirt, for cursing  
in front of a group of younger indian boys. do i dare  
my salwar-clad grandmother at middle-school PTA meetings. do i dare  
parents, their skin dark around the eyes, darker than some of the other kids' parents—  
mom hands me salt scrub & a loofah, says, get to work. dare i work  
on my tan, skin without sunscreen, dare i explain to a friend  
the back of my neck, dare i explain that i am not a “nigger.”  
dare i use the word. dare i understand i should not be using this word.  
my friend shakes her dirty blonde hair back & forth slowly:  
ain't a difference. dare i know if you put the word “sand” before,  
she's right; my people apparently live surrounded by sand, never mind the river,  
the himalayas, never mind dharavi & the mountains of sheet metal  
& laundry my dad says he once was assigned to during his residency.  
says it was electrical & no plumbing & would you look at that,  
not a grain of sand in sight. how can i argue  
with a question like that—how can i answer will you have an arranged marriage  
when i'm thirteen—how justify—how rectify—how peel off  
epidermis & then dermis & then how rid oneself of a name:

i don all the popped collars, all the pink crop tops,  
by God, whom i now presumably believe in, i will show my tits  
to the neighborhood boys so they shut up about the sand, so they stop  
chasing me down in their pickup trucks yelling run, nigger run until i turn  
to face & correct them: SAND-nigger. dare i sit on the roof of a brick house  
with white girls & laugh when they laugh at that story. dare i  
coat my eyes in black. dare i chameleon. dare i write. dare i girl.

*KIM GEK*  
*LIN SHORT*

from **BALLADS POPULAR IN BOXING**

ENEMIES

*Boxer* her real momma said *Boxer when you were born*  
*a jealous sword* bore into your enemy's dantian *a leaky hate.*  
Real Momma held Boxer her hands cupping  
Boxer's pits she held Boxer up she bore  
into Boxer's navel into the no-muscle no-strength  
she bore with her tongue and spoke something  
Boxer could not say put stories there.  
Seconds after sacred vowels from Real Momma's  
mouth her nose through Boxer's lips p a r t e d  
and Real Momma's voice fell sacred a  
sacred sound.

Real Momma had Chinese eyes black hair  
and many enemies in China. *In China all*  
*mommas have many enemies,* she said. *In America,*  
*there are no real mommas,* she believed, *only*  
*sunglasses and boxing gloves* and on the children so many  
*mangled underpants.* *Boxer,* her real momma  
told her, *Boxer when you born* *a jealous sword*  
*bore into your enemy's dantian* *a leaky hate.*

## BOXER

Boxer has  
Chinese eyes  
American hair  
and mangled underpants.

Boxer has an American Momma. American  
Momma finds Boxer in an abandoned car  
somewhere outside Wyoming when Boxer is four or five or a  
malnourished six. American Momma has honey  
hair dragon eyes dry lips and is too pretty  
to look at for more than four or five or a malnourished  
six second hit. If you look too long you will  
catch fire American Momma is that pretty.

Pervert Ray says  
the first time he saw  
American Momma  
a wild animal took his manners away.  
When he says this  
American Momma's face always changes.



When American Momma finds Boxer                    an acoustic                    plugging  
a scratching                    *finally finally finally.*                    She spots the gray  
coupe                    wavy in August heat                    its fastback tucked  
on ready haunches.                    She leaves                    Ray  
in the truck                    on look-out                    and camps                    in the shelter of  
a ditch                    to case the car:                    Its door  
is                    o p e n.

When she was a younger girl                    four years ago  
American Momma                    pinned down a boy                    in the  
cramped back seat                    of a car like this                    door open  
legs out                    pants off                    she licked his tongue his teeth  
his lips                    to suck the drug he did not share                    sucking his  
tongue hard                    swallowing the metallic presence  
of that absent paper.                    But his car was psychedelic.  
This one is gray.

Still:                    the door is o p e n.

American Momma knows how to size shit up.

She takes a wide look

closing in

she sees

boxes in the rear

zippo

backpack

keys

no people

door open.

## HER ENEMY BLIND

American Momma does not see:  
the child  
sitting in the driver's seat.

The child hidden  
slipped under the sheepskin cover  
the mask of sheepskin

over shape of Hidden Child  
yellowing  
Plush Child

the child stiff to be still  
in the bucket seat  
breath held in

lungs like lamp burning  
toy filament  
of kept breath.

Boxer calls this her Ready Position.  
She has three ready positions  
and this is One.

A competent disciple  
knows how  
to make her enemy blind.

Boxer wonders  
if American Momma  
is the enemy

Real Momma told her about.  
Boxer makes American Momma  
blind.

## QING, WYOMING

*How you got made, I'll never really know.* She was made  
from sheepskin made of the wet pleating  
vaginal bumps that sheepskin soaked. She was made from  
parked car heat poached in a sheepskin.  
Bucket seat bleeding she came out heavy with damp  
fists slipping. American Momma didn't know  
what hit her. She saw Child Flailing.  
*Couldn't be. Couldn't be.* Car door fencing  
that sheepskin cheese an organ pulled  
inside out Boxer's sleeved body 38 inches 36  
pounds dantian dangling sheepskin creased.  
American Momma and Pervert Ray. Child Punching.  
*Couldn't be.* It was the Qing Dynasty and it was  
Cheyenne Wyoming. The Mind of Blind Seeds. The  
Mind of Last Minute Rescues. The Mind  
of Unblockable Mind. American Momma Pervert Ray  
and the punching child they call Boxer  
deciding by coin toss (Ray calls tails) to raise her.

*BRIAN KIM*

STEFANS

READING in the PACIFIC  
PALISADES

There are mysterious persons, friend,  
who greet you warmly, but then stare back  
at you, after the most brief, impartial

*hello*, with visions, it appears  
of skin splitting beneath razor, or rape  
of their small, unguarded daughter.

Hollowed-out eyes suddenly grace  
their faces when you thought a comic's  
*doh!* was all that was called for, or

at least the neutral mask of a bearded  
physics scholar. Neutrality, however, seems  
a rare quantity in this parking lot,

and the hour or two that lie ahead  
with this accuser – insufferable. Bring out

the drinks, oil this creaking boat

caught between the twin coasts of  
boredom and hate, with no hope of  
offshore gambling to fraternize the time!

A half hour later, the reading's done, and  
no one's lost, violated, or beheaded  
by rusty machete, or tattooed with streams

of burning oil, nor has the host  
announced your recent return from Sing Sing  
after pasting your face on a broadsheet titled

Meghan's Law. But the jury's still out  
for the one with the paranoiac leer,  
apostrophes around the exit, and with

no passion for adventure among the illegible  
natives, my friend, the game seems fixed,  
two steps forward being the sole way

out, and no hope of the cudgel's blow.

## TOSSED EPISTEME

SOMEDAY, WE MAY come  
to regret this,  
*albatross*,  
but only the pronouns

(nothing much more  
can scrape the inner curve  
of the skull) –  
we'll regret it all.

•

THE BIRTHDAY GIRL  
is skinny. U2 plays on the  
speakers.

•

AS IN LIFE  
a breakfast of chopped steak,  
runny and failed eggs  
  
sprinkled with low sodium spices  
a new story  
branches out from every moment  
  
of new media theory  
  
as La Brea Avenue  
hums with professional fitness  
preternaturally, to the gyms  
  
as the homeless  
with conventional charm, lie ensconced  
in starlight  
  
that doesn't burn  
given the lack of snow

I go –  
fueled, as Bukowski says, with no goals  
but to avoid despair

which is the pleasure, its gauge,  
what one understands

benighted to causes

•

TEN ASSISTS  
in the telling of this story –  
aspirant's dilemma.

•

I LIKE THE cars.  
In moments of heightened emotion,  
they are my bling.

I lost my voice screaming in my car tonight.

Good actors who need career rehab  
are my bling.

•

ANDRE THE GIANT with a cold, autistic stare  
is unconcerned, for once, with birdshit on his billboard  
serving, like the jar in Tennessee,  
to command his own pure piece of chaos.

A flicker of radio  
could bring all this peace to life.

Some days we just sit and commit, my friend,  
fixed in commercial glut, waxing and waning in attention.

•

YOU,  
draped over the couch like some discarded kimono  
of David Bowie's!

•

SHITTING IN TURBULENCE

while Alice in Wonderland

(Johnny Depp version)

burns on the cabin YouBoob

lusterless monstrosities are we

wish mine were illusion

•

CURL UP

like a nap

and take a cat.

•

NOW LET'S TRY murder:

usually, two beings, possibly

both armed, maybe neither,

but often within proximity

of each other

able to hear, touch, smell

the offering

the drone is not that

it is our reading

•

I RISE TO piss

again, into the terrain

and see that it is living.

I am the pulse.

•

MOSTLY AS AN object

yet declamatory



though love contends

and argues threshold

to be revealed

in social, mammalian glory dangerous to analysis

and to the State

•

TRYING TO

hold

the hand of a body in the shower

he discovered water.

•

THE CELL PHONE

ripped into shreds his pleasant avoidance

some mawkish, falsettoed

ode of eighties vintage

emerged like tin from the speakers, thus

his friend, no longer in abeyance

in some winter time-

zone

placed a bet on the frailty of his advertised,

hen-pecked mood.

Better get it.

It's been got, and somehow

the camera  
clicked:  
he was deciphered. If only for fun.

Observe the ease  
of folding out of indifference:  
the price of admission.

•

THE ACRIMONY OF the streets:  
street walker, *hi*  
*we're here*  
*to favor your tenants.*

•

IN THE OTOLARYNGOLOGIST  
Christian Head's waiting room  
an old guy leans over into his  
breath.

•

IT'S SICK  
to end this.  
We're going to need pleasant iambs.

*SHARON*  
SUZUKI-  
MARTIN

MENACE WITH A THOUSAND FACES

*“Everywhere and always, when human beings either cannot or dare not take their anger out on the thing that has caused it, they unconsciously search for substitutes, and more often than not, they find them.”*

—René Girard

Before 9/11, we set off red flags for the airport security. We always got double searched while being told it was a completely random selection.

What a remarkably consistent coincidence.

My husband is Pima (like the World War II hero, Ira Hayes), and a professor. He is dignified and quiet, with a backpack of books. The security found this alarming.

Maybe they were hoping for Geronimo.

I was the sinister sister of Mr. Miyagi. The security insinuated my silver jewelry could be used as throwing stars and my umbrella was half a *nunchaku*.

Nobody else was accused of being a ninja.

Since when have Native and Asian American couples ever posed a threat to the flying public? We got caught in the great white net of free-floating anxieties.

Everyone is a potential villain in a country of fear.

After 9/11, we stopped getting harassed at airports. Our faces didn't match the latest enemies. We were yesterday's scapegoats, free to go for now.

## A LEMON CAKE WITH SPARKLY ICING

A dark horse receives a cake from its father.  
A lemon cake with sparkly icing.  
The horse is stunned  
by its perfect condition considering  
it came in the mail. FedEx,  
not the Pony Express, like you are thinking.  
The knock at the door  
had rudely awakened the animal  
from puffy dreams of fame and fortune.  
Bigger than Beethoven and Beyoncé combined!  
But losing the dream is nothing when  
the consolation is today.  
A summer day like an oven and an embrace.  
The dark horse tosses its lustrous mane  
and eats its beautiful cake: happy in not-having it all.

## ‘IWA

Black maidenhair ferns lived under our house in Hawaii. They were named for their stems: glossy-black, and fine as hair--as mine used to be. The leaves resemble jade-green fans for dainty mice. Those wild ferns were there long before I was born. They might hold memories of being hand-woven into ancient baskets.

‘Iwa’iwa is this fern’s native Hawaiian name. The name connects it to the ‘iwa or great frigate bird. This imposing, mostly black seabird has a seven and a half foot wingspan. It is difficult to ignore this modern pterodactyl soaring overhead, which explains why it was a metaphor for an eye-catching person. I remember an ‘iwa gliding high over Kaneohe Bay. Mom told me the bird was a bad omen. Later that year, one of the most powerful hurricanes to ransack the islands was named “‘Iwa,” which incidentally means “thief.” Now I’m growing gray in the Arizona desert, but I’m taken back to my verdant original home near the ocean whenever a large, dark bird circles slowly overhead.

It’s a bird, it’s a plant.

It’s beauty, it’s chaos.

It’s earth, sea, and sky.

‘Iwa weaves the world together.

# INEZ TAN

## RAPTURE OF THE DEEP

Sushi seems so Japanese, but so does  
tempura, its roots in the fritters

introduced by Portuguese sailors. The Ishikawa region  
still pickles whole fish with rice in a jar, preservation

being the same process as  
decay. Americans didn't invent

California rolls with avocado in  
the 1960's because they didn't know any

better; those were by and for a Japanese clientele homesick  
for fatty raw fish. Gunkan-maki – nori seaweed enclosing

rice and soft toppings like melting  
mounds of sea urchin – was created only

in 1941, by a Ginza chef inspired by warships  
docked in the Tokyo harbor. Nori was hard

to come by then. No one even knew  
what it was, until new findings in 1949

by Kathleen Drew-Baker, a British botanist. Seaweed  
farmers carved her image in a granite pillar facing

the Ariake Bay, with the English inscription  
*Mother of the Sea*. Marry the sea and

mother your mother. Every great discovery  
is as old as death.

## INQUISITION

If you awaken with no memories after a blast, trust anyone  
who gives you a weapon.

The right hand  
is the soldier. The left hand is the spy.  
Some tasks are best accomplished  
by diplomacy, some by subterfuge,  
some by force.

It is quite disappointing to kill something  
only to discover you cannot use it  
as a crafting material.

You appreciate a castle in the mountains  
the better for having been given a  
dinky little village with wooden huts first.

If someone's approval is high enough, they will tell you  
more about themselves. Sufficient disapproval  
can make someone a drunk or a traitor.

Not everyone can be romanced.

Dead companions  
will get up at the end of a battle. Only your choices  
can cause them to leave the party forever.

All of your choices are  
supposed to have meaningful consequences. You learn  
to crave it. You are what you want.

*Notes: The roleplaying game Dragon Age: Inquisition was released by Bioware in 2014.  
This poem is after "Nine Ways in which Pac-Man Speaks to the Human Condition" by Katie Willingham.*

## LET'S NOT WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE APOCALYPSE

to get into such motley groups that we *might actually survive*. I would be a good addition to the team because I'd rather die than give up what's mine. I like to take things, like teabags at catered events. We'll need leather boots and stiff thin wire and something pretty to pass from hand to hand by the fire at night to remember our humanity. I'll find a needle and harvest ink from flowers so we can give one another tattoos. It won't hurt. Okay, it will hurt, but you get to feel good about it afterwards. I know how this works. We'll carry knives in our belts, yet grow in compassion. We'll develop a certain look in our eyes. Look into my eyes now, Li-Young Lee. Deep into my eyes.



# *AMISH* TRIVEDI

## CONTUSION

One more coagulation  
of the fingers and the road  
shatters beneath our feet. My  
hair pulled by noises from  
under the hood and the purple  
patches of leg I know are  
coming. When we speak of motion  
in the future, we'll begin by calling  
our migrations unskilled because we  
weren't heading anywhere in  
particular. This can be our  
end time.

## BREATHING

The grass I know is melting and plastic and another thing: I stopped believing in parchment that was dwindling and brittle. I popped my lungs out and back in. This breathing is tense and I don't remember why we were crying in the first place. And I'll say it before this next sharp intake.

AMY  
UYEMATSU

COMFORT WOMEN

*after reading about Yong Soo Lee, 87, testifying in San Francisco, 2015*

She was just fourteen  
    says that fifteen men a day felt  
        more like fifty

~ ~ ~

Translates to *ianfu*  
    euphemism for *shofu*  
        meaning – prostitutes

~ ~ ~

Even the doctor  
    checking her for diseases  
        makes sure he rapes her

~ ~ ~

Tricked, taken by force -  
    will Japan apologize,  
        the true story told?

~ ~ ~

She's eighty-seven  
    sleeps three hours at a time  
        may never forgive

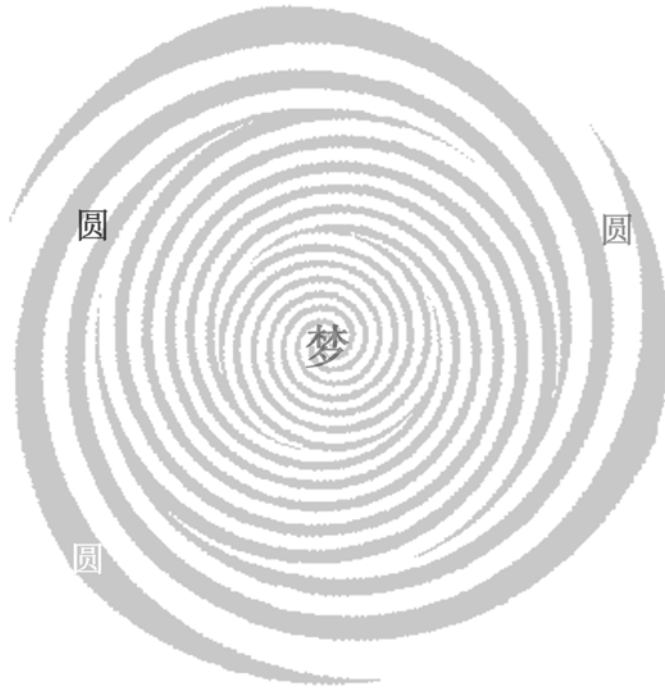
~ ~ ~

Wrists tied with wire  
    pain she couldn't imagine  
        electric torture

~ ~ ~

Seventy years pass -  
    the flashbacks and nightmares  
        that won't let her out

# WANG *PING*



## TEN THOUSAND WAVES

On the evening of 5 February 2004 at [Morecambe Bay](#) in [North West England](#), 21 Chinese immigrants were drowned by an incoming [tide](#) off the [Lancashire](#) while picking cockles. The victims were mostly young men and women from Fujian and Shanghai. The youngest was 18.

## XIE XIAO WEN

On the night of the Lantern Festival  
We stream into the sea  
Jumbos, tiernels  
Three-forked prongs  
The wind bites our ears, hands and toes  
Home, we say, home  
And tears streak our rubber sleeves  
On the night of riddles and light  
The moon is full behind thick clouds  
We cockle, cockling  
In the sand of the distant North Wales Sea

## WU HONG KANG

We pat the sand, we pat the sand  
Teasing cockles to the cold surface  
We dig, we pick, we break our backs  
Bagging cockles for ten pounds  
They say we could return  
When the bag is full  
But home is far away  
In the dark, we can't make out the sea  
No stars point our path to the shore  
Wind comes from all directions  
Cutting our bones  
How empty is desire, foaming  
On the cold North Wales Sea

## CHEN AI QIN

Every night since I left home  
I've been folding a boat  
To rest my aching bones  
How thin is the paper  
Paler than winter  
What's 365 x 365?  
Or divide?  
A boat full of bleeding hearts  
Home—all the heart wants  
Is to be called home again  
Across the silent North Wales Sea

## LING QIN YING

How tall has our dragon-eye tree grown?  
I've promised you, my little girl  
To come home when the tree blooms  
We'll pick the fruits and sell them to pay for  
your school But the wind is cold  
My back broken from bending over the sea  
Cockling, cockling in the quicksand  
The sea is rising to my chest  
My little girl, please forgive your Mama  
Forgive the eyes  
Decaying in the bed of the North Wales Sea

## GUO NIAN ZHU

Our hands ache from cramming  
Our feet numb in winter's clutch  
Indeed, we long for home—Yuanxiao dumplings  
On the Eve of the New Year's moon  
Steaming hearts of sesame, red beans  
Its sticky skin seals our bad deeds  
Tongues of gods  
Oh, home—pining of the soul  
The moon has completed many a cycle  
But not our dream, listless  
On the foaming North Wales Sea

LIN GUO HUA, WU JIA ZHEN, CHEN MU YU

The lichee tree I planted is blossoming  
White flowers hide under dark green  
The first moon comes and goes  
But I haven't returned as promised  
Lanterns, riddles, yuanxiao dumpling  
Lion dance, songs, children on stilts  
My love hovers in the deep shadow  
Lotus lamp on the tree, unlit  
Who will wipe tears from her lichee face?  
Who will sail me home from the North Wales Sea?

Lichees blush on the young tree  
Birds and bees feast with children  
My love lingers under the clustered fruit  
Her skin sags from too much weeping  
Tides ebb and flow with the moon  
Our house is empty, covered in tall weeds  
I walk on the sand, eyes on the sea  
Who can fill the hollow hearts  
In the bottomless North Wales Sea

Lichees ripen on the tall tree  
Its fragrance lasts three short days  
My love harvests with rusty shears  
A bundle of lichee, a tear-soaked sleeve  
They say the fruit, dried or fresh, cures toothache and heart pain  
But who will get me home before she fades away?  
They say you get beans if you sow beans  
Oh, sweet lichee, is it your fault  
I'm still drifting on the bitter North Wales Sea?

Lichees ripen on the tall tree  
Its fragrance lasts three short days  
My love harvests with rusty shears  
A bundle of lichee, a tear-soaked sleeve  
They say the fruit, dried or fresh, cures toothache and heart pain  
But who will get me home before she fades away



But who will get me home before she fades away?  
They say you get beans if you sow beans  
Oh, sweet lichee, is it your fault  
I'm still drifting on the bitter North Wales Sea?

(Lichee, a fruit tree from Fujian, ripens in clusters. Too fragile to be picked individually, it must be cut at the end of the cluster, hence lychee: li zhi—to be severed from the tree)

## LIN GUO GANG

父母在，不远游

父母在，不远游

父母在，不远游

When father and mother are around  
The son does not wander far from home

## LIN LI SUI

Ten thousand waves  
Call my mother  
Sorrow  
A statue facing the sea  
Raven hair bleached by salty wind  
Go home, Mother  
Go home  
Pray for your son  
Broken in the wild North Wales Sea  
The shore is empty, the net  
Tangled under your feet

Go home  
Pray for your son  
Broken in the wild North Wales Sea

## GUO BING LONG

Ten thousand waves

Wash me to the bay

My wife in the yam fields, gazing towards the sea

Who will unfold your fists

That feed our son, our aging parents?

Ten thousand apologies

My wind-chapped beauty

Pray for your ill-starred man

Wailing from the forbidden North Wales Sea

## WANG MING LIN

Ten thousand waves

Push me to the shore

My son skips rocks on the rolling sea

Will he hit me, a bodiless soul

Foam among endless waves

Will he raise a lantern on my path

A soul bodiless

Floating in the swollen North Wales Sea

## LIN ZHI FANG, YU HUI

We know the tolls: 23—Rockaway, NY, 58—Dover, England, 18—Shenzhen, 25—South Korea, and many more

We know the methods: walk, swim, fly, metal container, back of a lorry, ship's hold

We know how they died: starved, raped, dehydrated, drowned, suffocated, homesick, heartsick, worked to death, working to death

We know we may end up in the same boat

## XU YU HUA

Tossed on the communist road

We chose capitalism through great perils

All we want is a life like others

TVs, cars, a house bigger than our neighbors'

Now the tide is rising to our necks

Ice forming in our throats

No moon shining on our path

No exit from the wrath of the North Wales Sea

## WANG XIU YU

I have no time  
To make love to my wife

I have no time  
To watch my son grow

I have no time  
To feed my mother

## CAO CHAO KUN

Who will see us  
In this foaming sea  
Who will hear us  
In this howling wind  
Who will pull us  
From this tide faster than a horse  
Who will close our eyes  
That won't shut  
Until our souls reach the other shore

Highroad of the bitter sea  
Please send my bones home  
Under the knotted dragon eye tree

## GO CHANG MAO

Tread the sand with care

In the tangled weeds, there are hungry ghosts  
Tread the waves with care

In each foamy mouth, there is a word

In each word, a soul, unfulfilled

## ZHOU XUN CHAO, DONG XI WU

We move with the sea

Planktons, eels, turtles

The sea carries us

To the land of gold

We're urchins

Under prickly needles

Tender hearts

We ride currents

Following the Polaris

Our destiny always the same

To feed the old and young

To rest at peace

By the yellow sea

父  
母  
父母在不远游  
不  
远  
游

YANG TIAN LONG, LIN YOU

XING, CHEN AI QIU

Once again  
Our blood boils with longing  
Children of the Yellow Emperor  
Master of the sea  
Our ancestors wrestled  
With dragons, monsters, nine-headed beasts  
Their floating cities  
Covered four seas and five continents  
Our village—yellow kingdom by the sea  
Port of grand adventures  
If you don't believe me  
Go stand on the shore of Changle  
Where the South meets the East China Sea  
You'll hear junks' horns in the thick fog  
The clash of swords and fine porcelain  
Admiral Ho's robe fluttering in the arctic wind

Oh, fire of three thousand years

Ancestors' ghosts

Our eyes on the North Star Our

spirits churning for the sea





## THE GREAT SUMMONS

Hun hu gui lai!

Wu yuan you xi!

Come home, my Child

No more wandering in the wild

Come home, Soul

The four directions are closed

To the east the sea is rising

To the west mountains are falling

To the south beasts flee the jungle

To the north storms howl to the midnight moon

Oh tender Mazu, Maiden of Silence

Hear the plea of your suppliant children

Our bones shatter upon the rocks

Our souls scatter across the ocean

Nothing is left of us

Only an eye facing East from the sea floor

A breath drifting from shore to shore

Oh Mazu, Mother of Mercy

Please shine your light on the murky sea

Take us home under the dragon eye tree

Oh we sweep, sweeping, with thrashing oars

We will not rest till we reach the land of yellow earth

Hun hu gui lai!  
Wu yuan you xi!  
Come home, Soul  
The wind is blowing from the North Pole  
All dreams are not your dreams  
All desires are not your desires  
Empty your eyes, unfulfilled, restless  
Empty your hearts for the new moon  
Oh Soul, my lost Child  
Home is a bowl of spiced soup  
Sweet only to the hearts that cup it tight  
Mazu, our Maiden of Silence  
Goddess of the Sea  
You were born without a cry  
You left this world so we could live  
How many boats have you pulled from the raging sea?  
How many bodies have you lifted with a tender hand?  
Mazu, Maiden of Bright Eyes  
Please see the praying of your wretched children  
In the foaming waves, a pining soul  
A spirit listless until it reaches the shore  
Oh sweep, we sweep with our thrashing oars  
We will not rest till we reach the land of dragon  
Hun hu gui lai!

Wu yuan you xi!  
Come back, Soul  
No more drifting from pole to pole  
All currents run from heaven to earth  
All streams flow from mountains to sea  
Oh Soul, my lost Child  
Hear the call of the Silent Maiden  
Come home to the cup of nectar  
Do not move, let the rain speak  
Let the moon rise from the dark sea  
From the eastern shore  
Ten thousand waves call your name  
From the midnight sky  
The Big Dipper points your path  
Oh benevolent Mazu  
Virgin Mother of the Sea  
Our tears soak your lovely face  
Our breath follows your willow waist  
How do you stop a horse from running wild?  
How do you appease the pining of a lost child?  
This mist is not our mist  
This dream not our dream  
Oh, home, a foam on the wild, wild sea  
With thrashing oars we sweep, sweeping

We will not rest until we reach the land of lichee

Hun xi gui lai!

Wu yuan you xi!

Come with me, my Child

Rise from the rocks under the sea

Hang your eyes on the sail of my sleeves

The way is open on the murky path

Ten thousand waves take us to the shore

Home will arrive under our feet

When we go down on the knees

A prayer lingering in our thin breath

1. Mazu, literally "Mother-Ancestor", is the indigenous goddess of the sea who protects fishermen and sailors, and is invoked as the goddess who protects East Asians who are associated with the ocean. Her mortal name is Lin Moniang. She was born in the tenth century. As a baby, she never cried, hence she was named moniang—silent maiden. She is widely worshipped in the south-eastern coastal areas of China and neighbouring areas in Southeast Asia, especially Zhejiang, Fujian, Taiwan, Guangdong, and Vietnam, all of which have strong sea-faring traditions, as well as migrant communities elsewhere with sizeable populations from these areas.

2.

Hun xi gui lai!

Wu yuan you xi!

Come home Soul!

No more wandering far!

These two lines are taken from Qu Yuan's Zhao Hun (Summoning of Souls) with slight moderations.

## TEN THOUSAND WAVES: AN IMMIGRATION CAROL

I met Ai Weiwei in the East Village, soon after the Golden Venture ran aground in the sandbar of Rockaway, Queens, a rusty boat that traveled four months from China to Africa to America with 286 Chinese, 10 of them drowned in the angry sea, the rest sent to the detention center. Both of us were heavily involved in the aftermath of the tragedy, reporting, protesting, helping the victims' families. I told Weiwei about my idea of paying a snakehead \$40,000 to be smuggled from China into USA, to gain the first hand experience of what it felt like in the hold of a smuggle ship for 4-12 months. The Poetry Project symposium had just invited me to read my poetry with Allen Ginsberg, who was going to recite "Howl," and I wanted to use this opportunity to tell the story of immigration. Weiwei loved the idea and introduced me to the work of Tehching Hsieh, his yearlong performance art that requires mind-blowing endurance, determination, and passion. He also introduced me to his roommate Xu Bing, the creator of "Book from the Sky." They were sharing a moldy basement in the East Village. Thus, during the last month before his return to China, Weiwei sowed the seed in me as a multi-media artist.

I couldn't raise \$40,000 to pay the snakehead, being a poor PhD student at NYU. I did write "Song of Calling Souls: Drowned Voices from the Golden Venture," and read it with Allen Ginsberg at St. Mark's Church. Clayton Eshleman published it in *Sulfur*. A year later, Adrienne Rich selected it for *The Best American Poetry*, co-edited with David Lehman.

I thought I could rest the souls from the Golden Venture, buried namelessly in the public cemetery in NJ. I thought I could rest my own conscience afterwards, by giving them all I had. An intense five-day composing without sleep or food drained me so much that I went blind for 24 hours.

But the story keeps coming, from the deserts in Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, from the seas, shores, trucks, ships, from Canada, England, Spain, Italy, Holland...every story is the same, soaked with blood, death, unfulfilled dreams.

Each story makes me weep, lose sleep, lose sanity. Each story reminds me of my own arrival at JFK, on the night when the Mets won the World Series. My host drove through Flushing's carnival streets, trying to explain what it meant to win a World Series, but my head span with one question: how am I going to make it in New York with \$26 in my pocket, the only amount I was allowed to take out of China? Yes, I knew English, from Beowulf to Shakespeare to Poe, but I couldn't make out a single word from the foaming mouths on the streets, couldn't understand why people went crazy about a green ball game, then I heard my sponsor say: "Ping, I've arranged everything. At night you go to classes at LIU, so you can work at my antique store during the day, starting tomorrow. If you prove yourself worthy, you can work for me, 5 bucks an hour. But you have to find your own place."

Three days later, I was out of my sponsor's basement, out of his store. I didn't know anything about American culture, UPS, subway, baseball, football, rock-n-roll, jazz...I threw up eating pizza and hamburger my sponsor brought me. I sulked when his wife handed me the dresses and makeup she bought from gas stations. Before three days were over, she had concluded that I was lazy, stupid, ungrateful.

So I wandered from borough to borough, Queens, Bronx, Brooklyn, seeking a cheap room and an under-the-table job to pay for food, rent, tuition. Only Chinese restaurants would hire me as a waitress, earning tips as my wage, and I was constantly fired, for being too slow, for refusing to wear makeups or jewelry, for making mistakes adding up numbers on bills, or simply, too uppity because I went to "grad school." In less than three months, I had six jobs in all boroughs, and moved four times, Brooklyn, Harlem, Queens. I lost 20 pounds, my face covered with flaming hives. I cried myself to sleep every night, questioning why I gave up teaching at Beijing University to live a dog's life in NYC.

On Christmas Eve, I wandered into MoMa. I'd just been kicked out of the Chinese restaurant on the 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. It was the fanciest place I'd worked for, and the longest: three weeks. That day, the manager directed a German couple with 4 kids to my table. They seemed polite, took a long time deciding the menu, ordered lots of food, then rushed out for a Broadway show. The manager called me over, threw the bill in my face, and cussed: "Stupid cow, how dumb could you get!" The German didn't sign his credit card for his \$104 meal. I handed over all the tips I earned that week plus what I had in my wallet, and walked out into the howling wind. The streets were empty except for a few last-minute shoppers with gifts under their arms. They were all rushing home for Christmas. My home was a tiny unheated room in Flushing, emptier and colder than the streets. And I no longer had the rent to pay the landlady, who was waiting for me in the kitchen. Despair froze my eyes, nose, cheeks, hands, heart. I opened MoMa's glass door, hoping to warm up before they threw me out. The first thing I saw was Monet's "Lily Pond." I knew immediately it was his "Reflection of Clouds" series, because I'd written an essay for my art class at Beijing University. It was my first time to be with the original work, and my knees went limp. I sat down on the bench. The muscles and tendons in my neck, shoulders, hips and thighs began to unwind from their tight knots. The ice in my cells started melting. And for the first time since I arrived in NYC, I felt I could breathe.

I sat with Monet till a gentle hand touched my shoulder. "The museum is closed, Miss." I looked up. It was a guard, tall, thin, olive skin, dark hair. "First time here?" he asked, kindness in his brown eyes. I nodded. "First time Christmas?" I nodded again. He took my hand and led me to his place on Staten Island, where he lived with three friends from Greek, Italy and South Africa. On the ferry, I had my first glimpse of the Liberty Lady in the sunset, and my heart was on fire with hope.

This was my first miracle in NYC, which opened the door to many more: my chance walk into Lewis Warsh's writing workshop at LIU which led to my first story, first poem, first book, first meeting with Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Kenneth Koch, John Ashberry, Ann Waldman, Beidao, Yao Qingzhang, Peng Bangzeng, Tan Dun, Ai Weiwei, Xu Bing, Yan Li, first translation

for the first American Chinese Poetry Festival at MoMa, Penn, American Poetry Academy, first reading as a poet with Allen Ginsberg, Amiri Baraka, Jorie Graham, first NEA fellowship, first pair of skates that led to my first medal then to my first Flamenco dance, first son born on the bank of the East River, first job teaching poetry on the bank of the Mississippi, collaboration with Isaac Julien to make Ten Thousand Waves now showing at MoMa...

Life is a circle of miracles, if one allows it. To allow it, one has to keep eyes and ears and mouth and heart wide open, to dare hope, dream, adventure, even if it means pain, fear, and danger. Migration is movement, and movement means alive, like rivers, fish, birds, trees, mountains...

That's why I am in America, why over 40 million foreign-born representing 13% of the population resided in the United States in 2013, the same percentage since 1880 according to the statistics. We are flesh and blood of America. We're the story of civilization.

In 2006, Colin McCabe invited me to Pittsburgh University. For some reason, I decided to read "Song of Calling Souls," the poem I hadn't read for a while. When I finished, a British man came up and held my hand. "I'm Isaac Julien, Colin's friend. I want you to come and visit the Morecambe Bay, where 21 Chinese drowned picking cockles. I want you to write a poem for my movie on the global immigration. It's called Small Boat."

Morecambe Bay has a mud beach that stretches miles into the North Sea. It looked placid, and felt soft under my bare feet. Yet it is known for its ferocious tide that comes faster than horses, and no human can outrun it. Local fishermen are afraid of it. So are the immigrants. But they come anyway. British law is tight. No restaurant or salon or meat packer dared to hire them. The only option is to pick cockles at night, and sell them 9 pounds a bag to restaurants. It's cold labor, dangerous, and back breaking, yet they still come. They each owe the snakehead \$50,000 to come to Europe, who holds their loved ones back home as ransom. People will get hurt or die if the debt is not paid on time. So they come, on the eve of the Lantern's Day, the Chinese Christmas Eve, Thanksgiving, Valentine, the day for rest, feast, celebration, reunion, love. They need to make money to send back home, for the snakehead, for parents and children, even if it's the day when working could bring misfortune for the whole year. And it did. The tide came, swallowed them up. They called 911, but the coast guards didn't understand their language, so they stood on the dark shore, listening to their cry for help, as did the whole England listening and watching on TVs, their last goodbyes to their sobbing wives, children and parents in China, as the waves rose to their chests, necks, mouths, eyes.

In the morning, when the tide receded, the coast guard found 21 bodies in the mud, all together, in one neat line, as if waiting..."the most haunting scene," said the guard.

From the muddy beach of Morecambe Bay, I looked into the distant sea, only emptiness. I opened my mouth to speak, only silence.

That night, they visited me in the tiny hotel room in London, 21 of them, 2 women, 19 men, the youngest 18, most in their 20s, filing into my dream, one by one, as foams, ghosts, waves. Trailing after them, the 10 drowned from the Golden Venture, and many more. They all came from

Changle, the Village of Eternal Happiness on the shore of South China Sea, the famous port where Admiral Zheng He set off 7 expeditions between 1405-1433, his fleet containing over 27,000 crew and hundreds of ships with silk, porcelain, silver. The fleet sailed across the ocean like a floating city. Why did they leave home in the first place? Changle is a beautiful place on the coast, plenty of fish and farm, many mansions built with the money from NYC, SF, London, Amsterdam, most of them empty. Everybody has left to make money to send home, to build more mansions that no one occupies. "It doesn't make sense," I said to the ghosts. "Why can't you just stay home and enjoy what you have?"

The ghosts shake, cry, and spin themselves into foams and waves and seas. I woke up in cold sweat, and started drawing on the mole-skin notebook Isaac gave me upon my arrival: a spiraling circle made of then thousand waves, in each wave, a soul, unfulfilled.

I told Isaac I needed to visit Changle, the victims' home, and it'd take me at least half a year to finish the poem.

It took me a year to finish, each stanza in the names of the victims. Isaac called from London. The poem moved him so much that he was going to raise fund to make a movie about the Chinese immigrants, with the title "Ten Thousand Waves" that came out of the poem. It'd be his most ambitious project: a film installation with 9 screens.

I didn't hear from Isaac for over a year. I thought he had given up. Then one day he called from Shanghai. "We're filming, Ping. Can you join us?"

I flew to Shanghai, then to Liuzhou, the day after my surgery. When I saw the image of Yishan Island Goddess, played by Maggie Cheung, I realized it was Mazu, goddess of the sea for all the fishermen and seafarers, Asia's Holy Virgin. She helped Admiral Zheng He sail across the Indian and Pacific oceans in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. She'd be raising the lost souls from the bottom of the ocean. My song would help her summon the ghosts and guide them home.

I had tried to visit the Golden Venture victims buried in the NJ public cemetery before I wrote "Song of Calling Souls." My friend John took me there in his car. We got lost many times, even though we had the address and John was a marine specialized in navigation. When we finally got close to it, a storm came out of nowhere. It came down so hard the sky turned pitch dark and we had to pull over. When it ended, the cemetery was closed. Through the iron fence, I prayed for the ghosts and promised that I'd give them utmost care when I told their story.



“Ten Thousand Waves” is made into a 9-screen installation and shown in major museums around the world. Those who can afford the leisure and tickets go watch the film to be amazed. Yet the 21 souls still linger on the beach of Morecambe Bay, even though their bodies have been retrieved. And the drowned bodies from the Golden Venture are still crammed in the unmarked grave in NJ, waiting to go home, even though the cargo ship has been sunk in the Caribbean Sea as a major attraction for divers. Mazu’s summon alone is not enough. My song alone is not enough. We, immigrants and children of immigrants, must tell and retell their story, our story. Together we make ten thousand waves. In each wave, an eye, a mouth, and a hand to take the souls home and let them rest in peace and dignity.

On his last night in the East Village, Ai Weiwei hugged me. “Ping, I don’t like writing letters, but I’ll write to you from Beijing. Let’s keep in touch.”

I knew he was trying to tell me how lucky we are. Each of the miracles that happened to us is backed with thousands of unfulfilled dreams. The dead are never dead. They live through us. They sing their stories through our mouths.

I also knew he meant being in touch through living, fierce, fearless, free.  
And we’ve kept our promise.



# ANNIE WON

SAFETY

At the discretion of your doctor, inclusion of a few antihistamines for specific allergies such as poison oak and for any aid they might give in the alleviation of burns, might well be warranted.

Ticks generally do not dig their heads in and begin to suck blood for a few hours and can be detected by daily afternoon inspection and removed by sliding a keen knife between them and your epidermis. The heat from a match or ember will encourage them to back out from the body, as will touching them with coal oil, gasoline, or something alcoholic, even shaving lotion.

Trying to pull or to unscrew them reverse or otherwise unless as with adequately applied tweezers which do not kill the tick is not so good, sometimes leaving parts of the head behind to cause irritation if not serious infection. Ticks should never be crushed during removal. Even after they have been taken off uninjured, the common technique of squashing them with the fingers is dangerous because of thus released organisms that may be absorbed by the human system. Tossing them into the campfire will explode them instantaneously.

If you are bitten by a tick and the area appears to become infected, it is imperative that you see your doctor once you are out of the woods.

## Eye Ointment

If back in the bush anything becomes tightly embedded in the cornea that transparent outer top of the eye through which light is admitted. Due iris and pupil, it can soon become so probable that if skilled medical assistance is days away some careful local action may be warranted. This is one reason for including in the kit a small tube of an antiseptic and antibiotic eye ointment suggested by your doctor, which

In the above instance, first deaden the eye by using the ointment as directed. Then sterilize a needle. Fire will accomplish this, and if you keep the tip in the blue portion of a match flame, carbon will not form. If there is any remaining blackness, however, wipe the point clean with something sterile such as cotton dipped in tincture of iodine. This is particularly important, as otherwise an obscuring fleck of black might be left in the cornea.

Approach the foreign body very cautiously and steadily from the side with the sterile needle, holding it parallel to the eye rather than point first. Very often the object can thus be touched at its edge and flicked out, much in the fashion of playing tiddlywinks.

### Oddments

There are other odds and ends that you may want to put in the emergency aid kit, as for example something such as mentholated salve for chapped lips. Other items in your kit can frequently be made to perform double duty, however.

Half a teaspoon of salt in a glass of water is medically regarded as equal to commercial mouthwashes. No larger a proportion of salt should be used than one-half of a level teaspoon to every glass of water, for when a solution is employed that is stronger in salt than the body fluid, its tendency is to draw normal moisture out of the body, dehydrating tissue and causing irritation.

Baking soda, medical and dental professionals assure us, is as good a dentifrice as most and far less expensive than any of the manufactured products.

A paste of baking soda and water applied on open sores and lacerations will often help reduce the



As for footwear itself where a great deal of walking is involved, sneakers can neither be depended upon to afford sufficient protection in rough going, nor to hold up under emergency conditions. At the other extreme, leather knee boots have never worked out for most of us, being heavier and clumsier than we have found functional. Seven inches from bottom of heel to top of back is normally just about the maximum functional height for footwear to be worn while covering long distances across wild terrain.



Proper footwear is essential when trudging through the mountains of Colorado. Not only wilderness can be treacherous. Feet and toes should be able to move freely and not coming off on a long hike. Ventilation to the feet can be adjusted by tightening or loosening the laces.

Particularly unsatisfactory for much walking are the shorter rubber boots sold for hunting, and not only because of their tendency to be either too hot or too cold. It has always seemed less uncomfortable, to me at least, to risk getting the feet wet from the outside rather than soiling and inevitably from within.

Although there is admittedly no one ideal covering, there are the ever desirable gaiters or socks, which I have worn in widely separated parts of the continent throughout all seasons. I wish I could find the best type of gaiter.



as six inches whenever the terrain has made this practical. Such boots keep the feet reasonably dry. By varying the spacing and the tightness of the lacing you can maintain different degrees of ventilation. The uppers protect ankles from brush and snags and, even, when loosely tied with the tops of light woolen stockings folded down over them, they keep out debris that would soon cause blisters. Such boots seldom require much, if any, breaking in, although with some models the unaccustomed pressure on the large Achilles' tendon at the heel may be a temporary problem which can be met, incidentally, by inserting a stiffener such as birchbark, moss, or folded paper.

Perhaps, as many of us do, you'll want inner-soles, leather ones with steel arch supports that can be adjusted by the fingers. Two pairs of socks may be desirable for their warmth and for their cushioning effect. When we're ready to hit the trail, boots should fit so comfortably that feet and toes can move freely.

Good light leather boots with six or seven inch tops and rubber or composition soles are widely popular, too, being preferable to rubber-bottom leathers when wetness is no problem and when rocky going and temperatures below zero are

#### **A Crippling Error**

Sizes proper for the comparatively sedentary and smooth paved city life will cripple you in the foot-swelling wilderness walking. Hiking foot-wear should be one size longer and wider than ordinary shoes when combined with thin or medium-weight wool stockings.

Heavy wool stockings will add an additional half size to each of these measurements; a full size if fractional gradations are not obtainable. With the often extra doses of cold weather travel,

*JANE*  
WONG

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE LOVE SONG

These days, I'm floundering.  
The skin of the ocean crisps

at daybreak. There is too much  
vegetation in my ears.

Broccoli limbers up in the grooves,  
sprouting vertigo.

\*

The signs of a bottle factory  
shine in laminate.

Fog kisses each and every cheek.  
On a LCD screen, the sun rises

in pixelated elation, sweeping  
the bangs from our eyes.

A snail in basil takes  
its daily jaunt along

oil slicks. Pork hangs  
from a balcony,

salting. A button unfastens  
under a bright light.

It's hard, this desire  
for company in bitter

weather. Mid-day, a worker  
plants bitter greens

under a highway.  
There is this flavor

of char in every vein,  
worth every penny

in every century.

\*

To be a stranger, I held  
onto my best disguise.

When you reach for me  
like this, fleas bite

through my socks  
as we kiss and kiss.

\*

Everyone falls into a river  
at least once.

Not everyone gets saved. I've  
been loitering

among heroes again.  
Construction workers lunch

in the open field. Smoke  
unwraps in lettuce.

A cow drenched in rain stands  
uncontrollably.

To enter the factory,  
you have to announce yourself

by punching in, not by  
throwing a punch.

I can get so hysterical  
sometimes, so lightheaded.

Sometimes the run-off  
colors the water where the cranes

dip their necks as they listen  
to the waltz

of a wrecking ball.



## WHEN YOU DIED

A river thawed just enough  
to see the eels underneath  
but not enough to touch them.  
When you died, the husks of insects  
hung about in the wind: little suits  
of distinction. When you died,  
lettuce wilted each time  
you carried your brother home  
at night, his hair tangled  
with manure as if he was a crop  
in need of growth. When you died,  
you knew the different levels of relief:  
the moon follows another day,  
another day hollows out  
bowl by bowl. And isn't that enough?  
Nothing is for naught. Or so  
you were told and scolded by armies  
of ants. When you died, this hand  
prodding your back was not your country,  
not your youth, rosy at the cheeks  
from the sun, striking at noon.  
Was not what you curled toward  
in the early morning fog and fury,  
your breath sent: skyward.

# WONG MAY

## THE CHAIR

You have to first  
Sit in the temple gloom  
In the mahogany chair  
& despair.

The only glimmer  
In the temple (being the in-laid bits of  
The Mother-of  
-Pearl shells  
On the tall, more than humanly tall  
Chair-back. For these

These too  
Are the reputed "Tears of the Things"  
Of this world as seen  
By the world.

In that other chair behind the  
Temple-curtains  
Sits mother  
Mother  
Mother who so feared  
Half her life  
& a great part of yours  
That  
You were at work  
On a book of her life.

Such being the ways of things  
Of this world,  
Despite all your letters home  
You have never left the temple.  
Bent over the redwood hall table  
You write while she sleeps.

Mother had an interesting life  
Because she was beautiful  
& she wrote poetry  
& poetry ruins lives.  
(Does this sound like a fatwa, girls?  
It was a double fatwa.  
About mother poems were written  
By several poets (including herself  
Some very good.

Now as for a life in poetry  
-- Which poet's life  
    is a success story?

That mother's life is messy  
Messy & essential reading  
I do not doubt;

But I should be in prose  
Telling tales!

Goddess most merciful  
Most just

Sweet Swift Poetic Justice

Mercy  
I said

As  
If she didn't know already  
The daughter writes poetry  
There will be no stories  
But for that she said  
You must

(The tears of the things of this world  
Being where they are

You must remain in that chair  
Be a seated woman

& despair.

## ISLES

Yes,  
Such beauty  
& poetry  
You were fed  
On these isles.

Mother leaning on a  
    Flaking arsenic green

    Balustrade  
Watching the Moon

Full moon for 3  
    For 4 days;  
A Tang poem  
Of a last king much exiled,  
Broadcast live

From the Moon In  
Mother's own  
Voice.

& you went to bed early.  
Mother's arm cooled  
By the moonlight.

If the Moon has a scent

What the Moon smells like  
You have learnt early

Much too early  
    it was too late,

Once  
You're smelled out  
By the Moon.

& there were  
Any number of uncles

In plain sight. These have  
Glittery eyes.

Only one writes poetry.  
    Good poetry.  
The rest you can't abide. They  
took you both  
For high teas  
    In fancy places.

Mother has high standards.  
In heels  
Her conduct was anything  
To go by.

Because she is beautiful  
Like the Moon

Guileless in any guise

& far from China

She writes poetry.

JOHN  
YAU

THE STREET ON WHICH I NEARLY GREW UP

I confess to writing the sentence that begins

The neighbor who bakes red biscuits is a fraud

He keeps a model of his bedroom in a suitcase

He whispers to the carpet when no one is looking

The neighbor who bakes red biscuits is a fraud

I stand beneath a blighted tree and weep

He whispers to the carpet when no one is looking

The night, with its wires sticking out, is like a broken toaster

I stand beneath a blighted tree and weep

The beekeeper's husband told a story to his dog

The night, with its wires sticking out, is like a broken toaster

Did I tell you about the crackpot who wants to borrow my crock-pot

The beekeeper's husband told a story to his dog

The ungrateful cur was afflicted with amnesia

Did I tell you about the crackpot who wants to borrow my crock-pot

He says his checkbook is crammed with fingernail clouds

The ungrateful cur was afflicted with amnesia

A luminous moon, like the kind you find in children's books

He says his checkbook is crammed with fingernail clouds We wear

makeshift clothes and scowl at vacuum salesmen

A luminous moon, like the kind you find in children's books I

confess to writing the sentence that begins

We wear makeshift clothes and scowl at vacuum salesmen He keeps

a model of his bedroom in a suitcase

## QUALIFICATIONS

I used to pull a rickshaw through the canyons of Manhattan

I possess dozens of photographs of the sun rising above parking lots

I am no longer satisfied with playing second fiddle

I want to accelerate into the future and be appointed town clerk

I like to insert apocryphal sayings into a hypochondriac's calendar

I often sleep between the pages of an album dedicated to healthy offspring

I am able to restore portraits of cheeseburger kings to their former glory

I was once celebrated for my ad campaigns for pesky imitations

I sometimes tinker with the consistency of imported porridges

I no longer trap spiders in motels and release them in shopping malls

I occasionally steal ballet slippers from young ballerinas and sell them to collectors

I still trace the outlines of the obese and calculate their chances of survival



*TIMOTHY*  
YU

OFTEN I AM FORBIDDEN FROM RETURNING TO A FIELD

No one is permitted to return to the field.

No grass shall grow in it.

No blue mistflower shall spread from south to west.

No nutmeg hickory.

Yellow caution tape shall be erected around the boundaries of the field.

Its mystic forms shall spread from North Carolina to Georgia, west to Oklahoma and Texas.

These Japanese torreyas have an interesting history.

They are named after John Torrey.

No one shall be named John Torrey.

All evidence of non-native species shall be erased.

But these Japanese torreyas are not often found in cultivation.

Therefore they may remain.

(We are not having froyo.

I can't have froyo.)

Low-hanging branches may not touch the ground.

The yellow flowers of Pennsylvania shall bloom in the spring.

Their sharp-edged leaves turn gold in the fall.

A network of paths shall be erected so that they may be observed.

Do not pick the winter berry.  
Odors shall radiate outward from a seeded center.  
No fish allowed.

All plants shall provide ecological and environmental benefits.  
The field must not be remembered as it is.  
Permission will not be granted.  
Yet the field has an architecture, an architecture of childhood to which we return.  
It says where and who we are.  
Within the field, what is possible is determined by what has been  
I cannot leave the field.  
I cannot remain in the field.

What will the field become in a hundred years?

## WORDS: A FIELD GUIDE

Words are my animals.

Pigs are raised in the front yard  
of a first sentence.

A black chicken tut-tuts at the wall  
of a title.

A mother fish is expecting new nouns  
to be born in a village  
that until recently was submerged  
in the sea.

They must hurt  
when I take my cursor to them.

And I see night  
moths drawing their bodies  
in and trying to disguise  
themselves as punctuation.

Foxes walk lightly,  
in fear of their shadows being  
stolen from them  
and hacked into symbols.

Birds fly into the light  
of margins.

The next page?

Its white could be children's teeth!

Who dares?

So my words flee with nothing  
but a bit of jerky  
and a Dora the Explorer backpack into further spaces.

But sometimes,  
when it's dark enough,  
it's light enough.

They visit.

## SNAP\*

The ox-eye of the pond  
coughs up snapping  
turtles from the deep  
silt, beaky mouths  
like can-openers, –  
a rage a rage,  
in the aerial view  
of those spined shells:  
mountains, mudslides.  
The heads uncircumcised,  
these things eat fingers –  
this is what we call good luck.  
In the mulched bowels  
of the factories,  
beneath the stinking fish-water  
of vats of breakfast dye,  
beneath the jasmine-scented front desk,  
the invoicing computers,  
the magical printers stamping out  
shadow people and lunch,  
beneath that one office manager  
who is mean to the janitors  
there is a turtle  
kept for good luck  
in a tub of water  
on the basement floor  
in the dark,  
and every now and then  
the water seems to boil.

*\*In many places in China, turtles are kept in the center of buildings  
for good luck.*



# CONTRIBUTORS



Dilruba Ahmed's debut book, *Dhaka Dust* (Graywolf, 2011), won the Bakeless Prize. Her poems have appeared in *Blackbird*, *Cream City Review*, and *New England Review*. Poems are recent or forthcoming in *American Poetry Review*, *The Collagist*, *Memorious*, and *Rhino*. Ahmed teaches creative writing at Bryn Mawr College. [www.dilrubaahmed.com](http://www.dilrubaahmed.com)



Zubair Ahmed was raised in Dhaka, Bangladesh. His chapbook, *Ashulia*, was published by Tavern Books in 2011. His first full-length collection, *City of Rivers*, was published in the McSweeney's Poetry Series and was nominated for a 2013 Northern California Book Award. His works have appeared in *Tin House*, *Believer*, *ZYZZYVA*, among others. In his free time, he enjoys camping, dancing, and learning anything new.



Kazim Ali's books include five volumes of poetry, three novels, three collections of essays, and several translations. He is an associate professor of Creative Writing and Comparative Literature at Oberlin College and founding editor of Nightboat Books.



Fatimah Asghar is a nationally touring poet, photographer and performer. She created Bosnia and Herzegovina's first Spoken Word Poetry group, REFLEKS, while on a Fulbright studying theater in post-violent contexts. She is a Kundiman Fellow and a member of the Dark Noise Collective. Her chapbook *After* was released on Yes Yes Books fall of 2015. Photo credit: Reginald Eldridge.



Cristiana Baik works and resides in Oakland, California. In 2015, Letter Machine Editions published a book she co-edited with Andy Fitch, *The Letter Machine Book of Interviews*. She has been awarded residencies from Kundiman, Asian American Writers Workshop, Naropa University, Dickinson House, and the Featherboard Writing Series. She is currently finishing her second manuscript, entitled *Of Kith and Kin*.



J. Mae Barizo is the author of *The Cumulus Effect* (Four Way Books). She is the recipient of fellowships and awards from Bennington College, the Jerome Foundation, and Poets House. She lives in New York City.



Tamiko Beyer is the author of *We Come Elemental* (Alice James Books, winner of the Kinereth Gensler Award and a Lambda Literary Award Finalist) and the chapbook *bough breaks* (Meritage Press). She is a nonprofit communications professional dedicated to the fight for social and economic justice. She lives in Dorchester in Boston. [tamikobeyer.com](http://tamikobeyer.com).



Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge was born in Beijing. She is the author of many books including *The Heat Bird*, *Empathy*, *Endocrinology*, a collaboration with the artist Kiki Smith, and most recently *Hello, The Roses*. She divides her time between New Mexico and New York City.



Marci Calabretta Cancio-Bello won the 2015 AWP Donald Hall Poetry Prize for *Hour of the Ox*. A Knight Foundation and Kundiman poetry fellow, her work has appeared in *Best New Poets*, *Columbia: A Journal of Literature & Art*, and more. She edits *Print-Oriented Bastards* and produces The Working Poet Radio Show. [www.marcicalabretta.com](http://www.marcicalabretta.com)



Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982) was an American novelist, producer, director, and artist of South Korean origin, known for her 1982 text *Dicteé*. She was considered an avant-garde artist and through her work she juxtaposed various hypertexts and images. Her pieces in *dusie* are from her digital archive through the Berkeley Archive Museum.



Chen Chen is the author of the chapbooks, *Set the Garden on Fire* (Porkbelly Press) and *Kissing the Sphinx* (forthcoming spring 2016 from Two of Cups Press). A Kundiman Fellow, his work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Drunken Boat*, and *The Best American Poetry*, among other places. He holds an MFA from Syracuse University and is currently pursuing a PhD in English and Creative Writing at Texas Tech University.



Ching-In Chen is author of *The Heart's Traffic* (Arktoi Books) and *recombinant* (Kelsey Street Press) as well as co-editor of *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities*. A Kundiman, Lambda Fellow and Callaloo Fellow, they are part of Macondo and Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation.





Evan Chen was born in Buffalo, NY. He is currently a doctoral student in Film Studies within the English Department at the University of Pittsburgh. His current critical work attempts to understand the relationship between Asian-American bodies and the aesthetics and history of yellowface. Evan is, proudly, a Kundiman fellow.



Jennifer S. Cheng is the author of *HOUSE A*, selected by Claudia Rankine as winner of the Omnidawn Poetry Book Prize, forthcoming in Fall 2016. Her poems and essays appear in *Tin House*, *Tarpaulin Sky*, *The Volta*, *The Normal School*, *Black Warrior Review*, and elsewhere.



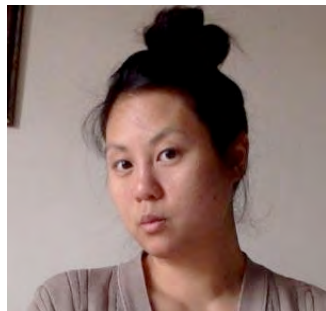
Don Mee Choi is the author of *Hardly War* (Wave Books), *The Morning News is Exciting* (Action Books), and the chapbook *Petite Manifesto* (Vagabond). Her translation of Kim Hyesoon's *Sorrowtoothpaste* (Action Books) was a finalist for the 2015 PEN Poetry in Translation Award and shortlisted for ALTA's Lucien Stryk Asian Translation Prize.



Frank Guan is a critic and translator whose writing has appeared in *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Artforum*, *Vice*, and *Full Stop*, though he writes primarily for *n+1*. He is a founding editor of *Prelude Magazine*.



Anna Maria Hong is the Visiting Creative Writer at Ursinus College and was a Bunting Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. The recipient of *Poetry* magazine's Frederick Bock Prize, she has poems in *The Nation*, *Southwest Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Drunken Boat*, *Fence*, *Conduit*, *Harvard Review*, *Best New Poets*, and *The Best American Poetry*. Her chapbook *Hello, virtuoso!* was published by the Belladonna\* Collaborative.



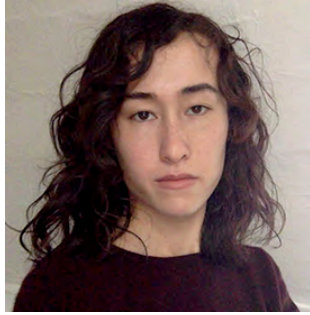
Christine Shan Shan Hou is a poet and artist living in Brooklyn, NY. Publications include *C O N C R E T E S O U N D* (2011) a collaborative artists' book with artist Audra Wolowiec, and *Accumulations* (Publication Studio 2010). [christinehou.com](http://christinehou.com).



Tung-Hui Hu is the author of three books of poems, most recently *Greenhouses, Lighthouses* (Copper Canyon Press, 2013), and a study of digital culture, *A Prehistory of the Cloud* (MIT Press, 2015). He teaches creative writing and media studies at the University of Michigan.



Laura Jew is a Kundiman Fellow and Mills alumni. She was the winner of CSU Chico's Associated Writing Program Award for poetry (2007) and has been published in *Watershed Review* (2007), *Margie: The American Journal of Poetry* (2008), *About Place Journal* (2015), and *sPARKLE & blink*.



Hanae Jonas' poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *jubilat*, *H\_NGM\_N*, *The Volta*, *Sixth Finch*, and other journals. She is a Kundiman fellow and an MFA candidate at the University of Michigan. She lives in Ann Arbor.



Bhanu Kapil is a poet and professor, who has also trained and practiced as a bodyworker since 1998. She teaches for Naropa University and Goddard College. Her most recent full-length book is *Ban en Banlieue*, preliminary notes for a novel as yet not written, and at this stage, perhaps never will.



One of the most prominent contemporary poets of South Korea, Kim Hyesoon lives in Seoul and teaches creative writing at the Seoul Institute of the Arts. Kim's poetry in translation can be found in *When the Plug Gets Unplugged* (Tinfish), *Anxiety of Words* (Zephyr), and *Mommy Must Be a Fountain of Feathers*, *All the Garbage of the World*, *Unite!*, *Sorrowtoothpaste Mirrorcream*, *Poor Love Machine* (Action Books), and *Trilingual Renshi* (Vagabond).



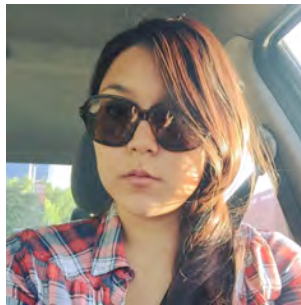
Jee Leong Koh is the author of four books of poems and a book of poetic essays. His latest book of poems *Steep Tea* (Carcenet) was named a Best Book of 2015 by UK's *Financial Times*, and a Finalist for the Lambda Literary Awards. His work has been translated into Japanese, Russian, and Chinese. Originally from Singapore, Jee lives in New York City, where he organizes the Singapore Literature Festival in NYC.



Alan Chong Lau was born in California and graduated from the University of California Santa Cruz with a B.A. in Art. He has received grants from the California Arts Council and a fellowship from the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Japanese Government and published four books of poetry including *Greens: A Produce Worker's Journal* (U of Hawai'i 2000) and *no hurry* (Cash Machine, 2007).



Iris A. Law is a Kundiman poetry fellow and the author of the chapbook *Periodicity* (Finishing Line Press, 2013). She recently relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area from Lexington, KY.



Janice Lee is the author of *KEROTAKIS* (Dog Horn Press, 2010), *Daughter* (Jaded Ibis, 2011), *Damnation* (Penny-Ante Editions, 2013), *Reconsolidation* (Penny-Ante Editions, 2015), and *The Sky Isn't Blue* (Civil Coping Mechanisms, 2016). She is Editor of the #RECURRENT Novel Series, Assistant Editor at *Fanzine* and Executive Editor of *Entropy*. She lives in Los Angeles.



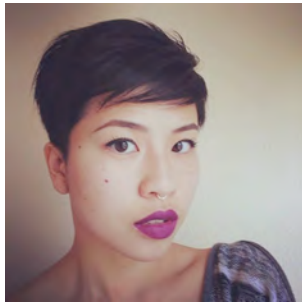
A former Pew Fellow in the Arts for Literature, Sueyeun Juliette Lee founded Corollary Press, a chapbook series dedicated to innovative multi-ethnic writing, and writes reviews for *The Constant Critic*. She has held artistic residencies in poetry, dance, and video art in Iceland, Norway, and Wyoming. Her latest book of poems is *Solar Maximum* (futurepoem) [silentbroadcast.com](http://silentbroadcast.com).



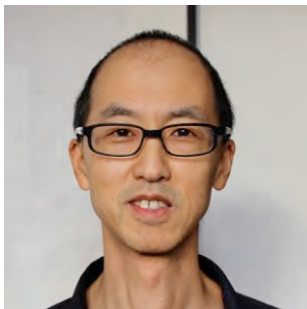
Joseph O. Legaspi, a 2015 Fulbright fellow, is the author of *Imago* (University of Santo Tomas Press (Philippines); CavanKerry Press (U.S.)) and two chapbooks: *Aviary, Bestiary* (Organic Weapon Arts), and *Subways* (Thrush Press). He co-founded Kundiman ([www.kundiman.org](http://www.kundiman.org)), a non-profit organization serving Asian American writers.



Henry Wei Leung is a Kundiman Fellow and the author of *Paradise Hunger* (Swan Scythe Press, 2012). He earned his MFA from the University of Michigan, and has been the recipient of Fulbright, Soros, and other fellowships. His poems, essays, and translations have appeared in such journals as *Crab Orchard Review*, *Drunken Boat*, *The Offing*, and *ZYZZYVA*.



Michelle Lin is the author of *A House Made of Water* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2017). Her poems appear in *Quaint Magazine*, *Aster(ix)*, *Powder Keg Magazine*, and more. She works for *Twelfth House Journal* and Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach.



Tan Lin is the author of over twelve books, most recently, of *Heath Course Pak*, *Insomnia and the Aunt*, and *7 Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary 2004 The Joy of Cooking*. His non-fiction writing has appeared in *the New York Times Book Review*, *Art in America*, *Artforum*. His art and video works have been screened at numerous museums, including MoMA/PS 1 and the Yale Art Museum. He is currently working on a novel, *Our Feelings Were Made By Hand*.



Kenji C. Liu is author of *Map of an Onion*, national winner of the 2015 Hillary Gravendyk Poetry Prize. His poetry appears in *American Poetry Review*, *Action Yes!*, and *Split This Rock's* poem of the week series, among other places. He has received fellowships from Kundiman, VONA/Voices, Djerassi, and the Community of Writers.



Timothy Liu's latest book of poems is *DON'T GO BACK TO SLEEP* (Saturnalia Books, 2014). He lives in Manhattan and Woodstock, NY. <http://timothyliu.net>



Janice Ko Luo's poems have recently appeared in *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, *The Wide Shore*, *The Baltimore Review* and *Ricepaper Magazine*. She is a Kundiman fellow and former Poetry Editor of the art and literary journal *Lunch Ticket*. Ko Luo currently resides in New York City.



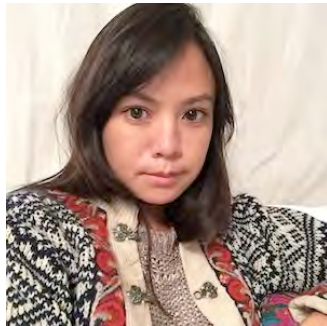
Carolina Maugeri is the author of the chapbook *many a holy and obsequious tear* (horseless press, 2014). She participated in a group exhibition, *Containment Policy*, at the Pterodactyl Gallery in Philadelphia, where these poems and images first appeared. She teaches at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Temple University.



Lo Kwa Mei-en is the author of *Yearling* (Alice James Books, 2015) and *The Bees Make Money in the Lion* (Cleveland State University Poetry Center, 2016). *The Romances*, a chapbook, is forthcoming from The Lettered Streets Press. She lives and works in Cincinnati, Ohio, and can also be found at [www.lokwameien.com](http://www.lokwameien.com).



Ben Mirov is the author of *Hider Roser* (Octopus Books, 2012). He is also the author *Ghost Machine* (Caketrain, 2010) selected for publication by Michael Burkard, and chosen as one of the best books of poetry in 2010 for *Believer Magazine's* Reader Survey. He is one of the founding editors of *Pen America's Poetry Series*.



Feliz Lucia Molina is the author of *Undercastle* (Magic Helicopter Press) and a co-author of *The Wes Letters* (Outpost19). Her chapbook *Crystal Marys* (Scary Topiary Press, 2016). Her book *Roulette* is forthcoming from Make Now Books. Other work appears in *Gauss PDF*, *Jacket2*, *Pinwheel*, & elsewhere. [www.felizluciamolina.com](http://www.felizluciamolina.com)



Natasha Moni's first full-length poetry collection, *The Cardiologist's Daughter*, was released by Two Sylvias Press in late 2014. Her writing has been nominated for Best of the Web, Best of the Net (finalist in 2009) and has appeared in over fifty journals including: *Luna Luna*, *Magma Poetry*, [PANK], *Rattle*, *Hobart*, *Verse*, and *DIAGRAM*.



Sahar Muradi is an Afghan-born, Florida-grown, and NY-based writer and performer. She is co-editor, with Zohra Saed, of *One Story, Thirty Stories: An Anthology of Contemporary Afghan American Literature* and co-founder of the Afghan American Artists and Writers Association. She is a Kundiman Fellow, an AAWW Open City Fellow, and a recipient of the Himan Brown Poetry Award.



Sham-e-Ali Nayeem is a poet & visual artist born in Hyderabad, India and raised in both the UK and the US. Recipient of the 2016 Loft Literary Center Spoken Word Immersion Fellowship, her poetry has appeared in numerous anthologies and publications. Sham-e-Ali is currently working on her forthcoming book of poetry, *The City of Pearls* (UpSet Press 2017).



Quyen H. Nghiem was born in Ho Chi Minh City and raised in the Feltonville neighborhood of North Philadelphia since he was a pup. You can wiki it and see a photo of where he first went to school at four years old. He writes regularly at [emersonquietkool.blogspot.com](http://emersonquietkool.blogspot.com).



Cynthia Dewi Oka is a poet and author of *Nomad of Salt and Hard Water* (Thread Makes Blanket). A Pushcart Prize Nominee, her poems have or will soon appear in *Guernica*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Black Renaissance Noire*, *Apogee*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, and other journals. She is based in Philadelphia.





Shin Yu Pai is the author of several poetry books including *AUX ARCS* (La Alameda), *Adamantine* (White Pine), *Sightings* (1913 Press), and *Equivalence* (La Alameda). Her limited edition artist book projects include *Hybrid Land* (Filter Press) and *Works on Paper* (Convivio Bookworks). For more info, visit <http://shinyupai.com>



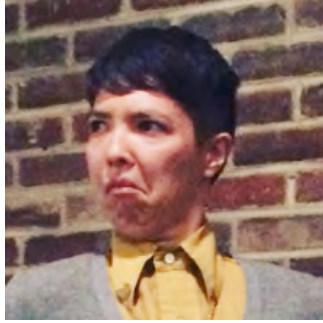
Soham Patel is a Kundiman fellow. Her chapbook *and nevermind the storm* (2013) and *new weather drafts* (2016) available from Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs. She studies Creative Writing in the PhD Program at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee where she also serves as a poetry editor for *cream city review*.



Born in Iloilo City, Philippines, Angela Peñaredondo is a poet and artist living in southern California. Her first full-length book, *All Things Lose Thousands of Times*, is the regional winner of the Hillary Gravendyk Poetry Prize. She is the author of a chapbook, *Maroon* (Jamii Publications). Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in AAWW's *The Margins*, *Four Way Review*, *Cream City Review*, *Southern Humanities Review* and elsewhere.



Born in Japan, Michelle Naka Pierce is the author of nine titles, including *Continuous Frieze Bordering Red* (Fordham, 2012), awarded the Poets Out Loud Editor's Prize. Pierce edits *Something on Paper* the online poetics/multimedia journal, and teaches in the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University.



Jai Arun Ravine is writer, dancer and graphic designer. As a mixed race, mixed gender, and mixed genre artist, their work bridges text and body and takes the form of video, performance, comics and handmade books. "The Escape Artist" is an excerpt from their second book, *THE ROMANCE OF SIAM* (Timeless, Infinite Light, 2016). [jaiarunravine.com](http://jaiarunravine.com).



Srikanth Reddy is the author of two books of poetry—*Facts for Visitors* (2004), and *Voyager* (2011)—both published by the University of California Press. A book of criticism, *Changing Subjects: Digressions in Modern American Poetry*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2012. He is currently an Associate Professor of English at the University of Chicago.



Mg Roberts is the author of the poetry collection *not so, sea* (Durga Press). She's currently co-editing an anthology with Bhanu Kapil and Ronaldo Wilson on the urgency of experimental writing written for and by writers of color to be published in 2017 by Nightboat Books.



Christopher Santiago's poems, short stories, and criticism have appeared in *FIELD*, *Pleiades*, *Postcolonial Text*, and elsewhere. He has received nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best New Poets, and his manuscript, *Tula*, was a finalist for the 2015 Kundiman Poetry Prize. A Mellon/ACLS Fellow, he teaches creative writing at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.



Brandon Shimoda was born in southern California, and has lived most recently in southern Taiwan and west Texas. His books include *Evening Oracle* (Letter Machine Editions) and a book about a young woman who shaves off her eyebrows (unpublished, unfinished, uncomfortable).



Raena Shirali's first book, *GILT*, is forthcoming in 2016 with YesYes Books, and her work has appeared in *Crazyhorse*, *Four Way Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Muzzle Magazine*, *Ninth Letter*, *The Nervous Breakdown*, *Pleiades*, and many more. Other honors include a 2016 Pushcart Prize, the 2014 *Gulf Coast Poetry Prize*, and a "Discovery" / *Boston Review Poetry Prize* in 2013. She currently lives in Charleston, SC, where she teaches English at College of Charleston.



Kim Gek Lin Short is the author of the lyric novels *The Bugging Watch & Other Exhibits* and *China Cowboy* (both from Tarpaulin Sky Press), and the cross-genre chapbooks *The Residents* (DGP) and *Run (Rope-a-Dope)*, a Golden Gloves winner. Her work appears in anthologies such as *Electric Gurlisque*, *& Now Awards*, *Narrative (Dis)Continuities: Prose Experiments by Younger American Writers*, and many magazines. She lives in Philadelphia with her family.



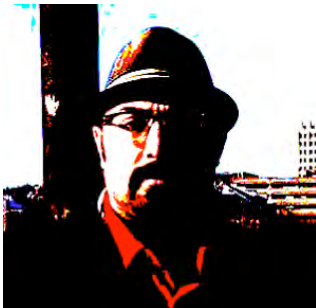
Brian Kim Stefans is the author of *Viva Miscegenation* and *What is Said to the Poet Concerning Flowers* among other books of poetry. A book of essays, *Word Toys: Poetry and Technics* is forthcoming from University of Alabama. He teaches at UCLA. His website is Arras.net and his blog is Free Space Comix.



Sharon Suzuki-Martinez is the author of *The Way of All Flux* (New Rivers Press, 2012). She received Pushcart and Best of the Web nominations, and curates *The Poet's Playlist* at <http://poetsplaylist.tumblr.com/>. Her hamster is named Mothra, in homage to the god of the moths from the Godzilla series.



Inez Tan holds an MFA in fiction from the Helen Zell Writers' Program at the University of Michigan, where she was awarded a Zell Fellowship for 2016. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *Psychopomp*, *Print-Oriented Bastards*, *Fare Forward*, *The Irish Literary Review*, *Quarterly Literature Review Singapore*, and the anthology *A Luxury We Must Afford*.



Amish Trivedi wrote *Sound/Chest* (Coven Press), is a PhD student at Illinois State University, and has an MFA from Brown. Poems are in *New American Writing*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *Hyperallergic*, etc. Reviews are in *Sink*, *Pleiades*, etc. He co-runs N/A ([www.nalitjournal.com](http://www.nalitjournal.com)) and badly codes his own website ([www.amishtrivedi.com](http://www.amishtrivedi.com)).



Amy Uyematsu is a sansei poet and teacher from Los Angeles. She has written four poetry collections: "The Yellow Door," "Stone Bow Prayer," "Nights of Fire, Nights of Rain," and "30 Miles from J-Town." In the early Asian American Studies years, she co-edited *Roots: An Asian American Reader*.



Wang Ping was born in Shanghai and came to the United States in 1986. She is the founder and director of the Kinship of Rivers Project. Her publications include collections from CoffeeHouse Press, translations of Yu Jian's poems co-translated with Ron Padgett, and a memoir *Life of Miracles along the Yangtze and Mississippi* forthcoming from Calumet Press. She is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Award.



Annie Won is a poet, chemist, yoga teacher who lives in Medford, MA and writes with text and images at the intersections of body, mind, spirit, and page. Her chapbooks include *did the wind blow it* (dusie), *once when a building block* (horse less), and *so i can sleep* (nous-zot).



Jane Wong's poems can be found in places such as *Best American Poetry 2015*, *Best New Poets 2012*, *Pleiades*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Third Coast*, *The Volta*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and others. A Kundiman fellow, she teaches at the University of Washington and the Hugo House. She is the author of the poetry collection *Overpour* (Action Books, 2016).



Wong May is the author of several books including: *Picasso's Tears: Poems 1978-2013* (Octopus Press, 2014); *A Bad Girl's Book of Animals* (Harcourt Brace & World 1969); *Reports* (HBJ 1972) and *Superstitions* (HBJ 1978). She lives in Dublin, paints at home, and does much of her writing in hotels.



John Yau is a poet, fiction writer, critic, publisher of *Black Square Editions*, and freelance curator. His recent books include *A Thing Among Things: The Art of Jasper Johns* (D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2008) and *Further Adventures in Monochrome* (Copper Canyon Press, 2012). In January 2012 he started the online magazine *HyperallergicWeekend* with three other writers.



Timothy Yu is the author of *100 Chinese Silences* (Les Figues) and *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry since 1965* (Stanford). His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Jacket2*, and *Cordite Poetry Review*. He is a professor of English and Asian American studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Yi Yu is from Zibo, China, and taught there for several years as a professor. She's currently a Ph.D. candidate in T.E.S.O.L. and Composition at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a medical translator for Chinese immigrants. Her poems have appeared in the Australian literary journals *Tincture* and *Hyphen*.

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