The background image shows a museum exhibit. On the left, there are large, dark stone blocks with intricate carvings of human figures. On the right, a modern, translucent blue sculpture is displayed, consisting of several curved, overlapping plates held together by a thin vertical wire. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the stone and the smooth surfaces of the modern sculpture.

# FUSION

Global Art, Words, and Music

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1



*FUSION: Global Art, Words, and Music* publishes outstanding writing, translations, and photography from our community and internationally recognized artists. The world-renowned writers, visual artists, and musicians in our international features inspire young artists. Where else do students have the opportunity to see their work published alongside, for example, Guggenheim fellows, a winner of the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, *New York Times* bestsellers, and artists whose work is exhibited in major national galleries? *FUSION* encourages explorations of the rich relations between music and *all* the arts, responding to E. M. Forster's charge, "Only connect!"

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# From a Selkie Song to Settled Airs: Voices and Visions from the U.S. and Scotland

As in every issue, these pages include a fusion of creative talents, from Berklee students, staff, and professors to featured artists with global reputations.

Jazz trumpeter and painter, Professor Tiger Okoshi, has given us three brilliant works. Tiger writes, "When I play my trumpet, my horn is my brush, high/low, fast/slow, bright/dark . . . I paint the air one note at a time."

Berklee's creative writing program fosters remarkable student fiction, creative nonfiction, literary translations, poetry, plays, and screenplays. While our students demonstrate an exceptional level of achievement in music, they engage fully in other art forms. Many are highly accomplished in writing, the visual arts, theater, and film.

As part of our commitment to "Global Art, Words, and Music," *FUSION's* Translation Initiative pairs international students with native English speakers. This results in fine translations, a celebration of diverse cultures, and greater involvement by international students in the intellectual and artistic life of the community. Our students come from over 90 nations. This issue includes poems translated from Spanish, Korean, Chinese, and Old Balinese.

Our online issues of *FUSION* feature videos, multimedia projects, music competitions, and student columns on such topics as film, busking, and making a living in the arts.

• • •

The people of Scotland vote this year in a special referendum to decide their nation's future: to separate from the United Kingdom and become an independent country for the first time in centuries, or determine that they are "Better Together," as part of the UK, alongside England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

The world is watching as the Scots debate sovereignty and what it means to be Scottish. This decisive moment has inspired our special Scottish Feature. We do not presume to offer an opinion from Boston on what is best for Scotland. We simply take this opportunity to highlight some of Scotland's greatest writers and artists. One of our poets, Douglas Dunn, won the 2013 Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. The BBC reports that Committee chair and Britain's poet laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, said Dunn was one of "the greatest poets Scotland

has produced.” We are delighted to share Douglas’s poems with our readers and that our students’ poems share space with such work.

An interest in Celtic culture and music has been growing steadily at Berklee. Every year, *FUSION* produces its popular Celtic *FUSION* concert, featuring outstanding student and professional Trad players.

Berklee Celtic music masters, such as cellist Natalie Haas, harpist and vocalist Maeve Gilchrist, Danú fiddler Oisín McAuley, Cape Breton fiddler Kimberley Fraser, and multi-instrumentalist and songwriter, Mark Simos, play with students who have won competitions throughout the Celtic world. Many students and recent alumni have begun promising international careers, including harpist and Scottish Gaelic singer Màiri Chaimbeul, from the Isle of Skye; pianist Hamish Napier; fiddler and step dancer Holland Raper; and Jenna Moynihan, a fiddler in the Scottish tradition, whose agility is matched only by her warm tone.

I often invite these student musicians to give clinics. Celtic fiddlers, pipers, bodhran and bouzouki players, pianists, and guitarists inspire students to learn Trad music. A jazz or classical flautist hears her peers, discovers an old tradition, and buys a wooden Irish flute.

I am very happy to co-edit this special Scottish feature with Larry Bethune, Berklee’s vice president for student affairs. Larry, like an accomplished piper, has his fingers on the pulse of Scottish culture, in Boston and in Scotland. Over the years he has created a community that understands its shared musical origins. Larry’s Preface, “A Personal Journey,” celebrates the adventure of discovering one’s heritage, including a deeper understanding of Scottish music and its relation to American roots music.

• • •

You will find more details in the Contributors Page, but I would like to give you, at the front of the book, a sense of the achievements and broad sweep of our featured artists.

Photographer Michael Russell is Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning in the Scottish Government. His photographs, taken each day as he goes about his duties, provide an authentic perspective on the western constituency of Argyll & Bute, which he represents in the Scottish Parliament. As Michael says of his photograph of restored stone Celtic crosses from the island of Iona, “These crosses have been raised for the first time in hundreds of years.” This powerful image of renewal and the *FUSION* of old and new was an easy choice for our cover.

The National Portrait Galleries in London and Edinburgh have more than 50 of Norman McBeath’s photographic portraits in their permanent collections. Norman has collaborated with a number of award-winning writers, including Robert Crawford, published here, and the celebrated Irish poet Paul Muldoon, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and poetry editor of *The New Yorker*. Collaborations

such as these speak to *FUSION*'s passion for interdisciplinary projects, whether by students or world-renowned artists.

Novelist and scholar Susan Sellers, of St Andrews University, has given us an excerpt from her new novel, *Given the Choice*. Her first novel, *Vanessa and Virginia*, has been translated into 17 languages and adapted as a play performed around the world. Susan is also an editor of Virginia Woolf's works for Cambridge University Press and translator of the influential French author Hélène Cixous. Only so many writers bridge so successfully the gap between elegant scholarship and critically acclaimed fiction.

The BBC's Iain Anderson contributed an essay on co-creating Celtic Connections: Glasgow's Annual Folk, Roots and World Music Festival. Iain can be heard as the late-night voice of "country, folk, blues, soul and rock 'n' roll" on BBC Radio Scotland.

This issue also includes gifted writers not from Scotland, including Major Jackson, a Guggenheim Fellow, and Lynne Potts, *AGNI* Poetry Editor and winner of the 2012 National Poetry Review Prize.

I was fortunate to spend time with poet Kent Maynard in a small village in Cameroon. He has the keen medical anthropologist's eye and a deep understanding of the people with whom he lives. His extensive experience working in West Africa has lent authenticity and power to his ethnographic poetry.

I'll let the music of two of our poets take us out.

Robert Crawford's collaborations with Norman McBeath and others are important for giving a Scots voice to a wide range of literature. Robert translates the power of ancient Greek fragments by the poet Simonides into fresh and energetic versions that reveal the flexibility and nuance of Scots. A few lines from "Orpheus" are a fitting celebration of what Seamus Heaney recognized as "that moment when the bird sings very close/To the music of what happens":

Abune his heid fled coontless burds. The fush  
Flang theirsels up oot o the daurk-blae wattirs  
Jist for the drap-deid brawnness o his sang.

*Above his head flew countless birds. The fish  
flung themselves upwards out of the dark-  
blue waters simply for the drop-dead beauty  
of his song.*

Creating this special edition has been a rich exchange by our students, faculty, my fellow *FUSION* editors, and our extraordinary artists on both sides of the Atlantic. The seaway has had its risks and squalls, but like Raftery, the poet and fiddler Pete Mullineaux writes about in "Raftery's Buttons," we have, together,

“sharpened our wits” and found the “steady rhythm” that binds this book.  
Thanks to the generous spirit from all on this crossing, we have,

staved off the elements,  
mellowed cares,  
re-jigging old scores  
wild ramblings  
into sweet strains  
and settled airs.

Joseph A. Coroniti, PhD  
Editor-in-Chief  
Special Features Editor

BERKLEE COMMUNITY

# Fiction

## Andrew Choi

# Childhood

They say that when a person dies, his life flashes before his eyes. Well, my life hasn't flashed before my eyes. I'm not dead yet.

I'm trying to think of all the possible reasons why this could or would have happened to me, and the only thing I could think of is that Gary is an ungrateful little prick. What's his problem with me! I was the closest thing to a friend he's ever had, and here he is showing gratitude by stabbing me in the back... literally.

I think it was three times he stabbed me. That's how it feels. Whatever the real reason was, he really wanted me dead. And that's what I don't get. I was the nicest guy in the world to him and he lures me into a trap and kicks me down a freaking ravine to die. The audacity. He must have really thought he killed me; he didn't even take my phone. Perfect for me. Unfortunate for him; I'll get my revenge.

"Hello, 911? I've been stabbed and throw down a ravine—I need an ambulance. *Grunts*. I'm a few meters away from the top of the Smoker's Hill. You know, where all the potheads go to smoke. *Gasps*. Hurry. I've been stabbed three times, I hurt all over, and I'm bleeding very badly. Yeah, it's someone I know—his name is Gary, Gary Grayson. No, ow, *gasps*, I don't know exactly when it happened, just hurry. Fuck, what do you think he stabbed me with? Shit, looks like he stole my wallet, too. JUST. HURRY. Yes, the ravine by Smoker's Hill. Hurry—" *Beep*.

Fifteen minutes he says... I think I can get to the top by then. And if I can't they'll come get me.

I'm trying to remember the first time I even met Gary. I remember I couldn't remember his name the first several times even though I had him saved on my phone. But I don't remember anything beyond that. The boring little shit. I was always surprised when he showed up at my house even though I was expecting him, because I could never remember his plain-ass face. But he's just a customer, and I'm just a merchant. I was never really obligated to remember his face anyway.

Dammit, I think some of my ribs broke when I fell. Makes sense, actually. It'd be weird if I rolled down all those rocks and bumps, and hit a tree and walk out of this completely unfazed. And I've got blood everywhere, too. My ass is getting warm from the blood trickling down. It's not a great feeling.

Oh yeah, I remember. That run-of-the-mill prick got connected through Tim. I guess I should've noticed in Tim's tone that he didn't really like Gary, but I wanted the money and I told Tim that I wanted the connection. I guess that's how this got started.

All I remember was he wasn't very memorable. He never made a lasting impression. Most of all, everything about him seemed so... fuzzy and gray. If he

were in my profession, he'd have been the best. No one would remember him, and no one would recognize him in public. He'd have been the perfect salesman.

Ow, my leg... it doesn't feel like a break, but still hurts. But I don't think I sprained it either... I'll have to ask when the paramedics get here.

He was a steady buyer. The shithead used to come once a week, just the standard dime bag. And then he started coming more frequently and got smart enough to size up to sacks. I guess even he knew his life was boring. But at this point, he's just a good customer: I welcomed him every time, as long as I was getting my money, and I guess he mistook that as friendship. How was I supposed to know it would end up like this?

Look at all this blood. *Look at all this blood.* That bastard is going to pay. If he thinks he's going to get away with attempted murder, he's got another thing coming. I don't die that easy.

Conversations with him were the hardest things to ever deal with. He always gave awkward one-word answers with those unbearably short awkward pauses that seemed to last for days.

"Hey, Gary. How've you been?"

"Good." Unless they were in any particular rush, people normally follow up with a story or two.

"And how's work?"

"It's ok."

But like in any good business, customer service is key. You can't just turn away a loyal customer after taking his money. No—you have to make small talk to make him feel at home no matter how boring he is, so he can bring in other customers by word of mouth. But the fucker didn't have any friends, but by the time I got to know that, it was too late.

I think my first mistake, if I would even call it that, was making small talk about his non-existent friends. I just wanted more customers. I don't really care about the boring prick's friends. I don't care how he gets along with his buddy-buddies. I wouldn't care even if I were paid. Well, actually, I did care, which is why I asked him about it. It turns out the loser doesn't have any friends outside his study groups or whatever. I showed some interest but I guess he took that as an offer from me to be his friend.

The more frequently he came, the more I tried to get to know the people around him so I could expand my customer base. That involved asking the prick about his family and other acquaintances. Well, what I found out was basically he's pretty much all alone. His "friends" all thought he was boring, his family doesn't really like him, and because of he was so forgettable, he doesn't have many acquaintances. I actually felt a little sorry for the bastard; I was all he had. I was actually really surprised to find he had a girlfriend throughout all his boredom. I think she had name... She was probably some dumb bitch who was just as if not more boring than Gary.

Why the hell are there so many pebbles on this ravine anyway? Who the hell places pebbles on a ravine? Who is looking at how fancy the ravine is? People stabbed and left to die like me? I can barely keep balance as it is, and I have to crawl on this shit. If I had a dime for each time I slipped on these pebbles...

One thing that made me feel especially sorry for him is that he knew how boring he was and could do nothing about it. Of course, I could have told him to get a hobby and develop himself as a human being but then I'd be encouraging a habit other than smoking and I would lose a customer—and a steady customer at that. It's not my responsibility to make him a good person. I'm not his fucking mom. Whatever the hell he did with his life was his choice and his problem. He wants to come to my house more frequently to smoke more? As long as I got paid, I didn't care.

And rain. It always has to rain during times like this... I didn't even ask what else could go wrong. And I wonder what on earth I could have done to deserve this. This will speed up my bleeding. I better hurry.

One time in the middle of a conversation he even asked me, "Do you think I'm boring?"

Dammit, Gary. What the hell was I supposed to say to that? Of course I told him no. And because of that he'd go on about how he appreciates that I don't find him boring, because everyone else did and spill his ever-boring guts in front of me. In actuality, I was always waiting to get him out of my door. And now that I think about it, he always lingered and took his sweet time getting out of my house. I guess he never wanted to leave. He really thought I was his friend. Stupid asshole.

And my other clients didn't like him either. Any time they came and he was around, they'd feel uneasy. It's not like he's disgusting or anything, but just his grayness made him so uncomfortable.

Seventy cents.

I was the first one he called when his girlfriend left him. I don't blame her. I guess even boring people have their limits. He told me how bad it felt. He's even boring when he feels like shit:

"I'm really sad right now. My girlfriend just broke up with me."

"Oh damn, bro. I'm sorry. I thought you two were going strong. (Lie.) What happened?"

"She said she didn't like me anymore." No surprises here.

"Did you want some weed to cheer you up?" I couldn't pass up a good business opportunity.

"I want to be alone."

Normal people get very detailed, and express some sorrow or something when they are down. He just told me that he feels sad and that he wants some alone time—no emotion, no nothing. Good grief. I was getting sick of him coming to my house all the time. I needed my space, too.

My breaths are getting shorter. I think blood is starting to pool in my lungs. Fuck. I guess all the adrenaline from trying to survive prevents me from feeling pain. And I'm almost at the top. And I'm not dead yet. There's got to be a reason why I'm not dead yet. It's as if fate wants me to get revenge on the average-in-every-way piece of shit. I'll get him yet.

And then he calls me again. He didn't tell me this time that he was coming over. That was good; I didn't want him over. But then he told me that he was planning to go to the Smoker's Hill to kill himself. He said no one really goes there, and since it's only smokers that go there they wouldn't care much. *Dammit,*

*Gary.* I honestly didn't want to care about his problems, but come on. He said he wanted to kill himself. I like to think I'm a good person. After all, I sell happiness. That's why people come back to me, because I have happiness. It's probably why he called me first. He said he wanted to meet me there. What else was I supposed to do?

When I got there, he talks to me about how boring his life was again, and how that was the reason for why his girlfriend broke up with him. I didn't care. I just didn't want him to kill himself, for some strange reason. Well, I guess I wouldn't want to watch someone die, though. He was so boring when talking about his entire life. *Dammit, Gary. Just get on with it. Are you going to keep living or not?* He went on about how his mom didn't really like him because he never met her expectations, or that his brother doesn't call him much. I really didn't care, but I thought he would actually kill himself if I said anything, so I just kept listening. He talks about what he always wanted to be fun like me and how much he envies my life because I can do whatever I want anytime I wanted because I was in charge of my life. He told me that he wanted a life like mine and how giving up his past life to take on a life like my own would be the best thing for him.

And while I turned around to look at the sunset, the fucker stabbed me in the back. A couple times.

I didn't think to fight back because it was so sudden. It didn't even register until he did it a few times more. I tried to fight him then, but the shock was too big. I couldn't do a thing. He took my wallet and my keys and then he kicked me down the side of the road on the hill into the ravine. I got a good look at his face as I fell. He looked a little scared, but at the same time very bemused, as if this was indeed the best thing that happened to him. I lost consciousness after I rolled a couple times and hit tree. He probably waited until he saw I wasn't moving and left.

My eyes are getting heavier. I feel a little sleepy. I think all the injuries are finally getting to me. But it's ok. I'm almost at the top. Just a couple more branches and shrubs left. I'll be at the top soon and I'll be able to rest. I'm far from dead.

I'm at the top. Finally. My car is gone and the piece of shit's Honda Civic is still there. I assume the ass took mine. Mine wasn't even that good, but I guess it's a step up from the cliché-ass Civic. Aw man, look at me. I'm a bloody mess. Ribs broken, legs in pain, hands scratched up, three stabs in the back, face badly bruised: I am totally going to hospital treatment and when I get back on my feet, I'm calling my friends and Gary will be history. I'm still alive. It has to mean something. I can't have survived a cliff fall and crawled to the top to tell a story. You can't write something like this. My revenged must be fated.

I don't know whether to lie face down, or face up. I think lying face down would be best so that the blood doesn't seep out of my back on to the floor. I have to preserve my life as long as possible, despite what the boring and ungrateful prick wants.

*Sigh.* Then turn my head to the side and lay face down to prevent unnecessary bleeding. Ouch. The rain stings my cuts. I don't know what to do anymore. I guess I'll have to bear it. Shit, look at all these cuts on my arm. It's not right for

any human being to have landed in this situation. I'll just close my eyes and wait for the ambulance to arrive.. *Sigh*

*Sirens.* I hear sirens. The ambulance is finally here. I'll wake up and I try to get myself back up to be more visible. Never mind, they'll see me. I'm the only guy here. The paramedics sure are fast, but rough. If all ends well, then I'll finally be able to get my revenge on Gary.

Oh man. Ambulance feels so warm compared to the rainy outdoors. It's a good feeling. I'll finally get healed. After I regain consciousness I'll call my lawyer. He'll tell me what I can do. Maybe I'll send him to hell on earth with all those other motherfuckers who commit atrocious crimes. Shithead... This case will be so simple. All evidence points to Gary, and he won't even know what hit him.

All I can think now is about how comfortable the ambulance is. The paramedics have done a good job stopping my bleeding. It stings a little bit, but at least I'm completely safe now. I won't die yet. I am still alive. My life hasn't flashed before my eyes yet.

Shit, childhood.

## Alexandra Groff

# In Which the Time Passes

An old man sat in his rocking chair, his face stuck in an uncomfortable looking frown. He pushed his slipper-covered feet against the hardwood floor, occasionally slipping, but he paid no attention to it as the *crick* and *creek* of the chair swayed his body back and forth. Eyes fixated on the window in front of him, he watched as the crisp leaves danced through the bleak, gray atmosphere and land in their respective place on the ground. It was autumn—or fall as some liked to call it—and the old man had little else to do but fall asleep in his spot in the rocking chair. In his younger days, he might have gone for a walk around the block with his wife, but things such as that had become difficult. He was quite old, and quite lonely. How lovely it would be to be young again.

When young, most people can't wait to grow up. The old man himself had valiant aspirations for great things, but despite them, somehow he got stuck running a local convenience store for much of his life. There at his counter, he'd set himself on his stool and read the newspaper, holding back from spouting his opinions on the news aloud as he awaited customers to arrive. Though it was dull for the most part, someone had to do it, and he had done it up until he was well into his seventies. Now in his mid-eighties, he spent much of his time by his lonesome at home, the tube mumbling *The Price is Right* across the room as he nearly fell asleep in his chair. Today, the old man simply opted for enjoying his rocking chair and the barely decent weather just outside his window. This old man's name was Harvey.

With a few more squeaks of the old wood of his chair, his bony toes clenched and his feet brought him to a slow stop. Harvey cleared his throat, the sound of phlegm rumbling around in his windpipe, and he smacked his lips a few times. He shakily brought his wristwatch up to his face to check the time. The wristwatch itself had been a relic or sorts, having belonged to his father for some time until he left. It was Harvey's treasure, and you would rarely see him without it clasped around his left wrist. The face of the watch was scratched and worn and the golden trim was dingy, but the big hand ticked with the same conviction and accuracy as it always had. If inanimate objects could talk, this one would have its fair share of stories to tell. Eyeing the old watch for the time, he breathed a slow breath on its face and rubbed it with his sleeve so he could perhaps tell the time a bit better. It only helped a little. He squinted, and he frowned after reading the time. It was just about 5:30 p.m., and it was time to get up and find something for dinner. Maybe he'd have egg salad tonight.

Carefully pushing himself up from the rocking chair, he struggled gaining his balance. He teetered slightly, his leg going wild with shaking until a few moments passed and he was steadied. With a grumble, he rubbed his leg before shuffling and sliding his feet across the slick wooden floor. The old man's pace was slow, as it would be with his bad leg and joints. Though he was used to it

by now, it was frustrating and tiresome. Having your own body give out on you was certainly not something you would ever look forward, but it was inevitable. Perhaps he lifted a few too many heavy cartons in his time at the convenience store.

Fingertips gliding across the back of the sofa, his fingers brushed the hand-knitted blanket his wife had made back when their daughter still lived in the house. He always hated the colors of it, but even he couldn't deny that it was a wonderfully warm blanket. In a desperate attempt to steady himself further, Harvey quickly leaned his palm against the fabric to give himself some support on the way to the kitchen. A puff of dust came off the blanket. With a grunt, he looked down at his hand on the sofa, and back to the kitchen door frame. He was nearly there.

Taking a hand off the sofa, he sniffled, the dry scent of dust and old yarn filling his senses. Almost there. He tried hobbling faster, getting frustrated and tired of his own body. He detested how difficult it had become for him to get some blasted egg salad. Almost there. Suddenly, with another sniffle and a few hitched breaths, his body welled up with the uncontrollable urge to expel the dust inside his lungs. His nose flared, his face scrunched, and finally Harvey let out a loud—AAAAACHOOO!

With a flash of bright, warm gold in front of his eyes, Harvey let out a bellowing sneeze. It felt as though he jumped out of his own skin he sneezed so hard. The old man's slippers slipped on the hardwood floor, and he only barely caught himself from falling on the doorframe to the kitchen.

Leaning more of his weight on the doorframe to recover, he took his time gathering himself. He wiped the dust from his eyes, water welling up in them after his reaction to the itchy dust. But it was odd. Rather than the scent of dust continuing to fill the air as it did before, the warm sweet smell of apple pie replaced it. Harvey looked through the kitchen with curiosity. Something was different. Something felt off about this whole situation, and he wasn't sure if he wanted to bitterly spout a comment about it quite yet.

"Harvey? Is that you? Harvey, the pie is done. Could you get it out of the oven for me? My hands are full," said a woman's voice. The sound of clanking dishes and running water came from the other side of the kitchen.

Harvey's eyes darted upward instantly upon hearing her voice, his expression turning to that of shock. He leaned more of his weight on the door frame, trying to understand why his dead wife was standing there so casually in the kitchen. Staring fixatedly at the woman at the sink, his lower lip quivered and his eyes glossed with emotion. His wife, Glennys, glanced around to check on him. He jolted backward slightly at her movement, losing his breath for a moment.

"Are you all right?" Glennys paused briefly before her eyebrows furrowed, and went back to her business washing dishes at the sink. The salt-and-pepper gray curls of her hair were frizzy and pinned out of her dainty brown eyes, and her favorite blue floral apron was tied loosely around her waist. The pattern matched the kitchen itself, which Harvey always thought was ridiculous. It looked as though she had been working in the kitchen for hours, and her attitude certainly matched that assumption. It was strange to see her so vividly after several years of life without her.

She said with an irritable tone, “Go on now, and get that pie! We wouldn’t want it burning!”

The old man sniffled a few times more, both out of confusion and the dust built up in his nose. He was trying to rationalize what was going on. Was this some sort of crazy *déjà vu*? The very shock of seeing Glennys was enough to give him a heart attack. Taking in a breath, he shuttered in an attempt to calm himself. After clearing his throat and a few moments of hesitation, Harvey let his body do what it so desperately wanted to—and that was to let his old habits sink in with his wife. He figured he might as well go along with this fantasy. Straightening his posture, Harvey walked with a wary gait over to the oven. “I’ve got it.” One last large sniff, he slipped on an oven mitt and briskly took the pie out of the oven.

“Now put it on the windowsill, dear. And be careful not to drop it—it’s very hot.” “I’ve got it, I’ve got it! Yeeesh. . .” Bringing the hot apple pie over to the window, he set it on the sill and opened up the window to let in the autumn air. He stopped briefly, watching the bright leaves float to the ground. Harvey found himself with a half-smile trying to find its way onto his lips. Though the sky was dim and bleak as it was when he was sitting in his rocking chair, the autumn air was crisp in comparison to the warm kitchen, and felt good against his skin. It was familiar in a different way, however. He couldn’t for the life of him figure out what he was experiencing. It felt like an old memory, but that certainly wasn’t possible. Oddly enough though, unlike his past self, Harvey found himself actually enjoying the nagging tone of his late wife. He had nearly forgotten what her voice had sounded like, and as grumpy as he always was with her around, he had missed her. Truthfully, he was probably even grumpier without her. The house was cold, lifeless, and dusty without her presence, and the kitchen was never so bustling without her and her baking habits.

Curious, Harvey checked his wristwatch for the time, the gold of the watch shimmered with an odd brightness in the dimmed sunlight; the little hand was still on the 5, and the big hand on the 6. The face of the watch was missing a few of its prominent scratches, but Harvey thought little of it. His half-smile faded as a thought crept into his mind: What should he do now? In some miracle, his wife was busy at work behind him, and this was either a dream or a memory—or perhaps both. Scrutinizing the situation at hand, he let his mind wander momentarily as he stood at the windowsill.

That’s when the doorbell rang. With a *bing bong*, Harvey’s head whipped around in realization of what memory this was.

“Is that. . .?” he muttered, his wife catching his statement in her ears.

“Lily? Yes, our daughter’s *apparently* here with some news. . . And dinner!” Glennys huffed while taking off her apron and placing it on a hook in the closet. “Go get the door, for heavens sake! I’m busy cleaning up!”

Still in slight awe from his rather sudden time-jump, Harvey decided to go along with how he remembered the memory, as much as he would have liked to change it. Lily was here with her husband to announce that they were moving from their quaint place in Pennsylvania, only thirty minutes from Harvey and Glennys’s house, to Massachusetts for work. As happy as he was for his daughter to take this opportunity, he had also always somewhat loathed her decision to

desert her family in their old age. He would hardly see her anymore, and she would eventually be absent during Glennys's struggles with her eventual cancer. He had gotten on her case about this before, passive aggressively remarking on her choice to leave Pennsylvania, and had managed to make quite a bit of tension between them. Despite this, from the few times she had managed to contact him, Harvey heard that Lily had made quite a lovely life for herself in Massachusetts. There, she and her husband bought a nice house and adopted a child. She was happy there. And that was good, though it was hard to admit at times.

"Yes, yes, I'm going there now. These old legs don't work as well as they used to, you know!" Harvey glanced down at his golden wristwatch briefly and sighed as he headed to the front door. As soon as his foot passed the doorframe of the kitchen, another flash of bright energy hit him. The light's warmth coursed through his skin briefly, like a summer sun's rays being absorbed by black pavement. Dazed, he snorted and shook his head, flailing a hand slightly as if to chase away the brightness and sensation.

He blinked, and noticed that the scent of pie was gone. Opening his eyes, he jumped at the change of atmosphere. Somehow, he was back in his old living room setup with his daughter of only sixteen sitting comfortably curled up and happy on the couch. There was a rather clunky phone in her hand, and a cord coming from the back of it that was currently wrapped around her finger as she spoke. Taking a double take at the watch, Harvey noticed the time had hardly changed, though he couldn't say the same thing for his hands. The thin skin that previously covered his hands showed fewer veins than they did only moments ago, and there was certainly more hair crawling up his wrists to his fingers. His hands looked younger, and more plump like that of a middle-aged man rather than an old one.

"What the hell is going on. . ." he grumbled to himself, admiring his body further and scrunching his round, ruddy nose up.

Being distracted, Harvey hadn't noticed that his daughter had already set down the phone and was watching her father confusedly look at his hands.

"Uh, Dad? Are you okay?" Lily said this with that tone of voice Harvey never quite liked.

"Who was that on the phone?" he said changing the subject with a gruff tone. "Uh," she paused, her eyes darting to the side momentarily, "no one. . ."

"Yeah, and I'm the Queen of England. Come on, who was it?"

Lily paused again, chewing on her lower lip and shoving a chunk of her brown hair behind her ear. "My boyfriend, okay?"

"And when were you planning on telling me about him?"

"Never."

He gave her a look, feeling himself falling back into the memory's sequence of events, only remembering what happened as he re-experienced them. The sixteen-year-old daughter in front of him puffed out a single breath of laughter before answering him with a slight roll of her eyes. "I was going to tell you! I mean, I'm telling you now, aren't I?"

"Are you?"

“Yes, I am. . .” She seemed only slightly peeved at his constant questioning. “Look, he’s a good guy. We’ve been dating for about a month now.” Lily couldn’t hold in a smile thinking about her boyfriend, and Lily always had a fantastic smile. Her delicate lip shape and cutely crooked teeth were like her mother’s, but she had that curious curl to the edges Harvey remembered his father having. Harvey hadn’t seen her in so long that he almost forgot about how charming her smile was and how it could light up a room. He imaged she was smiling quite a lot in Massachusetts with her husband and new life, though he wished he could see it more or at least stay in touch to hear the smile in her voice.

With a grunt, Harvey easily made his way over to the couch, brushing his hand across the ugly blanket that looked fairly prettier and less worn. Plopping himself across from Lily, he laced his hands together. “Sounds like you like the guy.”

“I do. . .”

He treats you well?” “Yeah, he asked me out with a flower during lunch! And he took me to the movies too.”

“Did he pay for your ticket?”

She paused, leaning back in the chair she was seated in and crossing her legs, “God, would you stop asking so many questions? He did okay—does it even matter that much?”

“Sounds like he’s at least got some man in him then!” he said with a smirk. It was oddly refreshing to have a conversation like this with his daughter, despite the fact he was essentially interrogating her. It was fun to hear her talk about something else other than work and the small talk of checking in how he was without Glennys.

“He’s got a name?”

She hesitated.

“So he’s a little punk? Forget it, don’t tell me.”

“No, dad, he’s not a ‘little punk.’”

“You’re sure? He’s not at all like that Jimmy down the street?”

“He—” Lily started to retort, but she immediately clamped her lips shut. Harvey’s face became dark, realizing both in reaction to Lily and in realization of

what was to happen in this memory.

“It’s Jimmy?”

He could see her fingers clench the fabric of her skirt as her face scrunch in an attempt to hold back looking upset. She could already tell that he wasn’t happy with who her boyfriend was, and Harvey remembered reacting poorly at the dinner table that night. Rather than answering him, the brown-haired sixteen-year-old pushed herself up from the chair and stomped into the kitchen.

“Forget it! You wouldn’t understand anyway. I’m going to check on dinner.”

In hindsight, maybe Harvey should have opted for changing this particular memory as well. After all, this boy was going to be her husband one day despite his terrible attitude and that awful mess of hair that boy had at that age. Harvey had always assumed he was doing drugs. That stuff they smoke in pots mostly. Regardless, it seems Harvey couldn’t change the past no matter how bad. Whether something mystical was compelling him to follow the timeline, or he

merely inherently knew that it would be easier to keep things the way they were, he didn't change the course of history. As he sat on the couch, he leaned back and arched his head to face the ceiling. His feet slid forward of his body on the slick hardwood floor as he let out a large guttural sigh, trying to figure out his next step. It was enough for him to have seen his daughter's smile again. To ruin it with a petty argument from her childhood would be a shame.

Harvey glanced down at his father's golden wristwatch, but not to check the time. He inspected its wristband for any peculiar markings, curiously eyeing it like he never had before. Those two gold flashes he had experienced during his time jumps were golden, which much reminded him of the sheen of his wristwatch. It was a strange and stupid thought of his; to think that an object he had all of his life would cause something so fantastical was stretching his belief. And yet, some itch in his mind said to him that it made some sense.

Rolling his head, he moved his eyes towards the kitchen and listened at the muffled chattering of his daughter and wife, which sounded like it was getting increasingly heated. The experiences he had re-experienced, though not necessarily pleasant, made him realize how much he really did miss even just their chattering. Head rolling back front to face the family room in front of him, Harvey realized it was nearly time to go into the kitchen for dinner. With a low rumbling hum, he looked down to his wrist.

"I'm done here," Harvey said softly to the wristwatch. He was skeptical of talking to the inanimate object, but it felt right somehow, "I'm not sure how this works or even if it does, but I don't want to argue with my daughter. Take me anywhere, make me an old man again or to see my father for all I care—just take me away from here." With that, he got up from the couch and made his way through the kitchen's doorway to meet with his wife and daughter. Just barely seeing Glennys turn to look at him as he entered the room, as he had expected, another flash of gold hit him as he passed through the doorway. But third flash was different.

It wasn't a flash at all, but rather a few strides through a golden void. The golden hue, which reminded him of the watch on his wrist, engulfed him in an energy that felt like it was feeding his life through his pores. The area was nothing but a swirling ambiguous atmosphere, his feet standing on nothing, but a solid feeling through the soles of his shoes tricked his body into thinking there was ground beneath him. Confused yet determined, Harvey attempted his strides, carefully placing his feet as the warmth of the gold radiated against his skin as it had before. On his last step, he suddenly landed in a memory once more.

This time, Harvey was in a different location altogether. It was his old bedroom from when he was a child. Tacky airplane wallpaper plastered against the wall, there was a dim lighting from his bedside lamp. The light bulbs weren't nearly as bright as they would be in the future, a detail he had failed to notice over the years. Looking to his right, there was a pile of dirty clothes, which probably added to the musky smell of that typical scent of a messy boy's room. The general perception of the room was larger than it would have been as an adult as well. Looking down at his fingers, Harvey could see how young he had become during his last jump through time. He must have been nearly 13 years

old. Looking up, his father was kneeled in front of him, clutching a golden item in his strong hands and looking at him with his fiercely blue eyes. The features of face were difficult to see in the lighting, though he only vaguely remembered his estranged father's face in the first place. After all, this was the day his father left his mother for good, and never again would Harvey see or hear from him. All he ever had of his father was his wristwatch, and why it was given to him, he would never quite understand.

"Here," the man said tenderly as he place the watch in Harvey's hands. It glistened in the dim light in of the bedroom, and it looked magical. Staring into the face of the watch with his young, clear vision, he admired the gift. He could feel his eyes widen and his heart skip a beat as he checked the time on his father's watch excitedly, just as he remembered doing as a child. It was 3:40 p.m.

In sync with the pounding of his heart knocking excitedly against his ribs, a few flashes of that similar gold took him on one last jump through time. He closed his eyes, letting the mystical force of God or magic take him over, and suddenly Harvey felt a jerk pull him back to present day. He was old and frail again, and it as though the sneezed welled back up inside his chest and was pushing him towards the kitchen floor so fast that he couldn't feel the impact of the fall. His chest felt tight, his body was heavy with old and dead weight. He wheezed a cough, and his lungs expelled the dust that irritated them. The tile floor was cold against the skin of his cheek, and he winced at the contorted and unfortunate position he had landed in. The old man, numb and still, managed to look up at the wrist sprawled in front of him. His bony fingers fanned to move the scratched, old watch's face to a visible position. Though dimmed in its old age, it was a beautiful gold. But it dulled in comparison to the long-forgotten scent of his wife's cooking and the brilliant smile his daughter inherited.

"I think Dad would have wanted us to keep this," Lily said, patting her nose with a tissue before slipping it back in her pocket. Back in the house she grew up in, she was sifting through her father's things, deciding what do with them after his passing last week. Harvey had been found by a mailman, laying motionless on the kitchen floor and already dead by the time he was found.

It was a difficult task to go through his belongings in the first place, considering each object either reminded her of the past, or left her to wonder about what she had missed in her time away from Pennsylvania. Coming up behind her, Lily's husband kneeled down on the floor behind her and rubbed her back for comfort. She was taking particular care in placing her father's wristwatch into a small black padded case.

"You don't think he'd want it with him?"

"No. . .," she sniffled and choked on her words slightly as she spoke, "He would never want something he held so precious to him buried away from the world."

## Kathleen Parks

# Beacon

The phone buzzed, and Kitty looked down at it vibrating on her thigh. While sitting in her family's living room an incoming message on her rickety old cellphone read, "Hey! My friend, Travis, and I are going to drive over to Beacon today, and wanted to know if you'd wanted to come?" Tina rarely texted Kitty. They had only met twice, giving each other their numbers as a teenage exchange of consideration and politeness. Tina was a photographer and artist, someone who could see the most ordinary objects and capture their silence and shame in a photograph or painting. Kitty looked up to artists. She wanted to know what might become of the day around someone like that.

"Sure!" she responded. "What do you guys have planned for the day?" She looked outside to the winter gloom. She was not a gloomy day kind of girl but figured getting out would do her some good. The phone was ringing.

"Hello?"

"Hey Kit, how's it goin'? We're just on our way to Beacon, and well...someone is there who says they really need to see you..."

Kitty chuckled, "What? Who on earth could you be talking about?" Tina responded quietly and seriously, "Well, it's Jackson. . . he's back."

The ride to the town of Beacon was long, and although Kitty was freezing, the palms of her hands were hot and moist. The three of them were traveling in Tina's 1973 navy blue Mercedes-Benz. The heater wasn't working all too well, the leather seats were squeaking and freezing, and Tina was verbally damning the vehicle. Travis was playing indie folk music, the kind that only hipsters like. Kitty liked folk, but not this brand. Travis had sent away for the hipster kit—a tall and lanky character with boxy black frame glasses, a beige collared shirt, brown cardigan, navy blue corduroys, and brown oxford shoes. He was only missing a cigarette. He put on a song that she decided was cozy and enjoyable. The lead singer had a soft whispery voice, and behind him were vocal harmonies and a sweet fiddle. "It's not too loud back there is it?" he asked.

"I like it just the way it is," Tina told him. She laid her head against the back of her seat, tilted it slightly and gazed out the window. They were crossing the Beacon bridge, and she noticed the broken shards of ice floating in the Hudson river. Her mind conjured the past, back to when she was fourteen years old, standing on that exact bridge in the dead of winter. She and Jackson. They were discussing the broken shards of ice, how it would feel to hit those frozen knives floating down there.

Travis put on a new song, one that sounded like warm summer. She knew this song from years ago. It had always made her happy. A piano that sounded like it was from the 1940s with friendly, acoustic bass and happy, bouncing drums. John Lennon was singing about his love, Yoko Ono. Kitty was summoned to

a new scene from her past. She was now sixteen, at a barbecue with a large group of friends. The song was playing inside the house. In the back room of the house, Jackson was standing with both arms folded against the wall, grinning. He grabbed Kitty's hand and tugged her closer to him. He twirled her around the room until she was dizzy.

"We're here!" Tina said with a smile. They had made it to Beacon. Jackson's hometown.

"Yaaaaay, man. I can't wait to see that Jacko, he's a nice boy, a boy nice he." Travis expressed his excitement in registers of weird.

"It'll be a good one, hipstah twavis," Kitty said.

"Ya know, Kitty, I like you, you're definitely one of us, and that boy better realize what he's about to see. . . how long has it been since you last saw each other?"

"Three years."

"Yesh maaaaa'm, too damn long."

"Oh, would you leave her alone, you're acting like a complete idiot," Tina barked. "C'mon Kit." Tina linked Kitty by the arm and they began to walk up a snowy side walk towards an old theatre. Tina looked around. "They said they'd be right here."

"Oy! Over here!" a tall and curly headed David Cohen yelled from across the street.

"We'll be right over." Kitty and Tina waited on the corner.

"So, are you nervous?" Tina asked.

"No, well, I don't know...it's been a long time since I saw him last...what if nothing is the same as it once was?"

"Well, I know I don't know you very well, and that is hopefully about to change! But, from how I've heard him talk...he still is in love with you."

"Well, we shall see..."

Travis ran across the street to check out what was going on. His shoes clapped and clopped the ground. Kitty stared at the old theatre she stood in front of, noting the vacant architecture and how abandoned it looked. She wondered if it would ever be restored and if it would ever hold the laughs, cries, and cheers of an audience again. It was beautiful, just needed someone to show it some care again. Suddenly a familiar voice was behind her.

"Hello Kitten..."

Kitty turned around. A smile crept over her face. She was with Jackson.

## James Sanderson

# Three Words

Inside Howard's wool coat pocket was a letter. The letter started and ended with the same three words. The three words became a mantra to Howard, one he would repeat while he looked at his haggard face in the mirror night after night before tucking himself into bed and watching the Late, Late Night Show with the Scottish guy with the only funny jokes on late night television. Where, Howard wondered, did all of the classic hosts go? Jack Paar, Dick Cavett, Johnny Carson, Ed Sullivan were replaced by overpaid chins and hairpieces.

Written in a lazy, lethargic cursive, signed with great care, and spanning six pages, the letter had been in Howard's Filson for exactly four years to the current day. He removed it only to read it until it was memorized to the last punctuation mark. This wasn't too much of an issue, as Howard retained 70-90% of the information he saw or heard, a natural-born talent one might call eidetic memory. This was the very same talent that got him into Princeton without much effort, and graduating magna cum laude with almost the same amount of work. This had its disadvantages: remembering that on January 15, 1998 a man in a bright yellow rain jacket stepped in front of the 34 bus in downtown Trenton and the exact look of relief that crossed the man's face right before he was struck down, how many times his mother used the word "fuck" in the fight that led to his parents' divorce and how many times she blamed Howard for the whole horrible ordeal (it was eleven, and so was he), and so on. He was thankful for every single one of his memories. His mind was like a computer, and his hard drive had a limited amount of space. He could hold onto things as long as he found them worthy. There were a surprising amount of bad memories inside his hard drive, but he used them to better himself; remembered the negative to breed a stronger version of Howard McGrath. Everything else was deleted, and he had trouble recalling it.

The contents of the letter covered a lot of ground. Everything from small talk and minor observation to soul-wrenching truths no one else could have found but her. She was an analyst. Hours of her time were spent diagnosing people's psychoses, delving deep into the recesses of the human mind. This caused her to read into every action, and sometimes got in the way of her and Howard's relationship. Truth be told, though, he never disliked it. This quality of hers was probably the only thing about her he didn't completely love or obsess over. It astonished him how many memories of her he saved in his hard drive. So many smiles, fights, long-winded coffee-fueled conversations, and sexual encounters would sometimes seep into his consciousness, even though he rarely called them to mind. One particular instance came to mind at the moment. The last time he had seen Elizabeth, she had already had her things moved from their apartment and was on her way out the door before he even knew she was leaving him. She was surprised, an emotion that was awkwardly flattering to her facial

features. Howard wasn't supposed to have been home until an hour later, the time being 5:13 p.m. on a Thursday during a warm April day. She looked down for a moment, before seeming to remember her confidence in the decision she had made independently.

"Howard, I'm leaving."

"Yeah, I can see that. Where are you going? Were you going to leave and have me wait until the sun came up for you to come home and—"

"Goddamnit, Howard, you're so longwinded. I left you a note"

"A note? Oh, I'm sure that aptly explains everything."

"It's more of an essay. Or a letter. I wanted to avoid an argument."

"Oh ok, that makes sense, yeah, just let me get out of your way so you can leave without telling me why or what I did or what the hell is happening." Howard didn't remember crying (he blocked it out), but this is the point where he started.

"Well, maybe you'll find your explanation in the letter I wrote you. It took me a long time to write, and I'm always better with words when I don't have to say them out loud."

"That's convenient, Lizzie. Don't you worry about me, don't ask me how I feel, just get the fuck out if you're so eager to leave."

"I *was* on my way out, if you remember. Which of course you do." She left without looking back and without hesitation. He admired her for that. She was much stronger than he was, or at least had more conviction.

He had replayed this melodramatic scene in his mind over and over again, never fully intending to. This kind of thing had been happening more and more, becoming, as of late, a recurring theme in his dreams as well. It became increasingly more upsetting as he got closer to his impending reunion with Elizabeth. Three months ago, he had received an email from her asking how he was. He responded with "Okay," and she pressed him.

"No, really, how are you? It's been a long time. I thought about you yesterday, and I had hoped we could talk or something."

"I'm fine. Not to be rude, but what is there to talk about? Your letter said everything. How are you?"

"That was a long time ago. Maybe it would be better if we talked in person?"

"You didn't answer my question. When and where would you like to meet?"

"I'm very well. I'm finally in a position where I can talk about things. How about Cal's Coffee Shoppe, you remember that place?"

"Is that rhetorical? I mean, of course I remember that place. We went there for our thirteenth date, then for our twentieth, and then on our two-year anniversary. I enjoy that place, and their Americanos. So when?"

"How about exactly three months from today? I know you love that kind of shit."

"Very well, I'll see you then."

Howard went upstairs to his room once more. He had already chosen a white dress shirt, a plain black tie, a pair of black slacks, and black socks to wear after his shower. They were laid out quite perfectly on the foot of his bed. Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted Apollo, his grey tabby cat, darting from under the nightstand and out the door. He wondered quietly what Apollo was running

from and decided he had seen his own shadow, the coward. After removing his robe, Howard glanced over at his chair, pushed in under his desk, and on the chair hung his wool coat, and thought of the worn paper letter inside and how important it was not to forget the words Elizabeth had written him. He ran them through in his mind thirty-seven times as he stepped into his shower, washed with Irish Spring, lathered Head and Shoulders in his graying hair, dried off, and dressed. He looked in his bathroom mirror and regarded the thirty-seven-year-old man inside of it. When had he gotten so many lines on his forehead? The lines didn't bother him; on the contrary, they reminded him of thirty-seven years of experience he had garnered, and wondered if this might be enough or if he should keep rearranging his hard drive to cram more knowledge. His house was quiet.

Apollo was waiting by his food dish when Howard finally came downstairs. The bowl was empty except for the cat's worm pill he had tried to sneak in there. Apollo, while a craven, was certainly smarter than the average cat. Peanut butter always seemed to do the trick though. Howard would have to pick some up on his way home from Cal's. The food dish was filled, and the last thing Howard did before he left his apartment was tell Apollo he loved him, and that he was an exceptional cat.

Three flights of stairs led Howard to the lobby of his apartment building, and a set of double doors led him onto the street where his SUV waited across the way. He sat in the car for a moment, trying to think of what he might say to the woman he had loved so adamantly. "Oh hello, Lizzie, you ruined my life four years ago but, hey, who cares about that right? Let's just start from scratch because it's fucking convenient for you." Howard realized that instead of saying that in his mind, the words had slipped out of his mouth, like spittle loosed by impassioned men in their most heated of moments. He thought about his high school chemistry teacher, who got so excited about the collision of atoms that he often would spit a little bit, showering those unfortunate enough to be seated in the front row. Mr. Huston had been a man of small stature, but his students enjoyed his class because he loved starting fires during his lab hours. Howard had especially liked the man, who wrote him a recommendation for his school's honor society and subsequently for his college application. This made his incarceration for having indecent contact with one of his female students all the more devastating. Not the relationship, because Howard knew that it wasn't really any of his damn business. Yeah, it was pretty weird, but who was he to judge? It was the fact that Mr. H had been sent to jail over the affair, and Howard never saw the man again.

Howard's parents, Linda and Jack, had never been in love, not really. They married due to the bump in Linda's belly, a mistake made two nights after their senior prom. The two unlucky lovers threw away their dreams of college and world travel, respectively, to raise their little misstep, Jack taking up work as a contractor and Linda doing part time shifts at the local Dairy Queen to supplement income. They were happy for a short time. The fights didn't start until Howard's 7th birthday, when Jack had purchased the wrong birthday cake, which said "Happy Birthday Hannah!" in big pink bubble letters. This turned into a row about their entire sham of a marriage and resulted in the

disassembling of Howard's party. Linda hadn't known that Howard had been listening the night of his parents' final fight. She hadn't said anything about their divorce being Howard's fault to hurt the eleven-year-old version of himself, but she had certainly meant everything she said. She made no real effort to keep in touch with her only son. Every now and then she would make the semi-obligatory phone call, acting interested in her son's life, but Howard had stopped answering some time as the overwhelming memory of her accusatory tone and the hatred he had heard in her voice that night took over his emotions toward her. His father on the other hand, had been a big part of his life until his death. Jack died April 17th, 2004, the same month Elizabeth had left him. That month was the hardest month Howard ever had to endure. No longer would he attend Braves' games with his father, and he donated their season tickets. No longer would he hold hands with the woman he so intimately cared for. A lot of his life stopped that month. His job as a general literature teacher at his alma mater kept him going, and that year he won an award for "outstanding dedication to education," which was so fucking ambiguous he didn't even keep the plaque.

He had gotten lost, sifting through his hard drive. The time showed him he was going to be about five minutes late to meet Elizabeth. He put the car into drive and sped off, buckling his seatbelt at the stop sign at the end of his block. He knew it would take him fifteen minutes to reach his destination at this time, around 4:30 p.m., due to traffic and light patterns. He reached the café at exactly 4:33 and it took him two minutes to collect himself and get inside. Elizabeth was already there, sitting in their usual booth in the back somewhat removed from the rest of the place.

"Howard, you look very nice."

"Thanks Lizzie. You look fine, as well." She looked better than fine. She was wearing an indigo scarf, one he didn't recognize, and a dark green blouse with a pair of dark washed jeans and black boots. These he remembered, as the blouse was his favorite color and he had seen the jeans on the floor of their apartment next to their bed plenty of times. The small speck of white paint still staining the right pant leg affirmed that these were the same pair they fussed over after repainting.

"How have you been? Have you been sleeping at all?"

"Very little, I'm afraid," Howard said starkly.

"I'm sorry to hear that. But otherwise?"

"Apollo's doing well. He misses you."

"That's sweet, but I didn't ask about Apollo. I asked—"

"I know what you asked. I deliberately avoided the question. You wanted to meet. You wanted to talk, so talk."

"Well fuck the small talk then," she half-hissed, and then regained composure. Her agitation remained evident in her right hand, though, which tapped surreptitiously. "Can't we be civil?"

"I am being civil. I'm just being direct, which I don't think is unfair."

"Certainly not, but your tone is. . . I just don't like the way you're talking to me."

"Sorry, Lizzie."

"Don't call me that, Howard. I'm not that girl anymore."

“Sorry, Elizabeth.”

“God, don’t be sorry. You’re too apologetic, you know that?”

“How the hell would you know? It’s been a while. I haven’t been sorry since the last time I saw you.”

She didn’t react well to this. The visage of her face indicated that she might as well have been slapped. She coiled, and then retorted, “Listen, I’m meeting with you because I wanted to be friends with you, not to rehash our long-terminated relationship.”

“Ok. I didn’t mean to be rude. I’ve been okay, just busy. I’m getting tenured soon.”

Her appearance instantly changed with Howard’s mood shift. “That’s wonderful! It’s about damn time! You’ve been there forever!”

“Yeah, tell me about it. I mean, I love the job, it’s just time for more. But what about you? What have you been up to for. . . for four years?”

“I started working on a book.”

“No shit?”

“Nope, none. It’s kind of a self-help book, the kind you always hated.” She smiled, which made Howard smile. “You know, ‘the universe and you: how to become one with your any environment’ kind of things.” They laughed and their eyes met, and then she looked down at her mug. When had that gotten there? He hadn’t remembered her having one, and he certainly didn’t notice it being put down in front of her. He shrugged it off.

“Congrats, Liz! Any publishers?”

“Actually, Princeton wants to put it out. Use it in some classes.”

“Jesus, that’s wonderful! So what other trouble have you been getting into?”

She paused, and her light-heartedness waivered. “I, uh. . . I’m getting married, Howard.” She looked at him again, probably hoping to discern how he was feeling by his facial expressions. He didn’t give any. Instead, he went inside his head and curled up on a small area rug, the one that had been in their old apartment. Apollo was next to him, purring into his left ear. There was nothing else around him. He was in nothing. He couldn’t see past the rug, and it was terrifying. For a brief moment, Howard McGrath couldn’t remember a single fucking thing. His momentary meltdown was ended as Elizabeth called his name through the nothingness, and all of a sudden he was back in the café and his old love was telling him she was getting married and he couldn’t even comprehend what was happening.

“Howard?”

“Fuck that.” It was a horrible thing to say to her, he knew, but it was all he could manage.

“Wow, thank you so very much.” She spoke almost as if she had known he would say it, and that she had been rehearsing this rebuttal for months.

“No, I didn’t mean that. I meant fuck you. Fuck you for emailing me after three years and nine months and asking to meet with me so that you could tell me this. Fuck you for barging back into my life when I was finally all right without you in it. Fuck you for being happy without me.” It all came out. It was too fast to stop it. He was dizzy, felt sick, and now everyone in Cal’s was staring at them. Elizabeth turned beet red.

“I should have expected this. I’m so sorry I assumed that maybe you were adult enough to handle this. I thought you might want to know, and that maybe we could be in each other’s lives again.”

“Who are you marrying?”

“You really wanna know?”

“Yes. No. You know what, who gives a flying fuck who you’re marrying. It doesn’t matter. I hope you’re happy, ya know, with your white bridal gown. Why do I still remember how many freckles you have on your back? Or the amount of underwear you used to own? Or what you had for breakfast on the morning I got my job at Princeton? Why am I forced to relive every moment from our three years together?”

Elizabeth went silent for a moment. Howard took that as his cue, stood up and walked out. He was getting into his car, accidental tears welling, brimming, and falling, when he heard her shout his name and the word “wait”. He didn’t know why but he heeded her. She came up to the window.

“Howard, I’m sorry.”

“What?”

“I’m sorry. Honestly, I am. It’s so easy to forget that you can’t really forget those things. My brain doesn’t work like yours. I remember some stuff, but most of it has been. . . I don’t know, it’s been so long. I loved you so much, but that was a long time ago. I met this guy, Harrison, he’s the love of my life. I’m so happy, and I just want you to be happy.”

“I’m not happy, Lizzie. I can’t be. I’m trying, but I don’t know. . . you don’t mean to, but you keep holding me back.”

“Once, you explained to me. You said that your mind is kind of like a computer, and you can kind of control what stays written on the disk. If this is true, you need to do, like, a search or something of every memory you have of me. Then, you need to hit the. . . the select all button and hit delete.”

He considered this a moment. Four years had gone by. Had he really never thought of this? Maybe he had but he didn’t like the idea of erasing her. Not like that. His mind kind of collapsed in on itself as he struggled with the implications of this course of action. Would he be able to delete it all? Would she ever really be gone from his life? Was that even something healthy and worth considering? “Can I hold onto some of it?”

“No, Howard. Get rid of it all.”

As he drove away, Howard let his mind wander back through his memories of Elizabeth, and as his consciousness passed over each precious scene in his mind, the memories disappeared, deleted permanently from Howard’s hard drive. He was halfway through this process when he reached his house. Parking his car, he allowed himself to be immersed in their three-year anniversary. They were sitting on the roof of their friend Ben’s apartment in New York City, for Ben’s big 30th birthday bash, surrounded by string lights and wracked by wind. They held hands under a fold-up table. For some reason, inside of Howard’s memory, no one else was on the roof, though he knew that to be false. He didn’t push this thought further however. He mentioned the idea of marriage to her, and she giggled before calling him dreadfully old-fashioned.

“Why would you want to marry me? We’re living together, we’re in a committed relationship. . . what more could we gain from matrimony?” Her smile hurt him to look at it was so beautiful.

“I don’t really know. I guess it seems like the right place to go from here. I mean, three years is a long time and you know how I feel about stagnancy.” He smiled back, doing his best not to look as nervous as he felt.

“Howard, baby, as much as I don’t really enjoy the idea of modern marriage, you only have to ask me to marry you and I will.” She stared into his eyes until he looked away. Her expectations were evident. She had mentioned disliking the permanence of marriage, but something in her eyes told him that she would have said yes to him. It was then, Howard realized, that he had lost her, because no matter how hard he tried he couldn’t push past his nerves, his doubts, his countless inhibitions. But she still loved him, despite the fact that they were already done, it just wasn’t said out loud.

“Yeah, well. . . I love you.”

“I love you too, Howard.”

Darkness as he fled that scene, and on through the rest of his memories. Howard was so fully taken by his hard drive’s functionality of the moment, that he was unaware of his physicality. His body was still, he was soundless, but more water poured from his glazed-over eyes as he made the hardest, but most necessary decision of his life.

\* \* \*

Howard woke up the next day feeling good. It was the best he had felt in a very long time. He jumped out of bed, scaring the shit out of Apollo, who mewed loudly before sprinting out of the bedroom. Howard showered and went to work. At work, he thought about the man in the yellow rain coat, his high school teacher, and his father. He didn’t dwell too long on anything, but he skimmed his memories like a scrapbook. He felt lighter. He also felt like he was forgetting something. He drove into Trenton after work, hoping to walk around the city a bit and maybe do some grocery shopping. “Ah,” he thought, “peanut butter!” He ran into the nearest convenience store and found a jar of Skippy to hide Apollo’s worm pill in. In the checkout line, he was intrigued by the covers of all the tabloids, wondering why actual news didn’t seem to be relevant anymore. After his purchase, he went outside and still felt as though he were forgetting something. Someone, a woman, was waving at him from across the street. He felt like he knew her, but couldn’t tell from where he was standing, so he walked into the street. Intuition made him look to his left, and there, plain as day, was the number 34 bus. Time slowed as the bus barreled towards him. He closed his eyes as relief washed over him like a wave. Before the bus made contact however, he felt himself being tackled to the sidewalk behind him. He opened his eyes to see a beautiful woman on top of him.

“Jesus, what the hell was that?” she spurted, winded.

“I’m not too sure. Were you on the other side of the street?”

“Yeah, Professor, I was waving to you and then you stepped right in front of that bus!”

“Oh, the bus. Did you happen to catch what number it was?”

“What?”

“The bus. What number was it?”

“I think it was the 212? I’m not positive.”

“It wasn’t the 34?”

“What? No, it wasn’t the 34, definitely not.”

“Good. I’m glad.”

“Are you okay, Professor?”

“Yes, yes, I’m fine, I think. Maybe better than fine. Do I know you?”

“You don’t remember me? I’m Megan, from your Literature of the Early 20th Century class?”

“Megan. . . oh yes, you wrote me that amazing paper on Joyce?”

“Yeah, the one contrasting his work on Ulysses. . .”

“To that of Saul Bellow. Yes, I can almost remember how it went. How long ago was that?”

“I think maybe four years ago?” The two stood up. “Are you okay, Professor? Do you need a drink or something?” She laughed and pushed some of her brown hair from her face.

“Perhaps. Something strong would be nice, I think my entire back is bruised.”

“I know this place down the street. It’s this neat little coffee place that serves alcohol, too.”

“Cal’s?”

“Yeah, do you know it?”

“No, I don’t believe I do. Sounds familiar though. . .” He trailed off there, trying to recall why it seemed so important. “No matter. Lead the way, Meg.”

The whole time they walked, they talked a bit and caught up, but three words kept ringing in the back of his mind. Three words that seemed so far off, but wouldn’t stop echoing in his chamber. They made him feel slightly remorseful, like a piece of him was missing, but somehow he knew he was better off without this piece. He knew that very recently he had been thinking about the words, and how important they were but if the words “Please forget everything” were supposed to be important, maybe he should listen to them. And as he walked with his former student Megan, had drinks, made plans to meet up again and stay in touch, drove home, and got into bed, he did. He truly did.

## Chris Stites

# The Lion Boy

It's not easy balancing school with drinking binges that last for days. I struggle to remember things and often feel sick. My black cat, Daisy, sits and stares out the window. I try to drink myself into breaking it. But there is no breaking it. So, all day I sleep and stay lazy as the housecat. And it would all be a lot easier without the booze. I just use the stuff like maintaining an open wound for the pain to make me feel alive.

There is a large tapestry on my bedroom wall of a lion roaring. When I wake early in the morning, hung-over, after little sleep, I look at the lion. It's funny: He's no longer roaring but yawning. The sun is not yet up. I put my clothes back on from the night before, thrown carelessly over my orange, upholstered chair and walk out into the Boston early morning.

• • •

I like walking around the housing projects near my place. I think Warsaw Ghetto, and when I think ghetto, I think of photographs taken of parentless children, starving and dying in the streets. Who took those photos? I am underweight too, and sometimes feel like I am dying. But where are the Germans? Where are my oppressors?

I walk through the projects with a folded twenty-dollar bill in my back right pocket. I am very attentive; looking around; eyes opened.

The inner streets of the projects are usually quite empty. They are all named after dead American presidents: Jefferson, Washington, Madison—all slave owners; but you know the names are just customary—aren't truly recognized by the city; they're just alleys. A few groups of people usually stand around looking stupid and sad, a careless look on their eyes, scanning my white skin. They probably wonder if I'm a cop. But this early in the morning the streets are empty. Many people that live here don't work. I still keep the twenty-dollar bill in my back right pocket and think about what I will say. After a couple hours with no luck I return home, try to sleep and wait for the liquor store to open at 9 a.m.

• • •

In between classes one day, I walk down to the Common, Boston's central park. I know where the needle exchange van meets; I know where the drunks sit by the new state house (I've asked them where I can take a piss before when I was down there drinking like them). The restaurants closely guard their toilets from the vagrants. There is a McDonald's that accommodates anyone needing a bathroom (one truly benevolent service they offer). The vagrants know all the good parking lots and alleys where one can piss with relative privacy and safety

from cops, property owners or mothers with young children trying to enjoy the park.

I walk the streets alone. One man feeds a flock of pigeons, and they circle around and around to pick up the crumbs of bread. It's remarkable. I look at the man feeding the birds as the birds are looping around, feeding.

"They follow the leader," he says. "There is one top pigeon. He's the boss. You see him?"

I continue walking through the park but again have no luck. I don't approach anybody. I don't even ask the drunks.

I check my back right pocket regularly for the cash I keep there, neatly folded and accessible. I do one more round of the park. It's a nice end of summer. Kids are playing in the Frog Pond that in only a few short months will be frozen into an outdoor ice skating rink. Winos lounge around, relaxed, enjoying the warmth. I feel for the money again going into the subway station, back home. No luck. I'll drink rye whiskey until the sun comes up. They do have that here. I'll still have some money leftover after the whiskey. Hopefully when the sun comes up I will be lucky.

• • •

I buy a bag of syringes. I need to stop drinking. My friends are growing afraid of me; I think I make them sad, or angry. The liquor is making me delusional.

I sit in my room and there is no motivation to do my schoolwork. The drinking isn't working. It lights a fire in me; helps me transcend dullness, boredom, fear. Crippling boredom. But still, I sit here in my room. I cannot watch anything or otherwise entertain myself, or distract myself. I am drinking, trying to kindle some sort of interest. I pace in my room; trying to forget my work; enter sublime viciousness. Maybe I will go out to the streets and walk.

But the drinking, the drinking is not working. It just strokes my ego. Delusions of grandeur. I need not think I am some great, special, brilliant someone. For the history books. These thoughts are making me weak, careless, stupid.

What thoughts can quell this discontent? Programs or religion have not worked and are too easily spited. I look up at the lion on my wall. He's yawning.

• • •

I am still going on frequent walks, trying new neighborhoods. It is hard to get your foot in the door, but once you get in, it's hard to get out. But for now I just want to get in. I am bored. I feel empty. There is a methadone clinic nearby my house. I read that this is a good place to look. I think I will walk there early in the morning and see if I can score.

As the night goes, I open the bag of syringes I bought a few days earlier. I draw tap water up into the syringe; squirt it back into a white coffee cup. There is a grey, striped, thermal long-sleeve in my closet I wrap and tie tightly around my right arm, and already prominent veins pop out like ropes on the surface of my skin. What a beautiful feature. I heat some more water in a spoon with a yellow Bic until it boils, and black carbon collects on the back. I draw the hot water up; coat my arm with rubbing alcohol. Easily, I push the needle into one of the available veins. I draw the plunger back and register a thick stream of

dark red blood. I push some of the bloodied water into the vein, then register more blood, inject more water, and so on, until the syringe is empty. When I pull the needle out, blood runs out of the injection site. It feels amazing, putting something directly in you. I untie my shirt-tourniquet, tie it on my other arm and prod for other veins. Then I go down to my foot. I go through several needles. I try shooting some sleeping pills but I don't think they are water-soluble. The crushed pill just floats in solid chunks on the hot tap water. I try injecting some anyway.

I go to sleep and set my alarm for 6:55 a.m.

• • •

I wake before my alarm goes off with a bit of a hangover. My arms are spotted with tiny red dots back-dropped with faint, greenish bruising. I think I will stop drinking.

I head out towards the clinic. Standing outside a nearby McDonald's is a black man, about fifty, tall, in good shape, strong-looking. He is dressed in nice clothes, clothes that appear more expensive than they are. They have a generic look to them, but they are clean and intact, put together in an ensemble arranged with an aesthetical eye. He is smoking a cigarette. The weather is nice and hospitable, even at this early hour, in mid-September.

I approach him.

"What's good brother? Can you help me out?"

"Yes," he answers with a friendly smile. He knows immediately what I mean. My instincts for this are good. "What do you need?" he asks.

"H."

"Come back in thirty minutes," he says. "You're not police are you?"

"Hell no," I answer, boisterously. I am still drunk from the night before.

"Okay," he says. "Thirty minutes."

I go back to my room. I lay clothed on my unmade bed with the lights on in silence staring at the ceiling, waiting for the time to change. I'll go back at 7:30.

I'm afraid of something going wrong. If I were to get arrested school would be ruined, friendships ended, my father's heart broken and his trust abolished. If only this secret in its true nature were to be known, how devastating it would be. It is worth it.

• • •

I wake up at 9:30, disoriented, a strong headache, the hot sensation of alcohol in my blood and on my breath, to my black kitty, Daisy, playfully attacking my feet. I am going to stop drinking. I have passed out, so I shoo her away, and she skittishly leaps from my bed to the radiator where she perches and stares out the window at the outside world. I jump out of bed and run to the corner by the McDonald's. He's gone. It's all laughable and totally acceptable. This is my story, and so it goes. . .

• • •

I spend the rest of the day in exile from myself, my duties, both academically, hygienically. I listen to my phone vibrate from my bed across the room. Don't

check it. Daisy is especially lazy and I listen to her sleep all day and try to do the same, punishing myself.

• • •

I come back the next morning, and the dealer's there in the same spot, smoking a cigarette. Still, it's laughable.

He asks where I went yesterday morning. I think my absence has made him more suspicious. Nonetheless, I explain the situation, give him forty dollars, and he goes inside the McDonald's to get the dope.

Another similarly aged black male sits inconspicuously on a bar stool inside behind dark glasses. A mean-looking creature.

Dave (as I learn is his name), the affable one, is a suspiciously affable guy. He insists he is "a cut above the rest." He assures me he won't rob me. He has morals, principles, ethics. But this other dude looks rough. I wonder how much I am paying just so I don't have to deal directly with him, and he directly with me. I'm sure I am getting hustled pretty good. I don't care.

Dave comes back out and slips me a small, folded-up lottery ticket assumingly containing heroin. He tells me that he'll be out there every morning, early, and to come back and see him anytime.

"You'll really like that," he assures me with a warm smile, then adds, "Be careful," before I look around and walk quickly back home to get high.

Just as I walk in the door I can't even make it to my room before having to run to the toilet. It is nerves I think. I've heard of mafia-type safe crackers leaving shits behind at the scene of the crime. Heroin is a natural constipate. Users sometimes will go weeks without a bowel movement. Perhaps this is a fortunate response in anticipation of using such a drug. I won't get backed up.

I repeat the process from last night, this time no placebo ritual. I have the real stuff. I pour half the contents in the spoon with water and mix together an almost soapy, brown concoction. I administer it with no trouble.

It starts in my lungs a few moments after I pull the grey striped shirt from around my arm. It feels and tastes a bit like a huge huff of rubbing alcohol, except deeply pleasurable. It tingles. Then it moves up into my head, traverses down to my feet and swells throughout my whole body. My vision blurs. It is two minutes of void-bliss. The rest of the morning I am fully content. This is wonderful.

• • •

I don't see Dave again for a week. I am satisfied. When I go back to the corner he is there again the same. I talk with him a bit. The victim of his environment, he seems genetically sound, with the awareness or consciousness of any fully evolved hominid. In another life I think he could be an Ethiopian prince or professor at an Ivy League school. But he is dumb, or ignorant rather, and poor. He doesn't work, has two kids who live with his aunt (their mother, I think, smokes crack). He is street-smart and his intentions seem in the right place, only they are strained by poverty. He behaves toward me like a mentor, a kind of father figure. Only he attempts to get me addicted to a drug he can provide me that I cannot provide myself, for a few bucks. And for this I am very grateful. I

can't think of a better, safer way of obtaining such a thing. But he is very poor. He talks to me about going to school. He is smiling and optimistic. He says a silent prayer before eating an Egg McMuffin I buy him that he drenches with a side of syrup. This reminds me of a scene in *To Kill a Mockingbird* when poor Walter Cunningham Jr. drenches *his* breakfast in syrup, and Scout is reprimanded when she embarrasses the poor farmer's son with her shock and disapproval of his hunger-driven decision to richen his meal as much as he can.

And Dave is ignorant. He speaks about politics and can't understand why the U.S. doesn't simply print billions of dollars and distribute it to all its poor citizens like himself: "We have printing presses!" I try and explain this to him. He doesn't understand why we can't just print the shit, becomes embarrassed and insecure, so I change the subject.

"I don't drink," I tell him, and I have not drunk since that morning a week ago when I scored. "And I am the casual heroin user, the exception that proves the rule!" I brag on the corner as we exchange money for drugs again.

I go home to get high, and as soon as I near my front door I have the violent urge to shit. Then, as I prod my outstretched right arm, Daisy playfully starts swatting at my hand. I ignore her as to not jostle the needle out of the vein.

• • •

I get up early in the morning regularly now and shoot dope to very sad music. Not explicitly sad. It is also, I think, incredibly beautiful, subtle, sweet and accepting, as I hope death will be. I played this same music in the hospital room when my mother was dying, and also over and over again back at the house, in between hospital visits. I want this music to be played at my funeral, as well as, if possible, the very moment of my death. It's not that I think: "I may overdose and die right now, doing what I'm doing, so I should have this music playing." No. I just think it is beautiful music to shoot to, the most beautiful. So beautiful, in fact, as I said, I want to die to it.

• • •

As I take the bus to school I look at the people filling the seats. I look at the buildings composing the city. And I think about the pyramids. Human advancement. I am a fully evolved member of this mighty species. And I want none of this human advancement for myself. I have desire deep down in me like the unusable memories from distant ancestors. And I am capable. Capable of being happy. Capable of living life.

It has been three days since I last used, and I can feel something stirring in me, something virile and living. But there is also a deep fear.

I have stopped because it has begun boring me. I think I will stop for good now, be sober just to make things interesting. I want one really good hit though. One last hit. I will save up a little extra money and take one really good hit, for the experience. I have developed a bit of a habit. I am withdrawn from the drug now, achy and tired. But this feeling of being sober is more exciting now than that numbness I welcomed. Once the achiness and exhaustion is over, I will take one more big hit, to feel like the first time. It will cut right through, and just one hit. . . I'll wait a couple more days.

• • •

I wake up on the floor, shirtless, and my right arm is asleep, dead asleep. I guess I “fell out,” as they call it—overdosed. I passed out from the hit, fell out of my desk chair onto my arm and cut off circulation for a few minutes. And I didn’t even feel it, the hit. I don’t even remember doing it. I get up and pace around my room and calm down as blood returns feeling to my arm. Who can I tell? I need to tell somebody. But nobody knows about any of this.

I call Dave. I need someone to check me. Someone who cares. When I tell him he seems confused, doesn’t know what to say or do. Maybe. Or does he even understand?

I hang up and hear that beautiful music playing in the background. It envelops me. The music is coming from inside. I am naked and all the track marks I have developed on my arms are so faint. Are they gone? My skin is smooth, white and unweathered. I am not afraid. Not like before. I try and call my father but I have forgotten his number. I cannot remember anything. It must be shock from the overdose. I want to go to somebody. I want to tell them everything. I need someone. But no one is home.

I start to cry the high-pitched sob of a newborn baby. And through my tears, my bleary vision, I see my dead mother over me, cradling me, hushing me. It is the sweetest sound. And as the want and need to cry subsides, forever a warmth comes over me.

## Inés Velasco

# In Her Own Time

The house was quiet when she went in. Isabelle remembered how much she loved going to that house with her parents when she was still a kid. Forty-five minutes away from Chicago, the “lake house,” as she called it, had been her oasis for almost every weekend of her childhood. It was still the morning, and the intensity of the sun forced her to bat her eyelashes to get accustomed to the change of light as she opened the heavy blue metal door. The handmade clay floor kept the house cool for hot summer days like that one. She walked through the living room, with its fireplace, its blue and yellow cushions that were stacked up on top of the wooden benches, and with its two big Indian silver platters at the center that served as tables. She heard the light buzz of the fridge, and heard the wind blowing out the trees in the garden. She opened the door and walked through the terrace.

The garden was deep and surrounded by short stone fences that allowed seeing other houses and their gardens as well. The lake was still and silent, and reflected in its gray waters the contour of the distant mounts, and the buttery yellow and white of the clouds. Everything was calm and looked almost exactly as she remembered. She slowly recognized each plant in the garden, the lush ferns and wildflowers, the creepers that slowly danced around the wide columns of the terrace, and the water lilies swaying on the lake.

She walked through the grass towards the lake and sat down on the stone fence. The rainy season had been generous this year, which allowed her to touch the water with her left hand as she bent forward. She felt the cold water barely touching her fingertips, and smiled when small ripples of water hit the palm of her extended hand.

She looked back towards the house and saw the old oak tree that she had climbed endlessly, and saw the handmade swing that her father had hung when she was seven years old. The wooden seat hung almost twenty feet from the thick branch that held it. She had been the happiest when her father pushed her high up in the air with his strong hands. She remembered feeling her hair being blown by the wind when she went forward, and then how it got in her face and mouth when she was being pulled back by gravity. She used to laugh and scream, hypnotized by the repeating motion. She used to feel eternal.

Like her father, she was a public accountant, and after she had finished her degree, he had taken her under his wing and they had been working together at his office ever since. She liked her job. Helping people made her happy and the predictability that numbers innately provide was calming. Still, her favorite thing about her job was that she got to see her father everyday. A car accident had tragically taken her mother away when she was twelve, and since then,

Isabelle and her father held on to each other more than in anything and anyone else in the world.

She reminded herself that she had taken the day off from work to go get her memory box from the house. When she had turned ten years old, she felt she had to do something special to remember that time of her life. She kept thinking that her age would never be just one digit ever again. She felt as she had entered into the realm of the adults, and didn't know how satisfied she was with that thought. She had compiled in a shoebox all the things that she cared about at the time, had sealed it with scotch tape and promised she would open it at least age forty, her parent's age at the time. She wasn't there yet; she had only turned thirty-four that year.

Isabelle's best friend, Julia, had asked her if she wanted her to go with to the lake house. Since kindergarten, they had been as close as sisters, sharing everything but blood, especially when Isabelle's mother had passed away. Julia found herself wanting to retreat back to that house with Isabelle, looking to spend as much time as she could with her. She would have given anything to go back in time and relive her time together with her. Isabelle kindly told Julia that she wanted to go alone, but promised she'd share every detail she would find in the box with her.

Isabelle walked back to the house, and went up the spiral staircase. As always, she took a second to look up towards the narrow skylight. The light was amber and warm and she remembered her mother saying how lucky they were because the sun decided to stretch one arm through their roof everyday. At the top of the stairs, she looked again at the family pictures that hung from the wall in various sized frames. She saw a picture of her parents sitting casually at the terrace, another one of her 8th birthday, where she shyly smiled, trying to hide her missing front teeth.

She turned left and opened the door of her bedroom. The blue and white curtains were half open, and she could see the garden and the lake from them. The two beds were made and had the usual floral comforters that she loved. The yellow walls made her comfortable. She went in the bathroom to wash her hands, rolled up the sleeves of her black shirt, and saw herself in the big mirror that lay from the top of the sink to the ceiling. She bent over the sink and looked inside her own eyes, noticing how her pupils dilated and contracted each time she blinked. Her black, wild wavy hair was roughly up in a bun. She noticed the dimple on her left cheek as she smiled. She tilted her head towards her right and saw the scar that ran through her neck. It went up almost to her left ear. It stung when she touched it.

The doctors had found that she had thyroid cancer about two months ago. She had been feeling some pain around her throat and neck for some time now, but she pushed it to the side until she couldn't ignore it anymore. After going several times to Dr. Newman for testing, the news hit her boldly in the face. She went in for surgery days later. She remembered feeling fragile and feeling the insides of her body hurting as she lay down on the bed with her thin sky-blue robe. After she woke up, Dr. Newman told her that they had found other twenty-four harmful nodules and had to remove them. He recognized in Isabelle the same look he had seen in so many patients by then. He knew what

she was thinking, and thought carefully of how to phrase what he too, had said many times before. She looked so young and vibrant in his eyes. He thought she had his daughter's eyes. He took a deep breath. Hoping that it would be true, he said that most likely, the cancer had not spread out, but they needed to do at least two radiations and some more testing to make sure that there wasn't any more cancer in her body.

She looked at the colored suns and moons that she had painted with her mother on the white walls of the bathroom when they built the house. She was around six years old. She saw the crooked eyes and smiles of her blue and purple suns and felt how nostalgia hit her in the stomach.

She went outside of the bathroom and into her closet. She turned on the light, and crouched to find her little military green safe, waiting for her at the corner of the bottom shelf. She took it out and turned the light off. The top of the safe was dusty and made her sneeze. She opened the window and blew the dust off, allowing the morning air to fill her lungs. She sat down at the edge of the bed across from the window, opened the safe using her date of birth as the code. She remembered thinking long and hard of what code to use when, twenty-four years ago. She smiled thinking about how she really thought nobody could ever figure it out. She thought of how wonderful children's innocence is. She forced her keys into the scotch tape to tear it apart, and finally opened the box.

The smell of cardboard and old paper reached her, as she took out the pink round container of the bubble gum she used to love. Still a kid, she had removed the sticker with the brand name, and had used it instead to keep various sized shells that she looked for alongside the lake. She opened it and found three of them. Then, she moved on to a map of the world that her father had given her in her early childhood. They had spent countless hours by the fireplace at night, and at the porch during the day looking at the lake, discussing where they wanted to travel and why. Isabelle would point out countries and cities and her father would describe all the places and tell stories about them. She never knew if he had gone to those places, but she didn't care. Her favorites were Morocco, Thailand, and Bora Bora. She remembered how much fun she had rolling her tongue to that name. Bora Bora. Her father always laughed and pinched her cheeks when she did that. She also found her favorite shoelaces of the sneakers she used until her mom told her she couldn't use them anymore because they were so torn. They were tied up in a knot, and were electric blue with purple glitter. Oscar Wilde's short stories lay silent at the bottom of the box. Her mother used to read them to her before she went to bed. She knew them almost by heart, and remembered the cover as a clear picture in her mind. The pocket-sized edition had a watercolor of a rose and a hummingbird. She opened it, and saw the dried daffodil she had so carefully squished in between the pages. Some of its yellow ink had sunk into the paper. There was a subtle halo of the beauty preserved in it. Her 4th grade picture from school was there, too. She remembered her teacher, Miss Blanchard and how sweet she was. Her hair was short, dyed and blow dried, and from her thick neck hung a pair of glasses with golden frames. She looked proudly at the camera. The kids in the picture were struggling to stay still. Some of the boys had tucked out their shirts, and some others had a little bit of dirt on their faces. The girls looked at the

others, imitating whomever they thought was the prettiest. She was no different. Nevertheless, she could feel their freedom, their carelessness. She wanted to unburden herself and feel that again, and knew that she had to reconcile with her ten-year-old self and re-learn it.

She then picked up a folded striped sheet of paper, which had a heart drawn at each corner of it. It took her a second to realize what it was. Her friend Julia and her had written down the features of their perfect man, and remembered how they had both drawn little pictures of the men they thought they'd love. She relived the excitement she felt as a kid as she saw her handwriting in colored pens. She wanted a man who was tall and fair skinned, a man who had black hair, blue eyes and a kind smile. She wanted a man who loved the same music she liked, who liked to travel around the world and who would go on walks with her. She had never found that man. Isabelle didn't realize she was crying until her father called her phone.

"Hi sweetheart, how are you? Are you at the house already?"

"Hi Dad... yeah, I got here about an hour ago."

"Are you all right? You sound. . ."

"Yes, I'm fine Dad" interrupted Isabelle, now smiling. "Thank you. I should be going back pretty soon, I'll let you know when I'm near the office. Maybe we can grab lunch, or something?"

"Of course, it's on me. Give me a call when you're around, okay?"

"Hey, Dad?"

"Yes, sweetie?"

"I love you."

"I love you too, Isabelle. More than you'll ever know."

She hung up the phone. She gathered herself and went to the bathroom again, this time to wash her face. She was happier than usual to see her father, but knew why.

Her cancer had already begun to spread. The clock was ticking fast for her.

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# Poetry

## Jordan Casty

# Sonnet 23

The moon is only good for hanging hats.  
It's lost whatever magic songs it played  
And now it's just a night-light for the rats.  
A whisper in a monstrously loud parade.  
The sun is just a joker in the sky,  
Sloppily stumbling into a grin.  
Aware of the way it can magnify,  
It shines bright, mocking the state I'm in.  
But she is dancing with them both in time.  
She skips little steps on the ocean blue.  
And I am witness to an awful crime,  
For both her hands are held by someone new.  
So now the sun and moon hold painful keys.  
Since she found him and lost her love for me.

Emmett Ceglia  
**The Pain of Creation**

My baptism had no business with fire  
It was my creation that was in a holocaust  
The womb from which I was expelled  
Rooted me in the unholy churning of the center of the earth  
In conflagration flame, I was compressed  
My body was so tight  
My heartbeat made the first cracks in my skin  
After my ejection, I was cast into the coldest brine  
Sitting at its pitch black silty bottom  
As the emptiness passed without purpose  
I began to move with the current  
I was getting closer to the light but shrinking all the while  
Finally washed up, I settled among the millions of others  
All cast off without a tear  
And like myself, left to wander, always getting smaller  
Deteriorating until our pitted shells and scars became our new skin  
Now I sit in his hands  
Under cancelled sky  
Telling him the story of what it's like to begin

Paige Chaplin  
**first/last**

i can only picture this now:  
your starfish body  
melting into stale bedsheets  
alone.  
when once,  
underneath the same  
collapsible cotton roof,  
we loved each other for the first time.  
i cannot say i remember  
how it felt  
when you heaved yourself inside of me,  
but i will never be able to forget  
the taste of the skin around your neck.  
how  
each time you would thrust,  
i bit into it.  
how  
it crisped  
like an apple.  
and how that just might have been the last time we loved each other.

## Erica Charis

A mother's tongue  
forges sounds into syllables  
blowing gently on the sparks  
of recognition, traveling  
from attentive ears to amazed eyes,  
lighting the fresh kindling  
in an old hearth.  
Moi, Dich, We.  
Embers radiate  
beneath the newer wood  
giving energy, encouragement  
in a glowing cycle  
of wood to ash,  
in a stone fireplace,  
vertebrally straight  
and folklorically structural.

Then a change of wind  
compels the careful closing of dampers  
in Wales and Ireland,  
London and Alsace Lorraine,  
after torches pass solemnly  
to the safekeeping of small hands.  
Cupped fingers protect  
against fierce foreign gales  
and cold Atlantic sprays –  
until, near wicks end,  
the torch-bearer arrives  
in a land full of questions:  
    What are you called?  
    Where are you from?

Shifting names and sliding birth places  
conspire with hushed tongues,  
to hide or extinguish delicate flames.

    We are you.  
    They are not us.  
Transformation. Re-creation.  
Police men and indentured servants;  
Plumbers and factory workers;

Teachers and prolific illiterate Xs;  
Big Catholic families and Protestant work ethics;  
Diaries, ledgers, photos –

Pause. A librarian,  
wrapped in the long wool coat  
her mother wore 40 years ago,  
standing on the banks of the Charles River  
where her mother's mother  
had posed  
in a long wool coat  
her hand resting on the black baby carriage  
of her first-born.

Wer? Qui? Who? Me?  
Standing on Memorial Drive,  
I push my hands  
into the pockets of my rose-colored coat  
and breathe deeply  
exhaling a wordless contented mist,  
as I turn  
taking my first step  
towards home.

## April Gompers

# Stained Glass Sea

The colored air that we breathe  
Ricochets from the waves  
Of a stained glass sea.  
And I know that the ceiling is only concrete,  
But I feel it elevate me,  
Almost making me believe.  
I want so badly to only believe  
In something other than  
This external beauty.  
So, if I believe in you  
Will you believe in me?  
And we can balance on each others' backs  
And find a way back to our feet.  
'Cause I've been lying low so long  
And I envy every tree  
That feels the light and reaches up  
Toward something I can't see.  
I'm grounded here beside all of  
The sinners and the shrubbery  
And as lofty as my intentions may be,  
I don't feel any puppet strings  
Pulling up my angel wings.  
But if I believe in you,  
And you believe in me,  
It won't matter who is watching  
Or waiting for the day we leave.  
We can live until our lives expire  
And have the envy of every tree.  
For we can dance and laugh and sing  
And run until we feel free.  
We can inhale the colored air  
And taste every moment as we breathe.  
And we can drift together in a stained glass sea.

# Raspberry Sorbet

A girl with lips the color  
Of raspberry sorbet  
Takes a drag of her last cigarette,  
Or so she says.  
She dips a small wand  
Into a barrel of soapy liquid,  
Reflecting her face in rainbows,  
And her raspberry lips form a kiss  
As the wand lifts toward her face.  
She blows her smoke into an expanding bubble.  
And it slides on the surface of the wind.  
I am enraptured by the way  
She combines her innocence  
With her sin.  
Creating cloudy spheres of soap  
That float away and explode  
Like a foggy memory.  
They evaporate, and so does she.  
She is vague and misty  
Like a crystal ball,  
She knows the future.  
She knows that her  
Sparkling, perfect circles  
Will fall away to the sky,  
And become part of the atmosphere.  
But in her mind, they're already gone.  
And she has followed them,  
Resigned to non existence,  
She dissolves slowly  
Until all I can see  
Is her silver smoke breaking free  
From its transparent shell.  
And she smiles.  
Vicariously all-knowing,  
With lips the color of raspberry sorbet  
Waiting for the sun  
To help her melt away.

Seph Hamilton  
**Starfish, Sleeping**

In my sea-combed hair  
You blink awake.

With your languid ray  
Push gold behind my ear.

Tell me of the pearls  
I am to wear.

Erin Snyder  
**The Arboretum**

A woman in a burgundy trench coat,  
felted black hat, feather topped,  
harboring a thick Boston accent  
meets you on the Linden Path.  
Because you look her in the eye  
she asks you if you pray, if you feel  
a presence in your heart.

She hasn't been here in a while, calls it  
beautiful, this desolate December nursery  
bare-limbed, all skeleton bark, residual  
sinew-sap, endless blanket of leaves upon  
the ground, a carpet of photosynthesized thought.

This is what Winter is made for, warming yourself  
under the world's collective meditations,  
soaking them up through the sponge of your soles,  
storing them in your fatty reserves,  
the secret hollows of your hips, your  
thighs, the soft pillow of your breast until  
that first day of Spring when your bones thaw.

Admittedly you do not pray, but you  
sense a presence in your heart, you  
send your thoughts into the world and  
hope that destination unknown, carried  
on a directionless breeze, they settle  
on a grove and sink into the soul of  
someone, somewhere, who might  
believe them to be God.

BERKLEE COMMUNITY

# Translation Initiative

Juana Aquerreta  
**La piedad por tus ojos**

No conocí la piedad por tus ojos  
mientras los rayas, hieren a su antojo  
mientras los rayas verde, yo me opongo  
porque en sus marcas no existe el retorno.

Porque en ellos, sin ver, me transformo  
no puedo ser otra cosa  
y lloro,  
desde el principio fue del mismo modo,  
no conocí la piedad por tus ojos.

Me hablaron de soledad y del monte,  
-a la distancia yo ví el horizonte-  
me hablaron de la quema del rastrojo,  
no conocí la piedad por tus ojos.

# Mercy in Your Eyes

*translated from the Spanish by Juana Aquerreta & Deborah Bennett*

I never knew mercy beneath your gaze.  
Your eyes mark me, crush desire  
in the green light, I oppose myself  
they leave a trace, a mark of no return.

Under your gaze, I am transformed.  
What else could I be?  
I cry,  
from the beginning it was always this way,  
I never knew mercy beneath your gaze.

They spoke to me of solitude, of the dry hills  
—in the distance I saw the horizon—  
they spoke to me of the wildfire,  
I never knew mercy beneath your gaze.

## Naongsunsa (1262-1342)

## 청산은 나를보고

청산은 나를보고 말없이 살라하고  
창공은 나를보고 티없이 살라하네  
욕심도 벗어놓고 성냄도 벗어놓고  
바람같이 구름같이 살다가 가라하네

세월은 나를보고 덧없다 하지않고  
우주는 나를보고 곳없다 하지않네  
번뇌도 벗어놓고 욕심도 벗어놓고  
강같이 구름같이 말없이 가라하네

# The Mountains Speak

*translated from the Korean by Sunhwa Kim & Heemo Yang*

The mountains say, be silent  
The sky says, be pure.  
Put away greed and anger  
Be, then vanish like clouds, the wind.

The years will never say I wasted my days.  
The universe says there is a place for me.  
I must cast off anguish, cast off greed  
And leave, wordless as clouds, silent as the river.

## Author Unknown

# Calon Arang

*“Calon Arang” is a folk tale written in the 12th century. It was originally written on a palm leaf manuscript in Old Balinese scripture (aksara Bali Kuna) by an unknown author. Although written in Old Balinese scripture, the language used is Kawi or Old Javanese (Jawa Kuna). The story of “Calon Arang” is a sacred text for Balinese Hindus, and thus people claim that “Calon Arang” is Balinese.*

Pada suatu masa di Kerajaan Daha yang dipimpin oleh raja Erlangga, hidup seorang janda yang sangat bengis. Ia bernama Calon Arang. Ia tinggal di desa Girah. Calon Arang adalah seorang penganut sebuah aliran hitam, yakni kepercayaan sesat yang selalu mengumbar kejahatan memakai ilmu gaib. Ia mempunyai seorang putri bernama Ratna Manggali. Karena puterinya telah cukup dewasa dan Calon Arang tidak ingin Ratna Manggali tidak mendapatkan jodoh, maka ia memaksa beberapa pemuda yang tampan dan kaya untuk menjadi menantunya. Karena sifatnya yang bengis, Calon Arang tidak disukai oleh penduduk Girah. Tak seorang pemuda pun yang mau memperistri Ratna Manggali. Hal ini membuat marah Calon Arang. Ia berniat membuat resah warga desa Girah.

“Kerahkan anak buahmu! Cari seorang anak gadis hari ini juga! Sebelum matahari tenggelam anak gadis itu harus dibawa ke candi Durga!” perintah Calon Arang kepada Krakah, seorang anak buahnya. Krakah segera mengerahkan cantrik-cantrik Calon Arang untuk mencari seorang anak gadis. Suatu pekerjaan yang tidak terlalu sulit bagi para cantrik Calon Arang.

Sebelum matahari terbit, anak gadis yang malang itu sudah berada di Candi Durga. Ia meronta-ronta ketakutan. “Lepaskan aku! Lepaskan aku!” teriaknya. Lama kelamaan anak gadis itu pun lelah dan jatuh pingsan. Ia kemudian di baringkan di altar persembahan. Tepat tengah malam yang gelap gulita, Calon Arang mengorbankan anak gadis itu untuk dipersembahkan kepada Betari Durga, dewi angkara murka.

Kutukan Calon Arang menjadi kenyataan. “Banjir! Banjir!” teriak penduduk Girah yang diterjang aliran sungai Brantas. Siapapun yang terkena percikan air sungai Brantas pasti akan menderita sakit dan menemui ajalnya. “He, he... siapa yang berani melawan Calon Arang? Calon Arang tak terkalahkan!” demikian Calon Arang menantang dengan sombongnya. Akibat ulah Calon Arang itu, rakyat semakin menderita. Korban semakin banyak. Pagi sakit, sore meninggal. Tidak ada obat yang dapat menanggulangi wabah penyakit aneh itu.

“Apa yang menyebabkan rakyatku di desa Girah mengalami wabah dan bencana?” Tanya Prabu Erlangga kepada Paman Patih. Setelah mendengar laporan Paman Patih tentang ulah Calon Arang, Prabu Erlangga marah besar.

Genderang perang pun segera ditabuh. Maha Patih kerajaan Daha segera menghimpun prajurit pilihan. Mereka segera berangkat ke desa Girah untuk menangkap Calon Arang. Rakyat sangat gembira mendengar bahwa Calon Arang akan ditangkap. Para prajurit menjadi bangga dan merasa tugas suci itu akan berhasil berkat doa restu seluruh rakyat.

Prajurit kerajaan Daha sampai di desa kediaman Calon Arang. Belum sempat melepaskan lelah dari perjalanan jauh, para prajurit dikejutkan oleh ledakan-ledakan menggelegar di antara mereka. Tidak sedikit prajurit Daha yang tiba-tiba menggelepar di tanah, tanpa sebab yang pasti.

Korban dari prajurit Daha terus berjatuhan. Musuh mereka mampu merobohkan lawannya dari jarak jauh, walaupun tanpa senjata. Kekalahan prajurit Daha membuat para cantrik, murid Calon Arang bertambah ganas. “Serang! Serang terus!” seru para cantrik. Pasukan Daha porak poranda dan lari pontang-panting menyelamatkan diri. Prabu Erlangga terus mencari cara untuk mengalahkan Calon Arang. Untuk mengalahkan Calon Arang, kita harus menggunakan kasih sayang”, kata Empu Baradah dalam musyawarah kerajaan. “Kekesalan Calon Arang disebabkan belum ada seorang pun yang bersedia menikahi puteri tunggalnya.”

Empu Baradah meminta Empu Bahula agar dapat membantu dengan tulus untuk mengalahkan Calon Arang. Empu Bahula yang masih lajang diminta bersedia memperistri Ratna Manggali. Dijelaskan, bahwa dengan memperistri Ratna Manggali, Empu Bahula dapat sekaligus memperdalam dan menyempurnakan ilmunya.

Akhirnya rombongan Empu Bahula berangkat ke desa Girah untuk meminang Ratna Manggali. “He he...aku sangat senang mempunyai menantu seorang Empu yang rupawan.” Calon Arang terkekeh gembira. Maka, diadakanlah pesta pernikahan besar-besaran selama tujuh hari tujuh malam. Pesta pora yang berlangsung itu sangat menyenangkan hati Calon Arang. Ratna Manggali dan Empu Bahula juga sangat bahagia. Mereka saling mencintai dan mengasihi. Pesta pernikahan telah berlalu, tetapi suasana gembira masih meliputi desa Girah. Empu Bahula memanfaatkan saat tersebut untuk melaksanakan tugasnya.

Di suatu hari, Empu Bahula bertanya kepada istrinya, “Dinda Manggali, apa yang menyebabkan Nyai Calon Arang begitu sakti?” Ratna Manggali menjelaskan bahwa kesaktian Nyai Calon Arang terletak pada kitab sihir. Melalui buku itu, ia dapat memanggil Betari Durga. Kitab sihir itu tidak bisa lepas dari tangan Calon Arang, bahkan saat tidur, kitab sihir itu digunakan sebagai alas kepalanya.

Empu Bahula segera mengatur siasat untuk mencuri kitab sihir. Tepat tengah malam, Empu Bahula menyelip memasuki tempat peraduan Calon Arang. Rupanya Calon Arang tidur terlalu lelap, karena kelelahan setelah selama tujuh hari tujuh malam mengumbar kegembiraannya. Empu Bahula berhasil mencuri kitab sihir Calon Arang dan langsung diserahkan ke Empu Baradah. Setelah itu, Empu Bahula dan istrinya segera mengungsi.

Calon Arang sangat marah ketika mengetahui kitab sihirnya sudah tidak ada lagi, ia bagaikan seekor badak yang membabi buta. Sementara itu, Empu Baradah mempelajari Kitab sihir dengan tekun. Setelah siap, Empu Baradah

menantang Calon Arang. Sewaktu menghadapi Empu Baradah, kedua belah telapak tangan Calon Arang menyemburkan jilatan api, begitu juga kedua matanya. Empu Baradah menghadapinya dengan tenang. Ia segera membaca sebuah mantra untuk mengembalikan jilatan dan semburan api ke tubuh Calon Arang. Karena kitab sihir sudah tidak ada padanya, tubuh Calon Arang pun hancur menjadi abu dan tertiuap kencang menuju ke Laut Selatan. Sejak itu, desa Girah menjadi aman tenteram seperti sediakala.

# Calon Arang

*translated from the Indonesian by Mandy Kowara*

Once upon a time, in the village of Girah, found in the Daha Kingdom, and ruled by King Erlangga, there lived a very cruel widow by the name of Calon Arang, a follower of the dark arts. When her daughter, Ratna Manggali, came of age, Calon Arang tried to find a handsome and rich man to become her son-in-law. However, because of her cruel nature, none of the villagers would offer up a son. Calon Arang became enraged and vowed to seek revenge against the village.

Calon Arang ordered her henchman Krakah to mobilize her staff: “Find me a young girl immediately! Before the sun sets, she must be brought to Candi<sup>1</sup> Durga, the sacred temple of our goddess of war!” He immediately mobilized his men to find a young girl, an easy enough task.

Before the sun rose, a poor young girl found herself at the entrance to Candi Durga. She flailed about in fear. “Let me go! Let me go!” she screamed. As the day passed, she grew tired and eventually fainted. She was then laid on the altar. At the stroke of midnight, Calon Arang sacrificed the girl in the name of Betari Durga, a wrathful and fierce goddess.

With this sacrifice, Betari Durga granted Calon Arang the powers to curse the village. A moment later, a villager shouted, “Flood! It’s a flood!” as the waters of the Brantas River swept him away. Every person in the path of the river’s waters fell ill and died. Calon Arang cackled, “Who dares to challenge me? I am all-powerful!” Slowly, the number of victims increased: people would fall sick in the morning and die by the evening. There was no cure for this strange sickness.

The king, Prabu<sup>2</sup> Erlangga, implored his prime minister, “What is causing the disaster that plagues my people?” Maha Patih<sup>3</sup> gave a detailed report of Calon Arang’s wrongdoings, and Prabu Erlangga became furious.

The drums of war could soon be heard. Maha Patih hastily selected the best soldiers for the battle. Soon after, they departed for Daha Village to capture Calon Arang. The people were very glad to hear that Calon Arang would be arrested. The soldiers were honored to take on this sacred mission, confident of its success due to the prayers of the people.

When the soldiers arrived at Calon Arang’s village, they didn’t even have time to rest from the long journey before they were surprised by thundering explosions all around. Mysteriously, many of the soldiers flailed about on the ground.

Soldiers continued to fall, as their unseen enemies toppled them from afar, without using a single weapon. The soldiers’ defeat emboldened Calon Arang’s henchmen. “Attack! Attack! Don’t let up!” they shouted. The king’s soldiers ran

1 A candi is a Hindu place of prayer. Betari Durga is the name of a Hindu warrior goddess, wife of Shiva.

2 Prabu, meaning “master,” is a title used for King Erlangga.

3 A patih is the equivalent of a prime minister. Maha Patih means “great minister.”

helter-skelter as they attempted to save themselves. Prabu Erlangga continued to search for a way to defeat Calon Arang. He gathered his spiritual advisers, and the most senior among them, Empu<sup>4</sup> Baradah, counselled him: “To defeat her, we must use compassion. Calon Arang is only angry because no one would marry her only daughter.”

Empu Baradah turned to his disciple, Empu Bahula, for help in defeating Calon Arang. Empu Bahula, who was still unmarried, was asked to take Ratna Manggali as his wife. By marrying Ratna Manggali, Empu Bahula’s might also deepen and perfect his mystical powers.

Finally, Empu Bahula’s group departed for Girah Village to propose to Ratna Manggali. “I’m delighted to welcome such a handsome Empu as a son-in-law,” Calon Arang said while chortling. Thus, a large wedding ceremony was held for seven days and seven nights, which pleased Calon Arang greatly. Ratna Manggali and Empu Bahula were also very happy, and grew to love and care for each other. When the wedding finally ended, the joyful atmosphere surrounding Girah Village did not. Empu Bahula used this moment to take advantage of his position as the son-in-law of a powerful sorceress.

One day, Empu Bahula asked his wife, “Dinda<sup>5</sup> Manggali, what causes Nyai<sup>6</sup> Calon Arang to have such great powers?” Ratna Manggali explained that Calon Arang’s powers came from the Kitab, her magic book. Through the Kitab, she was able to summon the goddess Betari Durga. Calon Arang’s book could never be pried from her hands. She even used it as her pillow while she slept.

Empu Bahula quickly arranged a plan to steal the Kitab. Later that night, Empu Bahula slipped into Calon Arang’s chambers. Calon Arang was in a deep sleep, weary from the party. Empu Bahula managed to steal the Kitab and handed it over to Empu Baradah. Afterwards, Empu Bahula and his wife fled.

Calon Arang was extremely angry when she found out that the Kitab was no longer in her possession. Like a mad rhinoceros, she blindly charged about. Meanwhile, Empu Baradah studied the Kitab diligently. When he was ready, he challenged Calon Arang to a duel. When Calon Arang faced him, the palms of her hands and her eyes emitted bursts of fire. Empu Baradah faced her calmly, and uttered a mantra that caused the fires to ricochet and sear Calon Arang’s body. Because the Kitab was no longer hers, Calon Arang disintegrated into dust and was blown towards the South Sea<sup>7</sup> by a strong wind. Thereafter, Girah Village returned to peaceful days.

4 An empu (or mpu) is a title meaning “sir,” which also indicates a person with powerful mystical skill.

5 Dinda is an affectionate title used to address a younger sister, and it is also used to address a (female) beloved.

6 Nyai is a title used for older women. During the colonial Dutch era, it was also used to refer to mistresses.

7 The South Sea is located to the south of Java, and it is the subject of many mystical legends.

Yohan Joo

## 빛소리 / 주요한

비가 옵니다  
밤은 고요히 깃을 벌리고  
비는 뜰 위에 속삭입니다.

몰래 지껄이는 병아리같이.  
이지러진 달이 실낱 같고  
별에서도 봄이 흐를 듯이  
따뜻한 바람이 불더니,

오늘은 이 어둔 밤을 비가 옵니다.  
비가 옵니다.  
다정한 손님같이 비가 옵니다.  
창을 열고 맞으려 하여도

보이지 않게 속삭이며 비가 옵니다.  
비가 옵니다.  
뜰 위에, 창 밖에, 지붕에

남모를 기쁜 소식을  
나의 가슴에 전하는 비가 옵니다.

# The Rain

*translated from the Korean by Jeongmin Lee & Nick Cazares*

The night extends its wings silently  
The rain whispers to the garden  
Secretly, like a coo-ing dove.

The waning moon is a sliver  
And Spring seeps into the stars.  
A warm wind breathes and then  
It's raining in the dark night of day.

It rains down on us, a welcome soul.  
An invisible guest.  
The rain falls on me through the open window.

It's raining in the garden,  
Outside the window, and on the roof.  
The rain speaks to my heart, sharing good news with me alone.

## Han Feizi (280-233 BC)

### 守株待兔

*These “cultural gems” from ancient Chinese literature were chosen by Yiru to leave the reader with something to ponder. Both pose moral questions that are more than just rhetorical.*

这个故事发生在大约2000年前的宋国时期, 有个农夫, 生活很窘迫, 因为他总想碰到送上门来的意外之财。

一天, 他正在田间劳作, 突然从草丛里窜出来一只慌慌张张的兔子, 一头撞在农夫旁边的树上, 死了。

农夫很吃惊!

他认为这是上天送给他的晚餐, 当天晚上, 他美美的饱餐了一顿。

从此, 农夫不再种地。每天坐在树下,

等着天降好运。

一天, 两天, 三天… …

直到农夫活活饿死, 他也没再看到一只兔子。

# At the Foot of the Stump

*translated from the Chinese by Yiru Wang & Madison Hockaday*

Once upon a time, more than 2,000 years ago, there was a lazy farmer who was quite poor.

One day, he was working in the field when out of nowhere a hare darted through the grass, ran into a tree, and died on the spot.

The farmer was shocked!

He thought this must be a gift from heaven. That day, he feasted on the rabbit, a meal such as he had never had before.

From that day forward, the farmer no longer concerned himself with work. He sat at the foot of the tree every day, waiting for a hare to appear.

He waited one day, two days, three days...until he starved to death, and never did a rabbit appear beneath that tree again.

## Yiru Wang

# 七步诗

*“A Poem of Seven Steps” by Cao Zhi is a well-known poem in the Chinese cannon. Yiru Wang wrote a preface to the poem providing historical and contextual information for Western readers.*

三国时期，魏国曹操去世后，他的长子曹丕即位，而曹丕的弟弟曹植被封为丞相。

曹植是曹操的小儿子，从小就才华出众，很受到父亲的疼爱。曹操死后，因为长子继位的关系，他的哥哥曹丕当上了魏国的皇帝。曹丕是一个忌妒心很重的人，他担心弟弟会威胁自己的皇位，就想害死他。

有一天，曹丕叫曹植到面前来，要曹植在七步之内作出一首诗，以证明他写诗的才华。如果他写不出，就等于是在欺骗皇上，要把他处死。

曹植知道哥哥存心要害死他，又伤心又愤怒。他强忍着心中的悲痛，努力地想着想着……果然，他就在七步之内作了一首诗，当场念出来这首诗，

# Poem of Seven Steps: Translators' Preface

*translated from the Chinese by Madison Hockaday*

After King Cao Cao, ruler of the Wei Dynasty during the Three Kings Period in China, passed away, his eldest son Cao Pi ascended to the throne, and Cao Pi's younger brother, Cao Zhi, became the Prime Minister.

Although Cao Zhi was not eligible to be king due to the laws of inheritance, he had always been cherished by his father. He was extremely bright and clearly his father's favorite son. Cao Pi was jealous of his younger brother and saw him as a threat to his rule. He decided he must kill him to protect the throne.

One day, Cao Pi summoned Cao Zhi to the palace. Cao Pi said to his younger brother, "I challenge you to come up with a poem by the time you have taken seven more steps. If you cannot, I will take it as a sign of your intent to overthrow me, an offense punishable by death."

Cao Zhi knew this was just an excuse to have him killed, which made him sad and angry. He buried his sorrow in his heart, and set his mind to the task. Miraculously, a poem came to him by the last step and he recited it on the spot. This is the poem composed by Cao Zhi:

## Cao Zhi (192-232 BCE)

### 七步诗

煮豆燃豆其，  
豆在釜中泣：  
本是同根生，  
相煎何太急？

曹丕听了以后潸然泪下，无法狠下心来对弟弟下毒手，而后免曹植一死。

# Poem of Seven Steps

*translated from the Chinese by Yiru Wang & Madison Hockaday*

Beans boiled over a fire, fueled by beanstalks,

A sad voice cried out from the pot,  
“We sprang from the same root,

Why should you kill me with such white hot anger?”

After hearing his brother’s poem, tears trickled down Cao Pi’s cheeks and he did not have the heart to kill him. Thus, Cao Zhi escaped death.

Yu Lou (1125-1210 BCE)

卜算子 咏梅

驿外断桥边  
寂寞开无主  
已是黄昏独自愁  
更着风和雨

无意苦争春  
一任群芳妒  
零落成泥碾作尘  
只有香如故

# In Praise of the Plum Blossom

*translated from the Chinese by Jihao Zhang & Madison Hockaday*

*“In Praise of the Plum Blossom” by Lu You is based on a Chinese form called the Bu Suan Zi. This form contains either 44 or 89 words and is sung with a specific rhythm based on the Chinese system of tonal changes. While it is essentially impossible to recreate the tonal pattern, Madison tried to mimic the rhyme scheme to gesture toward the musicality of the original.*

*The poem is an ode to the plum blossom, which blooms in winter and does not compete with other flowers. The Chinese see this as a symbol of optimism and courage, and use the image when praising great individuals. The author, Lu You, was a minister during the Song Dynasty. When the ruling class came under attack and fellow ministers wanted to surrender, Lu You wrote this poem as a metaphor for his belief that the ministers should never surrender.*

Next to a broken bridge  
At the outer reaches of town  
A plum blossom blooms  
Alone without a sound

Blooming in isolation  
The shadows grow long  
Along come the rain and winds  
To try and dampen its song.

Other flowers look on in envy  
Yet the plum blossom has no desire  
to show up the other flowers  
or get bogged down in the mire.

Even if it withers away to dust  
The sweet perfume will never be crushed.

BERKLEE COMMUNITY

# Creative Nonfiction

## Nicholas Salvador

# Eating Together

“Nikko! Get the table ready, the food is done!”

Piping hot bowls filled with *bakareta*, a beef stew with tomato sauce, carrots, and potatoes, and *pancit*, a noodle dish. My dad serves all of us. My family sits down at the table and we are shouting hallelujahs because of the good food we are about to eat. “Alana, Nikko, Deby, come on eat some more,” my parents would insist. My dad makes a face with his eyebrows raised, always starting up a conversation.

“Ha, see Nikko, you’re not eating anything like this in Boston. You miss this food, right?” I mumble with my mouth full, “Yup,” and we all laugh and smile. And man, does that hit the spot. To be eating great food with your family. That hits the spot more than the beef and rice hits the pit of my stomach. “It’s that experience, man,” I would say in my head, like the movie scene of Frodo happily drinking with the other hobbits at the Shire bar.

Oh man, but there is a bad part about eating with your family. And that would be *the questions*. Especially the questions asked by parents. Especially the repetitive questions asked by my dad, with the huge lion voice that is installed in every male of the Salvador family.

“Nikko...so what is your major now in school? Nikko. . .what are the graduate schools you want to apply to? Nikko, why do you and your group of friends only play jazz? Play something else too.”

“I just want to eat right now,” I say. “I don’t want to answer all these questions like it’s some interview.”

Another subject comes to save the dinner experience. Sometimes my dad and mom share stories of what happened at work the other day, or maybe a funny story of their past or when me and my sister were little kids, or maybe a story of my baby niece saying something funny.

“Deby, remember the time when you and me first arrived here in America and you met your dad? You said in Tagalog, ‘I don’t like you!’”

“So funny! And when Alana went up to me, stuck her finger up my nose, and said ‘smelly.’” Laughter would consume us naturally.

There was one day, however, where my mom and sister got into a serious fight right before we all sat down to eat.

“We’re working so hard to support you and Alana! Just to bring you to school and buy you things you need! You have this ungrateful attitude!”

“No, I don’t! You just don’t understand anything and take everything the wrong way!”

Here we go again. I don’t remember the reason why they fought, but they always disagree about a lot of things. My baby niece was actually quiet and not

shouting and singing Disney tunes like she usually does 24/7, and she had this sad face that I'd never seen before. Her playful attitude was gone in a second. Everything was awkward when they were done, and all I remember was my dad telling them to stop and for me to change the plates and glasses because it was just "not good" to eat off something that has just experienced a bad event.

"Okay. . . okay. . . no more. Stop now, we can't do this in front of the table of food. It's bad karma and bad luck. Nikko, change the plates, spoons, glasses, and the servings. It has to be brand new."

"Why?"

"Because it's bad luck. The food that brings us together just experienced a negative event in our family. We cannot continue after that event; we have to restart it with a new event, with all of us eating together."

I thought about that after we ate in silence. The silence was unbearable, and my dad was trying to start a conversation at the dinner table while my mom was in her room silent and angry. But then I thought about my whole family, including my grandma, grandpa, uncles, aunties, cousins, nieces, and nephews. When there's a big party we eat so much and drink so much alcohol and laugh the whole night away. Everyone has some sort of cholesterol or high blood pressure problem, yet when we eat as a family, there is this happiness in the air like nothing bad will happen. Maybe it's a Filipino thing. There's this fish dish my dad makes all the time when we eat, but me, my mom, and my sister don't like it at all since it smells strong. Yet my dad loves it. I asked one time, "Dad, you made this really good beef spare rib stew, but you're only eating the fish you make every time."

"Well *balong*, your Nanang cooked this for me and your uncles when we were young and poor, and we were happy eating it together," he said. "And since I make so many types of food as a chef, I always miss the things that I ate as a child in Sinait."

What I learned from my dad is that eating food is more than just filling a stomach; it is a happy, satisfying experience. He told me that even though the food he makes is great, it tastes a million times better when you eat with the people you love. Because when you share food you also share stories, and learn even more about your family. Because he told me these things, I take breakfast, lunch, and dinner seriously, especially with family, friends, or other people that may be with you at the moment.

## Cordelia Vizcaino Leal

# Chasing Song

I open my eyes to blinding powder, white light. A blurry view after what feels like an eternity of darkness. I blink hard to melt the snowflakes stuck in my weary eyes, and adjust my vision. Fingers frozen, throat dry, lungs heavy, and a hopeless effort to stay afloat and keep my heart pumping.

I look down and find myself sitting on my grandfather's polished demi-grand piano. The one he promises every Christmas to pass down to me as a family heirloom. I gently stroke its little cracks and imperfections that tell stories of endless lifetimes we've spent together practicing. I lift my bewildered stare from my hands to notice the white pine forest surrounding my maple-wood friend and me. It all seems strangely familiar. Not quite like *déjà vu*, but I know I've been here before—in this frozen corner of my subconscious.

Without warning, my hands start to play. My fingers move out of my control. They echo that colorful tune, and it colors the white. A bright melodic rainbow seeps from the soundboard and violently bursts the lid open. I am not startled, but in awe as I am slowly enwrapped in floating vibrant auroras that lift and spiral up to the white sky. Fired with excitement, I gradually start playing faster and faster, and the nuances grow from *mezzo forte* to *forte* to *fortissimo*. I feel my hands getting sore, but there's nothing I can do to stop playing. It becomes a race against the dark frostbite I now see oozing through my veins. The auroras effervesce and turn dark. My foot violently presses down the pedal, and I beg it to stop. Like a child ignoring his mother, it becomes more eager to stomp, and I notice the ice floor start to pop. I try to stand up, but feel heavier than a 200-pound anvil glued to the seat. I curse having had that last piece of pumpkin pie at grandpa's house on Thanksgiving.

Piano and me slowly sink with the melting snow quicksand, and I pray that at least the piano wood floats. My heart races, but for the life of me, I still can't stop playing. Finally, I give in and rest my forehead on the piano's smooth top to await my death. Frozen glacier water rushes from the cracks and overpowers the piano legs, my feet, my waist, and soon rises to my shoulders. I'm surprised to feel my hands fight to keep playing as water dances between my fingers. I hold my breath and prepare for the worst. Right when I'm about to be swirled into the liquid blue ice, a desperate gasp of air pulls me upright with eyes and mouth wide open, and I'm instantly transported from the dream cosmos to the foot of my dry bed.

"That song again?" my brother asks opening the door to my room.

"Yep," I answer as I slowly regain my composure, and shake my head as though I still have water in my ears. I let out a sigh of dismay.

And so it was, for months and months. I was thirteen, and I had been having the same dream almost every night. As soon as I was falling asleep, and the

right side of my brain, the creative side, became more aware, I started hearing this enigmatic tune. When I'd wake up, I could never remember the song that had lured me to my death. Not even a thread of the melody, a syllable of the lyrics, or a single tension in the chords. Up until that moment in my life, all I had written were fragments: little melodies, song seeds, and lyric phrases. But I never seemed to link all the pieces of the puzzle. Now, my sneaky little subconscious had finished the puzzle for me. The problem was, it was *trapped* in there. What use is a song if it can't even be shared with oneself? A blessing and a curse.

So I made a plan, and I took it upon myself to solve the mystery of the soundless song. In this dream lay my first complete song, and I was determined to rescue it.

I started studying all about lucid dreaming, and how if you train yourself to become aware that you're dreaming within a dream, you can control it.

It actually takes a lot more mental preparation and control than I thought. I often fell into sleep paralysis instead, which brought me the most terrifying nightmare experiences I've ever had. But at this point nothing was more terrifying to me than never becoming a songwriter.

It took me about a year after the first time I was able to dream lucidly. Something happened I had never expected: I finally tapped into the white forest dream. I felt the cold, my breath, the frostbite in my fingers, and even the smell of the green pines. I was finally able to prevent the ice floor from breaking. I kept playing lightly and waited for the warm rainbow auroras. As soon as they manifested, I was more drawn to them than ever, and I couldn't help but put my hand to them. Like a wind current flowing upward, they fiercely lifted me up through the white sky, and I woke in my dark room.

With trembling hands, and shaky breath I picked up my phone and recorded the first verse of the song in a voice note. I couldn't believe it. I had succeeded, but I wanted more. I went back to sleep to chase the chorus, and it appeared right where I had left off. I had finally rescued my first song. A song that would later grant me first prize in two songwriting contests, and admission to Berklee College of Music.

The adventure didn't end that night. After a few weeks, I could fly across the forest where I found, not one, but several more trapped songs. Songs I have now recorded and performed, and that to this day, I am grateful to have chased and rescued. I know it sounds silly and dramatic, but all musicians have their own unique way to write tunes. I went flying and looking for them in my dreams when I was thirteen. And I've been chasing songs ever since.

BERKLEE COMMUNITY

# Interview

# Leah Hinton

## Singer-songwriter Moana Avvenenti

*Interviewer: Who are some Influences?*

Moana A.: I've had a lot of musical influences, of course. I am a big Michael Jackson fan. I just love the arrangements of his songs. They are so well done. You can distinctively sing any part of any instrument of any of his songs, and people will know what song you are singing! That's really rare. I think we have to thank Quincy Jones for that. What brilliant writing. Other singers I have been inspired by are Erykah Badu, Etta James, Aretha Franklin, Esperanza Spalding, KT Tunstall, Amy Winehouse, etc. And if I am honest, I have to admit that the Spice Girls and Avril Lavigne were a big influence at some point in my life, too. Style-wise, I've had influences from Caribbean artists that were big for carnivals, like Destra Garcia for soca, or Beenie Man for Dancehall.

*Interviewer: How do you feel about the way technology has changed the music industry? Recording, Kickstarter, Indiegogo...?*

Moana A.: There are some good and bad things. I feel like we are still in the transition phase, trying to figure it out. I understand the frustration of artists not selling as many physical copies, and I certainly feel it myself as well. But at the same time, I really enjoy being able to type in the name of a song or even just a line from the lyrics and being able to listen to it in seconds. We still need to find a way to make it more lucrative and effective for the artists, but I feel like Spotify and YouTube advertisements are a step in the right direction. We will get there...

As far as Indiegogo and such fundraising platforms are concerned, I obviously think they offer a great alternative for our new trend of Indie artists. You don't get all the support that a label would give, but you can keep your independence and your artistic freedom, which is amazing! I also find it interesting that they reversed the stress: with the advance of a label, you take a big risk when you record without the assurance that the project will make enough money to pay back what the label invested. Whereas with those online campaigns, you sell your project before you make it; that's just genius! You are nervous for the duration of your campaign, but once you reach the goal, you can go to the studio stress-free. You've already sold CDs so whatever happens; and on top of that, all the support and encouragement you get during the campaign motivates and inspires you even more. It's a triple win.

*Interviewer: How was your experience with Indiegogo?*

Moana A.: Overall, It was great for the simple fact that I have reached my goal! I personally think that there are still some flaws in the system and if I could go back, there are a few things I would do differently. But I don't have time to think about what can't be undone: I have an album to make!

*Interviewer: When is the album planned for release? What will be on the album? Styles, stories, content?*

Moana A.: I originally had 13 songs for the album. But I cut one of them out. I might replace it with a strange vocal arrangement that I did, but I want to hear the other songs first before making a decision. It's always hard for me to describe my general "style" because I have a lot of fun writing each song in a different style. But I think the common thread is pop-rock with an occasional Caribbean influence. At the same time, there will be a blues, a hip-hop and a neo soul song on there too, but I feel like they are all still somewhat pop-rock-Caribbean tainted, if that makes any sense. We started recording the rhythm section and I am working with a producer on two electronic tracks. For the electronic tracks, we had a lot of fun. I sequenced a demo of one of my songs and I brought it to this producer that makes really cool tracks. I also brought him another one where I was singing every single instrument line. He made his own version of the 2 songs, but he liked the idea of singing the instruments, so we decided to experiment with that. So he played the tracks and made me improvise. I was singing "ooh's" and "ah's," Instrument lines, strange percussion sounds, etc. It felt so good and I felt really creative! He "robotized" some of the sounds I sang too. The mix of the vocal stuff with the very electronic instruments is very interesting! I love it. Sometimes, it has kind of an Imogen Heap style to it, and then it flips to dubstep, and then pop. I'm excited to hear the final results! As far as the "real instruments" tracks, I am currently recording the overdubs. I'm adding steel pan (which is very Caribbean), and strings in the same tracks. So here again, the mix of the styles should be original. It's all coming together but it takes time because I want to use so many instruments: drums, bass, electric and acoustic guitars, percussion, piano, organ, synth, string sections, steel pan, etc. I want to be involved in everything, so I'm busy writing string parts, working on the graphic and album art, and supervising every single editing and overdub session. It's a tremendous amount of work, but it's a job that I love. I can't wait for you to hear the end result! Keep an ear out for the release in late spring!

*Interviewer: How did you get into music?*

Moana A.: My father is a musician, so I grew up going to his concerts all the time. Every few years, he would experiment with a new style, and since rehearsals were usually at my house, I got to be exposed to a lot of genres. There was always music in my house; in fact, I remember complaining a few Sunday mornings for being wakened up by loud bass at 7 a.m. I always sang. It felt natural. My mom always tells me that I was singing before I was speaking, and that I would sing so loud in my stroller that tourists would stop and listen to me. So I guess I was an early performer! My dad and I formed a band when I was 17 and we started performing regularly around the island. I don't know when I started writing

songs. I feel like I've always done it. Since I was a kid, I've been recording ideas on old cassettes, and hiding lyrics in a locked box, wearing the key to the lock as a necklace. I was really shy with my compositions until very recently. Actually, I still am, but I'm forcing myself to get over it. It's just so personal. I express a lot of things in my songs, and I feel like I'm giving people my open heart with my songs, which is terrifying!

*Interviewer: What are your plans for the future?*

Moana A.: I've spent a lot of time being a GB band singer, and now I want to try and do more with my own music. This album is the first step to a long journey as an original artist.

[www.moanaa.com](http://www.moanaa.com)

BERKLEE COMMUNITY

# Film Studies

Zev Burrows

# Star Wars Episode VII: Return of the Empire or Revenge of the Consumer?

It's been almost a year and a half now since multi-billionaire and film executive George Lucas sold his production company, Lucasfilm Ltd., to the Walt Disney Company for an estimated \$4.06 billion, as the 69 year-old executive approaches what seems to be his retirement. His last involvement in any sort of film was as executive producer on the 2012 box-office bomb *Red Tails*. He has claimed that he wants to turn away from big-budget blockbuster filmmaking and move away from the business.

Of course, upon Disney's purchase of the company behind the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* franchises, news of production on three sequels to the original *Star Wars* trilogy was almost immediately revealed. At first, I noticed that most of the responses were entirely negative, due to the reception of the *Star Wars* prequels released between 1999 and 2005 and due to Disney's taking over. (I even joked that the new film was going to be an animated film with singing mice shooting blasters and wielding lightsabers). But as I looked more into the project, I've found that there are two sides to every story.

The most recent change regarding *Star Wars Episode VII* has to do with the actual screenplay itself: earlier this week, director J.J. Abrams revealed that the script by himself, Michael Arndt (screenwriter of *Toy Story 3*), and Lawrence Kasdan (writer of *The Empire Strikes Back*, considered by many to be the best of the *Star Wars* movies) is indeed finished. Lucasfilm and Disney have plans to shoot the new entry beginning in May of this year, with a targeted December 2015 release date. Reported to return are sound designer Ben Burtt, lead actors Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and Carrie Fisher, and composer John Williams.

With most of the loved mainstays of the original franchise returning, at first thought the new entry could potentially be the best *Star Wars* movie since *Return of the Jedi*. But there are some reservations. The biggest problem with doing a new *Star Wars* movie is that there are standards and expectations to please fans of the franchise. For the first two films, *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, there were no expectations, and the writers could do whatever they wanted. But by the time of *Return of the Jedi*, something had gone terribly wrong. Lucas had begun to let the outside world influence his writing. And by the time of *The Phantom Menace*, the evidence was clear.

*Star Wars*, for a few years, was just a movie with one excellent sequel. But by 1983, it had become a brand and a product. Lucas knew that he couldn't make any more of those movies for just one audience, and thus his writing suffered. This is a problem that plagues Hollywood today. While there are exceptions, too

many writers, producers, and studio executives are too afraid of taking chances to be intelligent. Instead of creating new, engaging material, their blockbusters are very safe, marketable, and only geared towards toys and video games.

Part of the reason why the prequel trilogy is almost universally despised by audiences and critics alike is that it not only failed to live up to the original trilogy's legacy, but that the writing was very limited. The truth is that George Lucas's ability as a screenwriter has suffered. His more recent scripts lack engaging characters, good dialogue, and cohesive plots. This is not true of the George Lucas of the 1970s: both *American Graffiti* and the first *Star Wars* are great films, written and directed by a very talented filmmaker. But after *Star Wars*, Lucas didn't direct another film until 1999's *The Phantom Menace*, generally regarded as the worst entry in the saga. (I disagree, and would give that slot to *Attack of the Clones*).

By taking this long break from directing and screenwriting to focus more on visual effects, Lucas lost his keen eye and attentive ear and was drawn to what computers do. He became a harsh, angry businessman, only looking for opportunities to make more commercial products rather than art.

That said, this is a great opportunity for Disney to do something extraordinary with the legendary film franchise. The people working at the Mouse House aren't naïve, and they of all people should know the panned reception that Lucas and the prequels have received over the years. At one point, Lucas was on record saying, "If I don't have complete control, I will never direct another *Star Wars* film." As former Disney executive Peter Schneider has often said, "You can't create art without great chaos."

Within the prequel trilogy, Lucas would often fire people who disagreed with him on certain aspects of the films, turning himself into a dictator rather than a collaborator. But now, serving only as a creative consultant on the sequel trilogy, he will have neither directorial nor screenwriting input. Given the technical and musical aspects, the new *Star Wars* trilogy is likely going to succeed. But even with Lawrence Kasdan writing the script, I have my doubts. Disney is a company that mostly uses film as a springboard for toys and other merchandise, unlike what Roy E. Disney (nephew of Walt himself) once said: "the real heartbeat of this company was, is, and will always be the film business." I think getting Hamill, Ford, and Fisher to reprise their roles is a sleazy marketing move. These actors need to move on to other projects. (Fisher joked that the gun-wielding Leia would be in the space equivalent of an old folks home.)

I cannot claim to know what the new film will be about. The sequel trilogy is likely to disappoint millions, but it is also likely to delight millions. That remains one of the curious aspects about art: you're never going to please everyone (I know people who don't like *Fantasia* and Hitchcock's *Vertigo*). But you can attempt to do your best work. With all the resources Disney will dedicate to the project, the new film could be quite good. But we must always fear the dark side of limitations in writing. Disney is still a corporation, and corporations tend to be very safe. Will the Force be with the sequel trilogy? It's anyone's guess. I have a bad feeling about this.

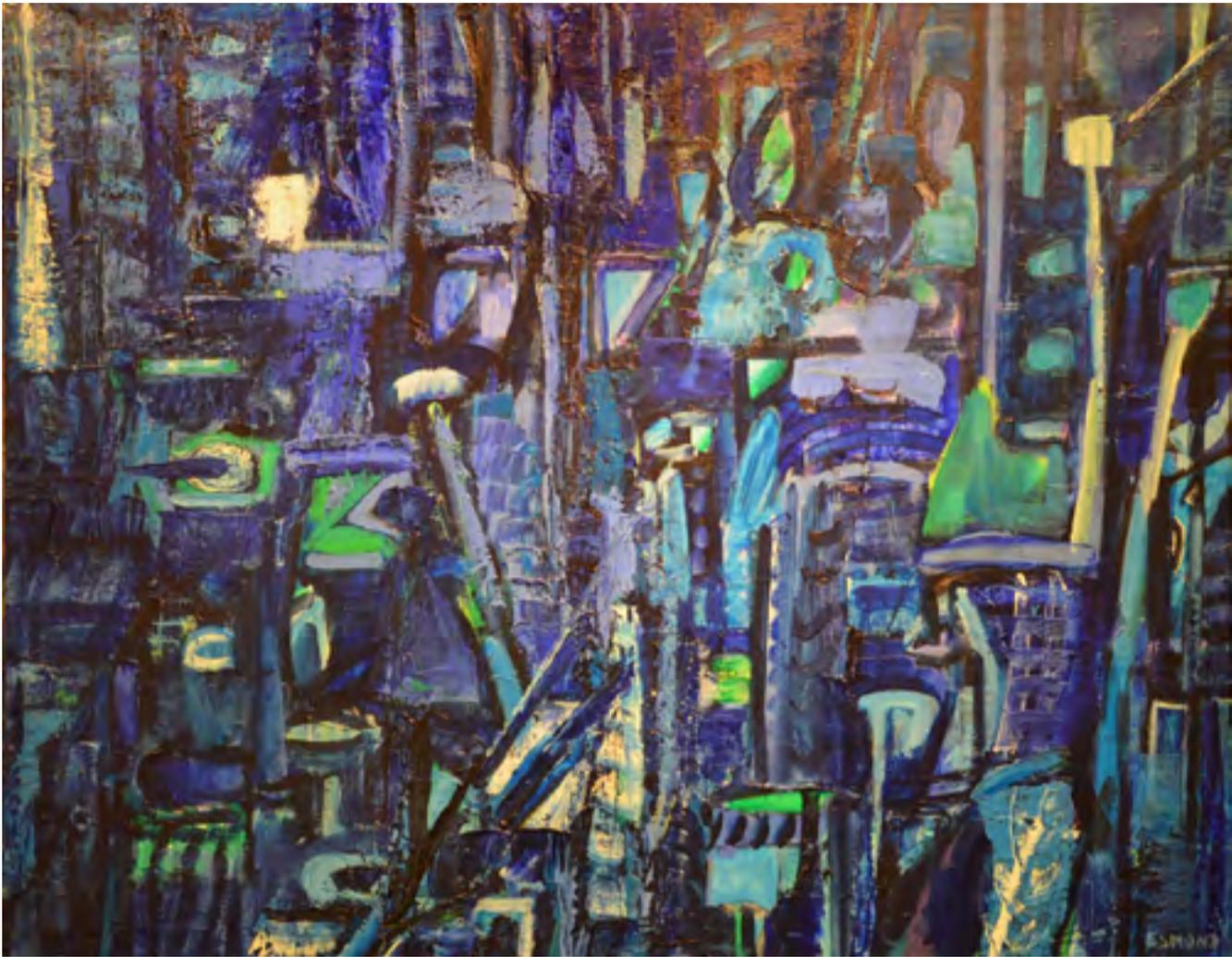
BERKLEE COMMUNITY

# Visual Art

Diane Esmond  
Photographs of Six Paintings



Bathers ca. 1965



Caribbean Night 1978



Landscape, Provence ca. 1964



Orange Forest 1974



Still Life 1971



Still Life with Wine Bottle 1953

Louise Bichan

# Portrait of fiddler Jenna Moynihan and harpist/vocalist Màiri Chaimbeul



Digital Photograph

# Lauren Desberg Portrait of Jenna Moynihan



Digital Photograph

# Fiddle Fingers, Jenna Moynihan



Digital Photograph

# Moana Avvenenti Self-Portrait with Gum



Digital Photograph

# Tiger Okoshi Family Traveling in the Stormy Indian Desert



Watercolor

# Crying Baby



Watercolor

# Resting Boy



Watercolor

# Callie Huber "Night Vision" sequence



All Digital Photographs









# Edward Wersocki Elation



Digital Photograph

# Maeve Gilchrist, Scottish harpist and vocalist



Digital Photograph



Digital Photograph



Digital Photograph

Louise Bichan  
**Kimberley Fraser**



Digital Photograph

# Kimberley Fraser



Digital Photograph

Philip Barlow  
**Alasdair Fraser, Natalie Haas**



Digital Photograph

# Natalie Haas



Digital Photograph

# Natalie Haas



Digital Photograph

# FEATURED WRITERS

## Lacey Daley

# Friction

I dance with people who are older than me. Someone told me years ago never to try it, but here I am, cooped up in ballrooms and dance clubs cavorting with people often three times my age. I can't stop. I don't want to stop.

I used to hide it, back when risking what was left of my name meant something. So I would go to school, sign in on the tennis roster, then leave. No one noticed, or no one asked. I knew about Ronnie not graduating because of it, and Jean too. Actually, I think Jean graduated but got absorbed somewhere into the nothingness of the habit soon after.

When I started, I only went to Teddy's Lounge, a dimly lit and elegant place, where I could count on two older men for a Rumba Hour partner. The taller one, the one who wore the velvet vest and smelled like a cob pipe, had a firm grip and large hands that straightened my slouching shoulders. He adjusted his stride to mine to make the hip sway more natural. It was a fatherly gesture, like shortening an old golf club. When we got close, I could read this in his eyes. The other man was completely bald and would wipe his halo of shining sweat with his forearms, then press them against my lower back. That dampness became familiar and loosened my limbs. I missed it once he passed.

The better I got at managing my stigma, the more places I frequented. When the heat died out at Teddy's and the crowd retreated to the bar, I would go next door to Havana. Things were all a bit sexier there, so I would shed my cardigan. The smoky atmosphere darkened my virgin glow and hid the logo on my tennis uniform. I danced the Mambo there, sometimes the Salsa. There was always a woman by the door who reminded me of my mother, minus the stale liquor under her breath. She was dark and called on me by tapping the nape of my neck. Even though the dances we did together made me sweat, I got goose bumps when her fingernails dug into my hip bones. I didn't mind the marks she left. I studied these trophies on my skin when I was home and wishing I wasn't.

Sometimes men took my hand, other times women, but it was always someone older. If it wasn't my hand it was my hip, if it wasn't my hip it was my waist. No matter what, there was always contact, touch meant for me. In dance, it was appropriate.

At the beginning, people stared. I would walk past dropped jaws and sharp fingers all the way to the spot-lit floor. My age was obvious. The black and blue around my eyes made everyone murmur, yet no one ever turned me away. I was new, I was different, and I didn't have much to lose.

Nowadays I find myself at more and more venues: festivals, receptions, anything of the sort. I have regulars. They wait for me to show up, backs against the wall until I enter. They approach me. I don't know their names and they don't buy me drinks. Few words are exchanged. We simply dance on those wooden floors we've come to call home. They are mature and I am still small. Their

fists are tight but not cocked, the pressure around my hand like an instinctive protection from harm in the wild. Their mouths are open but the only thing that comes out is the hot breath of a stranger on my neck. With my gaze to the hardwood floor, I put my feet in the path of theirs. There is friction between our bodies. Our trail catches fire.

## Amy Quan Barry

# loose strife

Embarassingly it was just outside the tunnels. One American dollar bought you one bullet. Consequently I did it because I could. A few hundred miles west in Cambodia rumors that \$100 could buy you a single shot with a rocket launcher and a cow. In all my days

I have never met anyone who's done it or seen it done. The animal's essence geysering up into the blue. Muse, help me to understand why I paid the money and laid down in the dust, the thing pressed against my shoulder. What wrath compelled me. What narrative. "Barry, who was born in Vietnam

but raised in America, provides what is definitely a Western point of view. From her perspective, violence is a shocking misfortune that remains foreign, beyond her personal borders." Yes. That other time the way I balled it all up and left it behind in Guayaquil after we were robbed at gunpoint on a deserted road

in the national park, the local police stroking our faces and telling us in Spanish that we were lucky and how, as it was happening, a light went on and I realized I had the capacity to die, that capacity was the right word, that it was a power, an aptitude, an ability

which I possessed, a potential, and I wondered how others do it right here at home, how the worst thing in the world happens to people right in their own living rooms, on the street where they live, at the movie theater, the grocery store, at the rally to meet their congresswoman

or the place where they worship their loving god  
and for those who don't die, for those in whom  
the capacity remains unfulfilled, the gunman's  
thousand rounds somehow missing them,  
how they keep going day in and day out,  
how they ever feel safe despite the public's reluctance

to do anything to keep it from happening again,  
someone taking up a gun in the place where you sleep,  
where you love, the place where you educate your  
children,  
the spot from which you can't fly out  
like Andrée and I did, back to Miami and then onward,  
handing over your passport and saying please,

just let me go.

## Brian Burt

# Occupations

There's an old high school buddy of mine  
who liked to sketch dead things and who  
when his dad lost the farm—all the land,  
all the cattle—headed west after graduating.  
I lost track of what came next, but I hear  
he earned his stripes by making  
bloody body parts for slasher flicks  
in Hollywood. He specialized in heads  
that looked so real you'd swear  
that last scream still lingered  
on the tip of its rubber tongue.  
He's already retired.  
Still, his nickname sometimes starts  
to take shape in the back of my throat  
though I never can quite remember  
what we used to call him.

These days I don't care to scare myself  
if I don't have to. I can barely work my way  
through the day's newspaper—the black  
headlines rounding up the daily slaughters,  
major and minor, on the page,  
as if anything will ever change—  
as if I could ever forget how  
our ninth-grade history teacher  
made us all watch *Night and Fog*:  
the bulldozers shoving floppy corpses,  
heads lolling slack onto bony shoulders,  
into massive excavations in black and white,

or how, after occupying itself  
with the matter for the past few decades,  
my mind has often been unsettled  
by a dream in which  
an SS *Einsatzgruppe* is busy  
herding a few hundred families  
stumbling down a dirt road  
through the winter woods  
near Riga, the panic pooling  
in the eyes of the children,

and then the captives digging  
shallow trenches for themselves  
to tumble into with holes in the backs  
of their heads placed there by a pistol held  
in the hand of an eighteen-year-old  
farm boy from Schwaben  
who only recently had learned to laugh  
to himself about how the screams  
all sound the same anyway.

## What I Was Trying to Say Was

Gloveless hands searching pockets of a wool overcoat on the way to meeting.  
Next to a church, a puddle reflecting angels upside down.

Swallows folding and unfolding among gravestones in the churchyard.  
Outlines of two uprooted quince trees hugging the ground.

The skin of a hand feeling like it's made of parchment.  
Eyes looking around the park bench as if something had been dropped and not  
found.

The brown in your eyes now established as the color of old, dry leaves.  
"I can't do this anymore" becoming only sound.

A jagged line of geese flying more or less away.  
A throat not speaking, feeling shriveled, tight.

The scars inside a voice, and inside those scars, scars.  
The screech of a streetcar turning in the distant light.

One word and one word and one word, twisting around.  
Are you sure you're all right?

Amy M. Clark  
**Elegy for Our Dog**

This morning on waking  
you and I were rolled to opposite  
edges of our bed, as if trailing our hands  
in the waters of two different oceans.

Last night I heard you  
having a snack in the kitchen,  
rinsing a plate, walking up the stairs.  
I fell asleep before you reached me.

Once I observed us at a cookout  
teasing each other in the presence  
of friends. Then momentarily  
we were alone on the patio.

Our dog was allowed in our bedroom  
but not on the bed. I miss her  
nosing the mattress in the morning  
and how I'd reach across you to pet her head.

## Surf Lesson

“Welcome to my living room,”  
he said as she climbed into the cab  
of his red Chevy. It was big enough  
to remove her pants in, but at the beach  
she changed standing beside the truck bed,  
a long towel wrapped around her waist.  
Goose bumps dotted her arms.  
He'd bought a wetsuit at the flea market,  
black with a hot pink stripe down each side.  
To her surprise it zippered smoothly,  
and the suit gave her courage, as suede boots do.

They grinned dumbly, and after that she was his  
to teach, watching for the right small swell,  
giving her board a push from the back,  
telling her when to jump on, helping her set up  
after each pitch. In between, the ocean held her.  
When she stood and rode, two seconds tops,  
they both whooped. She wanted to stop then,  
and watched him ride in. She didn't fall in love  
with him. At one time she would have,  
and she knew that. And knew how it would go.  
She would learn all she could, and thrill him  
with doing the thing he loved to do, do it well,  
and please him. She would be happy and then tired.  
And then she would be more tired than happy.

Carolina Ebeid

# A Thing Will Still Be a Thing No Matter What You Place in Front of It

They try to explain the shape of what happens in my afflicted brain.

Someone says some  
language: technical  
at first, then searching

for how nothing is like  
the house housing you  
the room inside a room

the mastery of you  
holds little by little  
by little less yours

and more ephemeral.

O Veronica,  
I am scared of the divine.

## Napoleon

A weed grows through this feeling: unwanted,  
untended prickly milk thistle spreading

its blotchy leaves--touch me not--hiding a secret  
silver cache; it crowns itself with a spiny flower.

Major Jackson  
**XXV. Salobrena**

That stretch of mountains features white windmill blades whose slow turns are rifles aiming, for I cannot help but think of Lorca's killing between here and the village Alfacar, and the firing squad's gun pops are that flamencan dancer's heel stomps. I bring back, too, her hand claps and the cantate's Andalusian moans like dried sticks or bones crumbling in his throat. Yet, only souvenir shops and steep winding streets accrete in this region's stacked brochures. Her dress spills across the restaurant's floor like a red shadow, darker than billboards of black bulls high above roadways, motionless but seeming to gallop like Franco's brigades. All seeing is an act of war. Tanks and artillery. Spanish castles and mosques. I choose to lose, and beneath a watercolorist's sky study my wife's splendor against the unruffled backdrop of the Alboran Sea whose waves match my sighs and bomb this beach, launching sprays of white duds.

Kirun Kapur  
Dancing with My Father

If you could go back in time,  
do you think you could have saved them?

Time is an illusion, you know  
that.

But if you could go back—  
explain, persuade them. Convince  
even one uncle or niece. One stranger.

The whole world is maya,  
illusion and dance.

Well, if you could stop the illusion.

The *Upanishads* say...

I don't care what the *Upanishads* say.  
What do you say? If you could go back,  
if you could stop the illusion that was their death.

I don't know who raised you  
to be so crude.

Surely, my crudeness is an illusion.

You should eat more loki; it's good  
for you. It's made with plenty of haldi.  
You know, they are doing studies  
at Harvard about haldi.

Did you ever wish you'd died instead?

No, here's what I want to ask:  
have you felt angry for surviving?  
All this time, is that how you've felt?

You should eat.

Dad.

They say it stops Alzheimer's.

Didn't I send you to good schools?

Didn't they teach you to ask  
smarter questions?

It's a dance.

That's not an answer.

Even now we are dancing.

I don't want to dance.

Many steps and many gestures.

I don't want squash. Or turmeric. I hate loki.

It has a beautiful flower. Can you  
hate a flower?

I *can* hate a flower. I've always hated loki.

And a dance? Who can hate the twirl  
and the leap; the drums and the bells?

# For the Survivors

Begin with a seed. Begin with the father and the mother, your first Adam and Eve. Begin with what falls from the tree: you can live on bruised and sweet. Begin with a monsoon breeze, begin with a flood, begin with miles of silk and mud and the wings of cranes and the stilt-like legs of a house with no one left inside. Begin with a young wife burying her sons and books riding the tide until they're caught and their philosophies dried out on laundry lines. Begin with a pen, begin with a cage. Begin with the memory of what they said while you tried to turn your face away. Begin with bargains, with stains, the names of towns built over towns built over graves, begin with your life burned down. Begin with the god who hasn't been seen since the burning bush or the goddess who steps into the flames like a housewife into a dress, or a fairy tale of hair so long that love climbed up—begin by putting your mouth to the mouth of your dreams. Begin with midnight rain and wild reeds, begin with hair and tendons, teeth. Begin with what never goes away: a highway pricked by gravel and stars, low beams on wind and trucks and emptiness. *Begin*. It starts with being, ends like a ringing bell: Begin. Begin. Ring your self.



# Biting the Branch

—Buea, Cameroon

Late afternoon, I'm walking back  
from market, the stalls locked early  
from no queues: Cameroon's been caught  
by an economic crisis for twenty years.

Lucy stays home, Tumbah only goes for news;  
he's got one shoe with no heel, another without laces.  
The road's full of dark-suited men  
talking about *chasing pay*.

A clamor from three trees, ruined  
eucalyptus stripped to phloem:  
weaver birds  
picked these limbs clean.

Kin to the innocent finch, weavers colonize trees.  
By the hundreds, nests  
perch upside down  
like woven straw Christmas bulbs.

These birds love millet or corn:  
like locusts,  
they glean field by field. I've seen  
plots razed to rubble.

Taxis honk, drivers  
lean out windows to *beg* fares.  
Like the birds, cars grow louder:  
mufflers have become a luxury.

I gape as a weaver flies to the next limb,  
rifling the last leaves  
to clothe its nest,  
flaying its own tree.

# This Window and a Wish

—*Oxford, 2011*

The man leans toward her,  
hair flung out unbidden, as though  
conducting sonatas with a quick thrust

of hands. Over tea, they speak  
amid half-eaten eggs,  
neglected bacon. Inside this cafe window

the woman sits in profile—hidden,  
oblique. But not from him.  
She, too, bends forward,

barely blinking. I hear nothing,  
there aren't many clues. No signs of anger:  
skin pulled taut from teeth, no narrowed eyes,

the histrionics of table pounding.  
These people seem engrossed  
in a mute volley of talk. Passionate

perhaps about local politics, the latest stats  
on melting ice caps. Maybe it's music:  
last night's Vivaldi or Coldplay.

I'm guessing. I only have this window  
and a wish to make up stories.  
The sweep of arm or hair, unsprung tension

between two bodies. The rapt tableau  
could mean anything. Or nothing.  
Two people eating eggs.

# The Witch's Eye

—Oxford

By the kitchen window,  
    squinting at an old slide,  
I glimpse my garden leaching white,  
    copper sedum  
    suddenly gone silver,  
dead hydrangeas levitating  
    with December mist.  
Off the Isis, fog twists in;  
    when I turn the photo  
    for more light, I see  
Peter on the path, hesitant  
    beneath the green dint  
    of Cameroon's sun.  
He's taken me to see *Pa*, a man  
so old he's buried ten children—worse luck,  
    all three wives have also died—  
    a man barefoot and  
    wrapped in rags,  
    slight, and slow to emerge  
from his kitchen  
steeped in soot from eighty years  
    of drying corn,  
    a family's close talk over the fire.  
Peter says, "Oh, he's a witch,  
    he has *four eyes*," the off-hand glance  
    that sees you dead.  
In the slide, I find the bamboo screen  
    built by *Pa* to shield his door.  
He talked to us outside  
    about long-gone rites  
    for disinterring the dead.  
A granddaughter stirred *fufu* in a second house,  
    her toddler peed beside the door;  
    neither looked at me or Peter.  
"No good will come," *Pa* said,  
    "from people staring at you and yours."

## Jennifer Militello

# Dear B,

This black trance where I lie like a cat, these arrows living naked in the after of my hands. Such resonance tempers the dark. I fever with impossibility. I fiddle with the antithesis of love. What lies in me is an armored starvation: I cringe at night. I go wild and pathological, schizophrenic as fire. The hiss you hear is my desire. I live on what exists before me, and I thrive. Nothing amounts to much. There are many of us, shaped brazen in the dark. Limbs bereft of significance. Visions within us weighing our hearts. Careless with the stampede in me, bleeding freely from the mouth, bellowing the anything down, risk practices taking my fingers delicately in its teeth. To kill me while I sleep. To sin differently. To kiss the hand of fate. Mute movements door my hands. Numb atoms dust my lovely death.

# Dear B,

Two months of spasms and still I am not well. Awake is more knives than I can count. I was the one who shut the window. But all the dead flies had already come in. All I remember already got out. You are not the proximity I wait for. You are not real. I am small, but need to be watched. Have I told you a thunderstorm is like getting a million letters from you? Only better. Only more like beginning, not ending, in rain. Today, the cold is beating down the bats from their wings. What I say isn't even close to what I think. It is much worse. Anguish grows gray as it waits in my throat. Like just before snow, when I can smell the holding back.

Pete Mullineaux  
**Raftery's Buttons**

Raftery, blind poet and fiddler  
negotiating the rough back roads  
of Galway-Mayo, stumbling  
over fallen trees, circumnavigating  
lethal drains and ruts, raging  
against rivals, the status quo  
and all who had crossed him –  
according to legend  
composed himself  
by mapping out tunes  
on his waistcoat buttons;  
sharpened his wits  
flattened the humps and dips,  
bum-notes of hidden pot-holes,  
the curse of a thousand  
cuts and sprains  
with a steadying rhythm;  
staved off the elements,  
mellowed cares,  
re-jigging old scores  
wild ramblings  
into sweet strains  
and settled airs.

# A Piper Prepares

It's almost like shooting up: a captivating ritual –  
the belt looped around the forearm; buckle  
notched, blowpipe joined to leather bag; a shard  
of cloth folded between elbow and rib for comfort –

trusted talisman, guardian against the unknown  
and unnamed – keys, bars with no endings. Drones  
are attached like pistol silencers, regulators poised –  
and now, the popping strap – the 'piper's apron'

a leather patch, spread across the thigh; you'd think  
for protection from the crazed jabs of the chanter,  
its manic hypodermic dance. In fact, the placing there  
will cause a glottal stop, suspension of sound, a near-

death, allowing trap-door drop, down the pit-shaft  
of the octave to low D: belly-forge, base underworld  
from where a primal hum vibrates, connects –  
fixes on the spinal cord, sends a hit exploding

into the skull's chamber. The head reels, a gasp  
for air as the bellows fill and suddenly there's life  
in the lungs and wind in the reeds, escape – we're  
up and away – tripping over the scales, flying

above the Walls of Limerick, the never ending  
Siege of Ennis – hello and goodbye to Rocky Road,  
Wheels of the World, Hills and spills of Donegal –  
heading towards that high high doh...

# A Slow Start to the Set

All materials are alive –  
at least in the sense they  
have potential to make sound.

Metals ring, while woods vibrate,  
put them together you have  
guitars and violins –

inside of which, the tunes are  
only sleeping...

# Music of the Spheres

Hard to imagine a universe without sound –  
why else call it the Big Bang?  
From background noise to formal structure:  
Sibelius heard chords reverberating in a forest,  
while Kepler, pursuing the Pythagorean string  
combined geometry with harmonic intervals,  
finding spaces between the planets  
relative to fourths and fifths.

As much as we are made of cells and atoms  
molecules and ever exotic sub-particles,  
matter is alive with waves and pattern of vibration,  
some only the dog, bat or dolphin, can detect;  
all things have their sympathetic note –  
there is tone and pitch in a blade of grass  
a lump of coal. Water crystals change shape  
and distort in response to varied frequencies  
of voiced emotions – there is hurt  
and healing in it.

And we too are so much water.

# Concertina

She shuffles it like a pack of cards,  
testing the silent breath in the pleats.  
With the air button pressed, fingers tease  
but the instrument stays mute –  
if push came to shove, you could play  
this way all day, under the table,  
hands coming together, moving apart  
never quite meeting; like almost clapping –

nothing strange then in a concertina sounding jolly  
while the player's expression  
is so often grave, giving little away  
of what lies beneath.

# Requiem

The cows have gathered in an adjacent field,  
I can see their shapes in the moonlight –  
a meeting of the tribes, they are here in their multiplicity;  
black, brown, black and white – some all white,  
like ghosts, or recent converts.

Just now I heard a moan from one of them  
that had me awake as if I had been shot.  
It's the night before their calves are taken,  
they know from the look in the farmer's eyes.  
They call him by name  
although it sounds like 'moo' to us.

I listen at the window to their keening –  
we make recordings of whales and dolphins,  
say they are a higher species  
as close to us as nature gets –  
but the cows are singing in their camp,  
refusing to be cattle  
marking their loss  
celebrating the grass  
thanking the rain.

The females, even the males most of the time  
are gentle, considerate, abiding.

But tonight the cows have run out of patience,  
can ruminate no longer; they sing  
their mass; make ready for battle,  
tomorrow they will paint themselves red –  
attack.

## Tonight's the Night

I took Dad to see Neil Young; he wore his suit (Dad, that is –  
Neil Young wore a tie-dye shirt.)

1975 (I think) Bristol Colston Hall: crazy Neil with Crazy Horse.  
And crazy me for bringing Dad

but he'd taken me to Cheddar Caves, Castle Coombe, and over  
on the ferry to South Wales –

(again, Dad, not Neil Young, who hadn't take me anywhere, yet.)  
So I wanted to show him something,

even though his taste in music began and ended with Bing Crosby;  
(*definitely* Dad, not Neil Young

whose influences would be more blues, roots country  
and rock and roll.)

And he was cross: (Neil, this time; my dad was surprisingly mellow, if somewhat conspicuous.)

They started with a brand new song called *Tonight's the Night* which the audience heckled

wanting more familiar tunes like *Southern Man*, *Helpless* and *Cowgirl in the Sand*.

But Neil was having none of it – he gave us all a lecture: how this was about someone

real close to him, a roadie who had died from drugs – ‘Bruce Berry was a working man...’

and sang it again, only more aggressive; which pissed the audience off even more.

I was hoping Dad was OK, not feeling out of place but he seemed to be taking it all in

even nodding his silver head through the deranged twenty minute guitar solos.

Eventually there was a compromise: the band won us over by doing all the old hits

but then, for an encore did *Tonight's the Night* again. I'll never forget it –

afterwards, he bought me a takeaway, (Dad, not Neil Young) don't know what Neil and the band got up to

maybe they went back to the hotel and talked about an old guy in the third from back row

who had smiled all through the concert, and wondered what he was taking.

Whatever, I enjoyed myself too – felt Dad and Neil

had got on well together. ‘Bruce Berry was a working man...’

Lynne Potts

## Last Imagining My Death Poem

I'm pretending I'm back under the fig tree like the one in Italy  
when I persuaded you to stop for a picnic of cheese, bread,  
prosciutto and wine. As it turned out the figs were perfect  
for picking and we each had several until we almost burst—  
our first trip since we got back together after thirty years,  
the children grown now, our others lovers in the past  
but we never married them and there we were  
having a picnic under the fig tree and I'm thinking I could  
die now because it won't get any better but of course  
I didn't die and here we are in a winter kitchen months  
later and I'm making lasagna and you are setting the table  
which is your job and right now I'm not imagining my death.

## Europa and the Bull

That day, the pique and gleam of it  
lyric and play, clouds bouncing, sea  
in rosies and dip at the shore's lip  
when he came in his sleek quieting  
to her fingers – nuzzle, slather  
the slippery *we* of it as she mounted  
his soft muscled neck and opened.  
Did she look back over the froth  
airborne tongue to his ear whispering  
nothing but be inside;  
and did she later guess the ravel—  
rough mountains, black meadows,  
ravens scouring the furrowed earth?  
Did she look back then, and still want?

Leslie Williams  
**Self-Portrait with American  
Crows**

Telling lies, wasting time, thinking  
no one else keeps promises  
as close as I— crows fly in

and convene on the elm, an insistence  
of wingspan, black-black-green.  
The effort of cawing racks

their whole bodies, swaying  
the top of the tree. I know crows  
keep the law. I know fate will be

my friend, bear out  
my diffidence, live in the void  
with my deluded attitude

of permanence, and with yesterday's  
bliss: sitting on the stoop  
with my little boys

in the shadow of the elm,  
stuffing ourselves with potato chips  
as everything turned to glory.

# Avenue of the Stars

From a deep brain-embedded place  
the recurring doodle kept slouching out,  
caught on paper when she rode the small-town bus  
to school, the tantalizing H-O-L-L-Y-W-O-O-D  
slanting through her pencilled hills,  
the gorgeous whole word **CALIFORNIA**  
filling up her pages with fat bubble script.

She'd been antic, pinpricked from looking  
at maps. Mother (and others) had stayed up  
rocking her. She longed to rise from straitened  
places, to rise—can you tell her that was wrong?  
She's out on the front walk, night-cool cement,  
moon in her notebook, drinking Shasta from a can.  
She's in a hand-me-down nightgown  
and stretching the sleeves.

# Celtic FUSION

*The Scottish Feature*

Larry Bethune

*Vice President Student Affairs*

# Adventures in Scottish Culture: A Personal Journey

I am honored and excited that *FUSION* editor-in-chief, Joseph Coroniti, asked me to help put together this special feature on Scottish culture. My family came from Scotland to America in 1774, and my Scottish heritage is very important to me.

Until I was twelve years old, I, like most children, knew little of my ancestors, nor cared much about them. Music and sports took up all my non-academic time. I did know my dad's family lived in North Carolina and my mom's in Indiana, but that was it. We visited my grandparents in both states every so often from wherever my father, a career U.S. Navy pilot, was stationed at the time.

When I was twelve, visiting my grandfather for the summer down in North Carolina and helping in the fields, my view and understanding of my roots changed forever. We went to my grandfather's sisters' house, (belonging to my grand-aunts who lived together). There I found a small room, a library of everything "Bethune": books, articles, music, church programs, and my father's cousin Charles' typed family genealogy. It started when David Bethune and his wife Flora McBride sailed from Scotland on August 26, 1774 and landed in Wilmington, Carolina October 17, 1774 (a long trip). From there, they rafted up the Cape Fear River and were given land in the Raft Swamp area near what is now Lumberbridge.

What an adventure. This twelve-year-old was hooked. I started tracking down ancestors and descendants. I read anything and everything about Scotland and its history and culture. But after a few years, I started college at Berklee and my Scottish adventure was replaced by adventures in music. I dropped the research for about twenty years before finally picking it up again. It is said in Scotland that "the blood is strong." It is certainly true in my case.

I opened the door, and the world of Scottish music, food, history, art, culture, and people flooded back into my life. I was listening to some James Taylor and heard some fragments that sounded like the Scottish traditional fiddle music I had just been listening to. I began analyzing Scottish trad from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, tracing melodic and rhythmic fragments and phrases to modern day American pop, bluegrass, country and western, and folk music. Eureka! I attended Scottish Highland Games, tried my hand at the Scottish heavy events, including tossing stones for height and distance, and tossing a caber.

I connected with bluegrass, old-time, and Appalachian music to explore their Scottish roots. All led me back to Scotland. Not coincidentally, all the family names and place names around our homestead in Carolina were Scottish.

When I first got to Scotland, I felt I was back in Carolina. I made many friends, traveled the Highlands and Islands, and took a deep drink in the river of Scottish culture.

I started doing research at a university in Glasgow. Years earlier, I helped lead a “Berklee on the Road” trip to Glasgow and met the head of music at the university, Mark Sheridan. Mark is a wonderful composer and has deep knowledge of Scottish music. We became fast friends, and then he became my supervisor for the research. Eventually, we both agreed that, though we found tracing Scottish bits from Scot trad to modern American music fascinating, the topic was better demonstrated to the untrained through musical performance. When words fail, music takes up the story. I had noticed that there were so many wonderfully talented Scottish trad music students in Scotland. I knew that Berklee had the same talent with many who also had bluegrass and other American folk genres under their belts. Mark and I agreed what a fantastic musical experience it would be to build a *seaway* between Glasgow and America, much like my ancestors had traveled, where these musicians could learn from each other and have that Eureka moment hearing the roots and influences.

Mark and I decided the best way to demonstrate the results of the research was to collaborate. We agreed to bring nine Scottish trad student musicians to Boston to join with nine American “folk” musicians to produce a concert that would demonstrate that many American music genres had roots in Scotland or were influenced by Scottish music. This does not diminish the influences and roots of other ethnic music, it simply reveals those from Scotland.

Our first concert was at the New Hampshire Highland Games in Loon, Mountain, New Hampshire. The result was amazing. The audiences loved the music and the story. And most importantly, they heard the connections. (This experience deserves an article of its own.) The band was then asked to perform this concert at the Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow, Scotland, the Festival Interceltique in Lorient, Brittany, France, as well as smaller ensemble concerts in New York City, Boston, and for the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. The group also is receiving help from the National Trust for Scotland U.S.A., from whom the project won the annual award for making the greatest contribution to advancing Scottish culture in 2012.

Through these adventures, I met Iain Anderson, a BBC Scotland commentator who, with Mark Sheridan, was there at the beginning of the Celtic Connections Festival in the early 1990s. Iain hosted a very popular music show for years on BBC dealing with the music of singer-songwriters. The festival is one of the largest of its kind in the world. Iain has an engaging article in this issue on the beginnings of the festival.

Through Mark and Iain I met member of Scottish Parliament Michael Russell. He is also a television producer and director and the author of seven books. Russell was appointed minister for environment and then became minister for culture, external affairs and the constitution, and was later promoted to cabinet secretary for education and lifelong learning. Michael is a strong supporter of Scottish culture and collaboration with America. He was honorary chieftain for the NH Highland Games in 2010. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that Michael is also a prolific and talented photographer. His photos are beautiful

snapshots of everyday life and landscapes in Scotland. We hope you agree as you enjoy his photographs in this issue.

In 2011, while at the NH Highland Games, I was introduced to a wonderful writer, Paula de Fougerolles, who gave me her book, *The Chronicles of Iona: Exile*. This issue has an excerpt from her book, which also has a sequel, “*The Prophet*.” Paula says of her book,

It is 563 A.D. The world has been plunged into chaos by the collapse of the Roman Empire and barbarian invasions: civilization holds on by a thread. Columba, a powerful abbot-prince from Ireland, is exiled for a violent act to the pagan colony of Dal Riata on the west coast of Scotland. Awaiting him there is Aedan, the down-and-out second son of the colony’s previous king, slain by the bloodthirsty Picts.

Together, this unlikely pair travels the breadth of a lawless, divided realm, each in search of his own kind of unity. Their path is fraught with blood feuds, lost love, sacrifice, miracles, dark gods, and monsters. Beset on all sides, their only hope is to become allies—and to forge a daring alliance with the pagan Picts. For both, what begins as a personal imperative becomes a series of events that lead to the foundation of the monastery of Iona and the kingdom of Scotland—events that literally change the world.

The recipient of a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, Paula de Fougerolles holds a doctorate in medieval history from the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, University of Cambridge. Interestingly, she has lived in all the places she mentions in this series.

We have many other fine Scottish and Celtic artists in the wings who will contribute to future issues of *FUSION*.

We trust the variety of works we have gathered here offers you a glimpse through the window into Scottish life. The blood is strong and the arts are alive and well—in Scotland and throughout the diaspora. I hope this dive into Scottish culture inspires you to embrace your own rich and vibrant culture.

*ceud mìle fàilte*

Iain Anderson

# Celtic Connections: Glasgow's annual folk, roots and world music festival—The Beginnings

Back in the winter of '93 – sounds like a song – I took a phone call from Campbell McDougall of the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. I was then in the old BBC Scotland HQ at Queen Margaret Drive in Glasgow's leafy West End. GRCH were looking to diversify at a time when wall-to-wall pantomime dominated the city landscape and alternative entertainment was simply unavailable.

What, pray tell, was Campbell proposing? The mere possibility of a Celtic Music Festival in the dark weeks of January as a break from pantomime Dames and Principal Boys! Sounded good to me as the Presenter of the early evening programme on BBC Radio Scotland—and negotiations began.

The Director of GRCH, the late Cameron McNicol was sceptical but interested, and the need to look elsewhere was not without a high priority. GRCH did not do pantomime! My first act of being asked to furnish a festival template was to get on board my then Radio Producer, Donald McInnes who brought to the table excellent background knowledge and a considerable awareness of the hot acts of the Celtic world, acts which would sit most comfortably in a Glasgow winter festival.

Lots of people in the business thought we were quite frankly bonkers, but there was a serious confidence back at the ranch that Celtic Music was on a cusp and that its links with what has now become known as Americana were both profound and fascinating! Hence the prospect of a developing audience.

Lots of things to consider; first, the music content of course but also the promotion of such a festival. What might it be called? Should it have a logo? How long would it last? And the 3 performing spaces within GRCH were all significantly different. Where ought the various acts be placed?

In the middle of all this, we lost Campbell McDougall – how and why I know not – consulted with Mark Sheridan, then Head of Music at Strathclyde University and made the acquaintance of Colin Hynd of GRCH – who was to become the future Festival Director. However, for the time being Anderson and McInnes were calling the shots and the following were the Artists who took to the several stages in the January of 1994 to fulfil the first edition of what was to become known as Celtic Connections. (Full details on the web site). [www.celticconnections.co.uk](http://www.celticconnections.co.uk) under History.

The first Festival had been a year in the making during which time the BBC had sought a change in their radio scheduling. My evening programme had now become the afternoon slot and was to be called Mr Anderson's Fine Tunes, mixing classical and Celtic music. In the January of 1994 at the first

Celtic Connections Festival, there were several live editions of the programme during the course of an afternoon with an audience who enjoyed free admission to various great acts.

This was an initiative which continues to this day and which has been hugely successful, although the tenure of the Fine Tunes is sadly no more. The author's current programme now provides a late night format, and the wee small hours are his only remaining refuge!

However, 20 years ago, the acts that we had set some store by were Cherish The Ladies and The McGarrigles, neither of whom had ever appeared in Scotland before. The later, of course, were pretty well known; their discs had been receiving regular airplay for many years. The McGarrigles had been widely recognised with awards and critical acclaim for their bittersweet original songs of love and loss. Their roots were vaguely Irish, but they were bilingual, French and English, having been brought up in Montreal. But now it was Glasgow's turn, and Glasgow just loved their delicate delightful performance. The reception was great and one box had been well and truly ticked!

Cherish The Ladies (back in Glasgow this year) are an Irish-American all female band who had attracted our attention from their sole CD, which we had played regularly on the evening programme. They were led by Joannie Madden, who was immediately granted Scottish Citizenship and now rejoices in the name Chief Cherish. She also plays flute, introduces the band, confers with the audience, and has been known to step dance to some acclaim.

They were first up, opening for the great Irish band De Danaan, a combination of male and female virtuosity. But there was a problem! Actually quite a serious problem. Cherish The Ladies set the bar so high that even a band with credentials such as De Danaan found it hard to get their noses in front. "Cherish The Ladies," said a slightly inebriated Glaswegian who had never set eyes on them before. "Cherish the effing Ladies-----wow!"

In the last two decades these Ladies have missed the annual Glasgow gig only once. Their name is indelibly linked with the festival known as Celtic Connections and in the January of 1994 Donald McInness and I had ticked another box.

Robert Crawford (poetry)  
Norman McBeath (photography)  
**Excerpts from Simonides**

*Simonides is a collaboration between the poet Robert Crawford and the photographer and printmaker Norman McBeath. The work features black and white photographs paired with Scots (and English) translations of epitaphs by the ancient Greek poet Simonides. These epitaphs were written for civilians and soldiers killed during the Persian Wars (492 - 449 BC) in celebrated battles such as Thermopylae and Salamis. The texts have a short, sometimes fragmentary eloquence.*

*The square-format, contemplative studies are not war photographs but scenes from everyday life—details of which thread through much of Simonides' work. They deliberately avoid any descriptive or literal link to the texts—the relationship between photograph and epitaph is evocative and tangential.*

*A hard back book was published to coincide with the exhibition's opening at Edinburgh College of Art (Simonides, Easel Press 2011). The exhibition has, among other places, since been shown at Oxford, Glasgow, Chicago and Yale.*

***SIMONIDES* texts, Scots and English (italics)**

*1. SPARTAN WAR DEAD, THERMOPYLAE*

Ootlin, tell oor maisters this:  
We lig here deid. We did as we were telt.

*Stranger, take this message to our masters: we lie here dead. We did as we were told.*



Sliver gelatin print

## 2. DANDIS O ARGOS

Dandis o Argos the racer's buriit here.  
He medd his ain fowk prood, winnin his race  
Twice at Olympus, then threy times at Pytho,  
Twice at the Isthmus, Nemea fifteen times.  
Nae man can coont whaur els he beared the gree.

*Dandis of Argos, the stadion-runner, is buried here. He made his own people proud, winning his race twice at Olympus, then three times at Pytho, twice at the Isthmus, fifteen times in Nemea. No man can count where else he finished victorious.*



Sliver gelatin print

### 3. BONNIE FECHTERS

Fareweel, bonnie fechters, aa faur kent,  
Athenian laddies, handy wi yir cuddies,  
Wha gied yir youthheid aince, for yir cauf kintra,  
Fecht in maist o the Greeks, agin the odds.

*Farewell, splendid fighters, all far-famed, Athenian youths skilled with your horses,  
who sacrificed your young lives once, on behalf of your native land, fighting most  
of the Greeks, against the odds.*



Sliver gelatin print

#### 4. THE BATTLE OF SALAMIS

Whan aa the weird o Greece wis slidderie  
We saufit Greece by giein up oor lives.  
We tuik the hert oot o the Persians' herts  
And medd thaim mind their blue do oot at sea.  
Salamis hauds oor banes. Corinthians  
Pit up this cairn, thankfu for oor guid deed.

*When all the fate of Greece was uncertain we saved Greece by  
sacrificing our lives. We took the heart out of the hearts of  
the Persians and forced them to remember their defeat at sea.  
Salamis holds our bones. Corinthians erected this memorial  
out of gratitude for our good deed.*



Silver gelatin print

## 5. ORPHEUS

Abune his heid fled coontless burds. The fush  
Flang theirsels up oot o the daurk-blae wattirs  
Jist for the drap-deid brawness o his sang.

*Above his head flew countless birds. The fish flung themselves  
upwards out of the dark-blue waters simply for the drop-dead  
beauty of his song.*



Sliver gelatin print

# Excerpts from Venice

*Venice is a recent collaboration by Robert Crawford and Norman McBeath which brings together poetry, translation, photography and printmaking. The work itself is a 25 leaf, signed, limited edition, boxed set of text and photogravures.*

*The focus of this joint work is a truly remarkable Scottish polymath called James Crichton (1560 - 1582). Seen as a paragon of “Renaissance man,” he was fluent in ten languages, skilled in the art of mnemonics and rhetoric, witty, a fine dancer and an adept swordsman and horseman. At the age of fifteen he completed his second degree at the University of St Andrews before living in Edinburgh for a time. He then traveled to Venice where he wrote an important Latin poem about his impression of the city—included in the first anthology of Scottish verse in 1637. Crichton was killed in a sword fight shortly after he wrote the poem, just a month short of his twenty-second birthday.*

*The set contains Robert Crawford’s translation of Crichton’s Latin poem, the first ever in English verse.*

## **James Crichton’s poem: Robert’s translation from the Latin**

Far from home, facing the Adriatic,  
I stopped, stunned by that city rising there  
Dead-centre in the waves. I knew it knew  
The lethal sway of Neptune’s jurisdiction,  
The regal pull of the incessant tides;  
Overcome, I simply started crying  
At all that had gone wrong with my own life,  
Until a Naiad stepped before my eyes,  
So beautiful I caught my breath...



Photogravure



Photogravure

# Claudia Daventry

## Blot

*An intense dialogue about the wallpaper or the rug would do as well provided that both parties believe – Reber, 1985*

We don't want to overpathologise normals, but he saw a *chameleon* in card eight, which you might expect if he were French - we know the English see cats and dogs - and we're not certain whether it is significant that he refers to a *troll* rather than an *ogre* in card four. Card seven he saw *human* which is a standard response in Japan and North America but not here, where research has shown high preference for *spider*. As it happens, our clinician is also bilingual which caused some confusion in card three as, for her, a *bow tie* is also a *butterfly*, the cause of the aberration being semantic, merely; an internalisation by the examiner, not the indication of above-average creativity one finds in the artistic population (as opposed to the non-artistic normal population): *nota bene* the *unique response* has a positive correlation with amygdalar enlargement. Concerns with sex: his response *bra* was categorized under *clothing* by the female clinician though on a second reading our psychologist, Max, felt it to be repression, perhaps, given that he found *buttocks* in the *wolf's head*, also latent homosexuality. On card six he claimed Christmas Elves which, since it is not Christmas and he is not Scandinavian, is, we think, worthy of comment. Card one was unequivocal. He just gave us *bats*.

# Leaving Amsterdam

To break away is relative.

I packed the rugs, the bed - and then  
I threw the bedroom in.

I pushed in the wormy boards and beams  
that have seen 400 years: the horses first,  
with steaming flanks and rolling eyes  
brought in unshackled from their shafts.  
I packed the hay  
the dust of hay  
I packed the groom, the stable boy  
the bridles and the bits.

I packed the puritan who beat his wife  
behind closed doors.  
I packed the doors  
and, with them, the scream  
she let out as he kicked her down  
the steep black stairs.

I packed his kick.

I packed six Jews from beneath the floors;  
pale as onion shoots, and thin  
as gruel. Packed their dim  
lamp, its paraffin  
and seven Nazis thumping up the steep black stairs  
to drag them out.

I packed the guns.

The Kerkstraat came up easily  
once I'd loosed the cobbles from their bed  
and rolled up the street, like liquorice.

The houses came, stretching soft as caramel  
as I gently tugged them from their roots  
which, after all,  
are only clutching at water.

# Selfish

Stiff linen under a glass dome in Paris:  
Bofinger, in the 4<sup>th</sup> near Place des Vosges  
- hushed place where they bring in the white Limoges,  
wine vinegar with shallots, and embarrass

lovers' hands with lobster picks and crackers;  
precision tools for winking out the meat,  
stashed white and succulent, just out of reach  
of the trickiest fingertips. To snap

in bits the creamy smooth tectonic plates  
between the jagged edges of amber,  
and wreck those exquisite articulations

is the work of the devil. No wonder,  
when it's dropped plumb into boiling water,  
still blindly groping, the lobster screams.

# Selkie Song

*The selich (old Scots), or Selkie, is a mythical creature, a revenant, reborn from the soul of the drowned as a seal, which takes human form at night and comes to shore. Their stories originate from the Faroe Islands and have their cousins in lore among the people of cold waters - in North America, the Chinook; also in Sweden and Finland. In Scotland they've been sighted as far down the coast as the East Neuk of Fife, close to St Andrews. The Selkie is wiser than human folly and can lure foolish, power-hungry humans to their deaths under the waves.... if you stand on cold Northern shores at night you can hear their song.*

*Seven is a magic number for the Selkies: if you want to tempt a beautiful Selkie from the waves you must go and cry seven tears into the salt water. All Selkie songs are in lines of seven: what follows is a true story about human brutality, translated from the Selkie original, which goes more naturally into the old Faroese, or Celtic languages like Gaelic, than it does into an imperial tongue like English. For the ease of Anglophones everywhere I've used an approximation to old Scots.*

February 29th, 1528. At noon  
black smoke catches the straw - a plume  
from bundles piled around the standing stake  
on North Street, just in front of St Salvator's  
This will be the final afternoon  
of Patrick Hamilton, martyr to the cause  
of righteousness, of fairness to the common man.

They lashed him to the stake, soaked his rags  
in tallow then set him alight. They said  
the flames engulfed him fast, at first: the skin  
seared, blistered and the fat ran out in rivulets  
between the cobbled stones that line the street  
today. They say he shrieked, but not profanities,  
they say: he called his god. They understood

his words: the common tongue - *vernacular*.  
The god was cruel, and watched him barbecue  
for six full hours until he let him die  
but everybody present on that day could hear -  
bore witness to the words he had to say:  
their Bible was for everyone. The ploughboy  
would defy the Pope and read the book himself.

*O, god, and godis; and fae wie the god's mair richt  
than the ain afore o' syne. Och, ye lourd men,  
come ye hame, come doon tae the bed o'th'sea  
where bells'll knell for ain and aa' o'thee.*

On thirteen counts he stood accused. This man  
was well-connected. Grandson of a Duke  
and friends with Martin Luther, and he'd gone  
to Flanders, met Erasmus, got his Master's  
out in Paris - and wrote six-part harmonies  
to boot. He wasn't just your local lad  
made good. He packed a punch. And then he died:

was roasted, slowly, like a pig, or ox.  
Are you surprised? The wood around the pyre  
was damp. This was St Andrews, don't forget:  
the town, then city, built on sacred ground,  
whose vast cathedral stood against the sky,  
its plain-chant tossed against the boiling clouds  
as walls of water crashed against the rocks,

the greatest church in Scotland, sacred heart  
that made St Andrews worth the pilgrimage  
until that second bloody Cardinal - nephew  
of the one who ordered Hamilton to death -  
was killed by ambush, murdered in his bed  
then hung up on the castle ramparts, to avenge  
the blood of Wishart. This was just the start.

*O, god, and godis; and fae wie the god's mair richt  
than the ain afore o' syne. Och, ye lourd men,  
come ye hame, come doon tae the bed o'th'sea  
where bells'll knell for ain and aa' o'thee.*

All you with legs, walk down to St Salvator's,  
take a look. You see those guilty cobbles:  
the P, the H, now intertwined in stone,  
now asking for forgiveness for the crime  
that saw a good man of St Andrews burn.  
The silent crowd that watched; each carpenter,  
each soldier, priest, each farmer, blacksmith, tanner,

every fisherman, each worker of the land  
 - they stood in silence, trying not to breathe  
 too deep. The wind blew west: the stench was rank.  
 It drifted down through Market Street, to South Street  
 and across the flattened grasses on the dunes,  
 beyond Kincaple, past Strathkinness, out to Crail  
 across the Lomond Hills, the fields of Fife

it wafted up Dundee to Aberdeen  
 and filled the Angus glens. It hung; a pall  
 on Loch Etive, Loch Earn, Loch Awe, Loch Tay  
 and down to Auchtermuchty, Falkland, Star, Dunbog  
 to Pittenweem, Anstruther, up to Crieff  
 across to Glasgow, up to Oban and Loch Fyne;  
 unsettled flocks of sheep as far as Nairn.

*O, god, and godis; and fae wie the god's mair richt  
 than the ain afore o' syne. Och, ye loured men,  
 come ye hame, come doon tae the bed o'th'sea  
 where bells'll knell for ain and aa' o'thee.*

George Wishart's still a bairn when Patrick burns.  
 He's fifteen when the scent of smoky flesh drifts  
 down the decades. Nothing moves the heart  
 as fast as sickness to the stomach and guts.  
 Wishart retches, backs away, avoids  
 the greasy blood congealing on the stones.  
 He runs, and hears the burning man's refrain:

*the Bible is for everyone. The ploughboy  
 shall defy the Pope and read the book himself.  
 The logic never left him: George becomes  
 a man of letters, then he preached the word  
 of god direct. Forget your Pope: he's vain,  
 he told the serfs. The Cardinals? They're eating you  
 for lunch. And as for Mary, baby Queen -*

*you watch her. She's not what she seems.*  
 The Cardinal took ill to this, though George  
 had one disciple who'd avenge his death,  
 and more: a man called Knox. The rest is history.  
 Their great cathedral, built on solid rock  
 was god's glory, as translated by mankind.  
 But sandstone by its very name's just sand...

*O, god, and godis; and fae wie the god's mair richt  
than the ain afore o' syne. Och, ye lourd men,  
come ye hame, come doon tae the bed o'th'sea  
where bells'll knell for ain and aa' o'thee.*

The buttresses and keystones fell -  
loosened, plummeting like dragon's teeth,  
crashing through the nave and transept roof,  
cracking slabs of granite, thudding to turf  
blackened with soot and smoke and steeped in blood.  
The only choir that lingered was the wind,  
like selkies, wailing over empty fens:

*Come home, our Patrick Hamilton  
come home, our George, and all of you  
who fell to the discords men must make  
of god, and gods, and whose god is more righteous  
than the last god or the next. Oh foolish men,  
come home, come to the bottom of the sea  
where bells shall toll for one and all of thee.*

And so the buttresses and keystones fell -  
loosened, raining down like dragon's teeth,  
crashing through the nave and transept roof,  
cracking slabs of granite, thudding to turf  
blackened with soot and smoke and steeped in blood.  
The ghostly choir that lingered was no wind,  
but selkies, calling in our Selkie tongue:

*come hame, our Padruig Hameldane  
come hame, our Deòrsa, come all o' ye  
who fell ower the brekis men moun mak  
o' god, and godis; and fae wie the god's mair richt  
than the ain afore o' syne. Och, ye lourd men,  
come ye hame, come doon tae the bed o'th'sea  
where bells'll knell for ain and aa' o'thee.*

# Time Difference

I liked meeting you, she says. I really liked meeting you.  
From where I'm sitting, I picture her on her balcony  
overlooking her city of grids and grey verticals.  
Maybe she's still in her travelling-coat. Maybe her keys  
are thrown on a glass table by a remote and an ashtray,  
and her belt still knotted at the back, the way it was  
when she walked through security without turning, my kiss  
an obol in her mouth. As her words cut through space, I hear  
a distant rush hour thrum beneath an open window.  
In my other ear, but five hours earlier, a blackbird  
is fluting out his presence from a dark twist of branches.  
Otherwise, the garden's silent, scented, oblivious  
to the black pencil-strokes of borders, the miles  
swallowed by planes; the mad incompatibility of clocks.

Paula de Fougerolles  
*The Chronicles of Iona: Exile*

*novel excerpt (Careswell Press, 2012)*

*It is 563 A.D. The world has been plunged into chaos by the collapse of the Roman Empire and barbarian invasions: civilization holds on by a thread. Columba, a powerful abbot-prince from Ireland, is exiled for a violent act to the pagan colony of Dal Riata on the west coast of Scotland. Awaiting him there is Aedan, the down-and-out second son of the colony's previous king, slain by the bloodthirsty Picts.*

*Together, this unlikely pair travels the breadth of a lawless, divided realm, each in search of his own kind of unity. Their path is fraught with blood feuds, lost love, sacrifice, miracles, dark gods, and monsters. Beset on all sides, their only hope is to become allies—and to forge a daring alliance with the pagan Picts. For both, what begins as a personal imperative becomes a series of events that lead to the foundation of the monastery of Iona and the kingdom of Scotland—events that literally change the world.*

*Council of Teilte, Hibernia, May 563*

Late in May of the year of the Lord 563, in a vast hall lent to the men of Christ in Hibernia by her *ard-ri*, her high-king, a prince, an abbot, Colum Cille, or Columba, as he was known in the tongue of his Church, stood trial on suspicion of murder.

Outside the hall, rain lashed. Inside, the air was thick and close, the mood fevered. Clerics crowded about, so many that the stout benches had been removed. Bishops, taking pride of place, stewed in their silken finery, priests fidgeted close behind, and all the way around the hall's outer edges, abbots stood in their simple, white wool cloaks. There were unkempt hermits, too, the unprecedented spectacle coaxing them from their inaccessible rock-stacks or their solitary forest musings. Presiding over them all with an imperious disdain was the high-king, Dermot mac Cerball, his rich red cloak a swirl in an otherwise muted company, his gold glimmering where all save the bishops eschewed finery as a manifestation of pride.

And then there was Columba, tall, grey-eyed, grey-haired, determined to keep hold of his dignity, a tree unbent by storm, even though his rough linen tunic stuck to his skin and sweat trickled down his spine.

Men were speaking, some to condemn, others to defend. First Budic, Columba's childhood companion, now the high-king's bishop, fleshy and bejeweled. "My friends!" Budic cried. "In your love for Columba—in your

desire to spare him a fate he wholly deserves—do not forget that which is demonstrable! Remember the charges against him!”

And old man shuffled forward in defense: Brendan the Elder, the abbot of Birr, Columba’s *anamchara*, his soul friend, his confessor, bent nearly double now with age. “You claim to speak of facts, brother Budic,” Brendan said, his ancient face soft and conciliatory, his hand out to Budic in supplication, “but there is no proof that Columba intended that the counselor die.”

“The high-king’s counselor was gutted *by his own dagger!*” Budic countered, his arms lofted in protest, sweat staining in pools under his arms. “By whose hand? Whose hand? Clearly, not his own!”

“By Columba’s hand ... ”

“Ah!”

“It is a question of intent, Budic: had Columba not acted, Ainmire would be dead.”

“Ah, yes! Ainmire! Mighty king of the Northern Ui Neill. Columba’s *cousin*,” Budic sneered. “We can believe neither of them: the one speaks to protect the other.”

“No! Columba is a man of God, beholden to the higher law. He may be a prince of the blood, like his cousin, but he is not above *us*.” Brendan’s hands swept the muttering clerics, including in his statement even the lowly hermits who nodded, honored to be included in such vaunted company. “Make no mistake, my friends!” he continued. “There is more at stake here than the life of one unfortunate man, one would-be *assassin*, whom it is convenient for Budic, here—and the high-king—to say that Columba has murdered. So much more! The faith of Christ, ablaze after our beloved apostle Patrick, sputters like a torch about to go out! Soon it will either sweep the land like a cleansing fire or be extinguished like a puff of smoke, its light too weak, too transitory, to dispel any darkness. You know this! The people know this! It is why they love Columba. Why they crave the life he offers them, inside the monastery’s gates. He is a beacon, a fire-arrow, a torch held aloft at the end of a defile. They know—as should you!—that this is a matter above the petty squabbles of kings!”

At Brendan’s impassioned words, Columba’s heart stirred with longing. Daire, Daire of the Oaks, his own monastery, his beloved home. To return to her, clean again, a forgiven man! Daire was heaven—or as close as one might come to it this side of the veil.

But the kings? The men of power, like Dermot, the *ard-ri*?

Columba sought him out. His palm was on the pommel of his sword, the only weapon there. He glowered back, his hatred of Columba so evident it was nearly alive. Once again, Columba marveled at the chancy good fortune which had spared the high-king death on that battlefield.

Columba knew about men of power. He was one. Theirs was a different path. With his mouth, with his tongue, with his words, Dermot made love to Christ. But with his body, with all his torn soul, it was the Old Gods for whom he lusted, for the earthly power they promised him. To take the high-throne of Hibernia, had he not bathed in the white mare’s blood in the great iron cauldron before all his people, naked as a new-born babe, pale skin luminous in the bloody broth, and eaten the floating chunks of her flesh?

He had. Not two years ago, Dermot had, as had every high-king before him. At the Feast of Temair, Columba had witnessed this still insistent tug of the old pagan ways. Thus was Dermot made high-king—Dermot, whose conversion to the faith of Christ Columba now understood to be false, meant to appease the people.

Oh, yes. Columba knew about men of power.

“My friends!” Brendan was crying. “You must remember that Columba is a man who has been predestined by God to be a leader of nations into Life! His coming was prophesied by Patrick, not so very long ago. Think on it! *Patrick!* He is such a man as we should not *dare* to spurn! It would be utter foolishness for us here, today, to sacrifice him, a soldier of Christ, an intimate of kings, for one man lost to war. He must be allowed to continue his mission!”

Some of the southern bishops, the high-king’s bishops, nodded, but not Budic. He paced furiously, his voice risen to a fever pitch, the jewels on his fingers flashing with his wild gesticulations. “If we permit this travesty, our churches are next! If there is no difference between a warlord and a priest—if we, the bishops, do not enforce a distinction—the tribesmen will wipe Patrick’s Church from the face of Hibernia! You know that they shall! It is not so long ago that this island had no Christ! The Old Gods persist! Their *druidi* wait for us to falter! *Which is why Columba must be held accountable for his crimes!* Come, brothers! Come! Let us vote!”

Brendan shot forward, hand outstretched. “Before we do, I ask that the council hear from Columba himself.”

Although the crowd, whipped into a frenzy by the men’s arguments, fell silent, the better to hear, Columba suspected that their minds were already decided on the matter—indeed that, in the case of the southern bishops, their minds had been decided for them by the high-king.

In his own mind, the flash of the dagger, it embedded in the body, the blood, Crundmael fallen, dead. What could he say? “Only this: If I could trade my breath for Crundmael’s, I would do it. But I can not raise the dead. I have asked for our Lord’s forgiveness. I now ask for yours. I trust that your voice reflects the tangible voice of our Christ in the saeculum. I will submit to you.”

“Yes, you shall,” Budic cut unkindly. “Now, brothers! Let us vote!”

With much muttering and conferring back and forth, they did. One by one, the bishops stepped forward to place a ball within the proffered bowl: white for innocent; black for guilty. And then the votes were counted, settling evenly, white and black, white and black, white and black, until only one ball remained.

It was held up. The crowd gasped.

The ball was black as night, black as the encroaching darkness, a blight which Columba now feared he had had a large part in ushering in.

*Excommunication.* To be driven from the Church, from Christendom, shunned by all the faithful, even unto death. The most severe of the Church’s punishments, reserved for the gravest of sins. It was a perilous fall for one who had climbed so high and so fast, and the men in the hall were stunned as they considered it.

Then the clerics, absorbing the enormity of the verdict, began to shout in horror. Columba looked for Brendan. Anguish twisted his old friend’s face,

but there was no time to go to him because suddenly, from the other side of the hall's stout wooden doors, they could hear shouting as word of Columba's excommunication swept through his supporters. The crowd began to cry his name and beat against the doors.

Over the melee a voice thundered, "Columba!" It was Dermot. The high-king was surging through the crowd, his chest heaving as he scattered clerics. "You!" he spluttered at Columba, his face as red as his cloak. "You! For love of you, Ainmire tried to take my throne! Mine! For love of you, they rise up against me!"

The hall's doors reverberated ominously, as if they would shatter at any moment. Uncertainty creased Dermot's face—stupidly, he had left his retinue outside.

"They need to see your clemency!" Brendan put in loudly.

At first, the high-king's glare was furious. Then his eyes narrowed in thought, his head tilting. "Yes," he finally said. "Yes. Excommunication will not work."

There was a cry. Budic sprang forward to grab the high-king's arm. "My lord! You forget yourself! We have excommunicated him! You may not overrule ..."

"Budic!" Dermot growled. "I have decided."

"No, my lord! *Where is the Rule of God?* We might as well apostatize! Let us worship the Old Gods like the people do! Let us lie with animals! Let each of us—you! me!—take seven wives and rape our slaves and fornicate with whores!"

"Budic! I said, leave it be!"

"My lord! My lord! If you love me ... if you love Christ ... I forbid it!"

"You *forbid* it?" Dermot's nostrils flared as he fell backwards to draw his sword, iron screeching against scabbard. A ring opened around him as men scrambled to get out of the way. "I do love you, Budic." The high-king's tone was white-hot. "But *take care!* I have spoken, and this man,"—the point of his sword swung around until it was level with Columba's eyes—"this man should get down on his knees and kiss my boots for my clemency. But he will not. No, he will not—not him. Not our dear, brilliant, precious Columba."

Dermot sheathed his sword with a furious snap, the iron rasping. "But the abbot is right," he said. "Excommunication will not work."

He cut short the outcry with a swipe of his hand. "I shall exile him instead." More calculation. "To Dal Riata."

The crowd gasped. "To which Dal Riata?"

"To Dal Riata in Caledonia," the king replied, his smile as mean as a knife's edge. "And if he ever steps foot on these shores again, I shall hunt him down and disembowel him myself."

Heathen Caledonia! Across the waves!

As Budic triumphed, and the clerics roared, and Brendan sagged against a wooden table, poor support for his horror, a chill overtook Columba, as if someone had just kicked over the soil in which his bones would eventually be laid to rest.

It galled him, it really did—playing nursemaid to a banished abbot. At the best of times, Aedan mac Gabran had little use for holy men, old or new, *druid* or priest. He had none at all now, after last night. But what could he do?

Last night, his cousin Conall, his *ruiri*, his king, had summoned the retinue and they had laid plans for the raid until the fire in the Great Hall lay dying. Last night, his cousin had welcomed his advice. He usually did. Aedan had not spent his youth fighting for his father against the Picts to learn nothing. He knew a thing or two about the art of war; whether or not he liked it, it was one of his specialties. And although Aedan did not relish yet another punitive sortie against the men of Ile—they were, after all, not enemies, but fellow Scots and kinsmen—he knew that a ruler maintained control in part through swift retribution. So he hadn't shared his thoughts. His father had taught him both things: that a king must keep order; and to keep his own counsel if the king happened to be someone other than himself.

Instead, Aedan had offered what tactical advice he could, which would mean that the hosting would unfold according to his plan. So, Conall would raid the cattle-pens of the Cenel Oengussa which lay on this side of the sound and fire one farmstead there as a token, but in no way many or all of them. Aedan hoped against hope that Conall would follow this last piece of advice most faithfully—to spare life if they could—but, since it was hardly in his cousin's nature to do so, he doubted the success of that part of the plan. Still, Conall had seemed to accept the rest of his counsel. There was nothing new in that. Aedan might not be a lord of high repute or, indeed, have any status to speak of, but he was the king's *fennid*, his battle-smiter, his champion. When weapons were required, he was the first one in.

Which is why, when the fire had reduced itself to red embers and the drunken men had begun to stagger off to bed, Conall's order to stay behind and tend to the exiled Christian had stunned him. His cousin had stood, hands braced on hips, fingertips at rest on the pommel of his sword (no doubt to make the point that it was still there and that he knew how to use it, as Aedan well knew), and had ordered him to stay behind. This, even though Conall had no idea when the man planned on showing up. No second message had come from the high-king's bishop; they had received no indication by either boat or bird that the abbot had finally left Hibernia. The man could be anywhere—foundered, drowned, or lost.

It was a fool's mission, to wait for a man they were not sure was even coming (an abbot no less! What possible use could his cousin hope to make of *an abbot*?) when the might of his cousin's muster rode out to battle. It was a steward's task, and he was no steward. It was a wife's task, and Conall's wife would not have minded the task overmuch, if Aedan was any judge of Eithne's character, which he had every reason to think he was. It was as if Conall sought intentionally to humiliate him—again.

He had fought hard to still his rush of outrage at Conall's command, a task made more difficult when Conall's men got word of his order. Backing Conall on the far side of the fire, their faces suffused with flickering light and their voices thick with ale, they had taunted Aedan. The ridicule had rung to the rafters.

The men of the Cenel Gabran, Aedan's brother's men, had not liked it at all. A fight had simmered in the air; he could feel it, a living thing, seeking form and focus. And while he stood there, flushed and shamed, he nearly let it loose. One motion of his hand, one flick of a finger was all that it would have taken. In fact, a response was expected of him: they were a prideful people; a man's name, his status, his reputation were his very honor, his *enech*, his "face". Skirmishes, indeed wars, had been waged over less than the insult his cousin had just given him.

Yet he knew that a brawl in his cousin's hall would accomplish nothing. As *fennid* he might be called in to fight now and again, but in truth he had little authority, especially amongst his cousin's men. With his father, the *ruiri*, dead these five years and his brother Eogan more fit for pleasure (or, perhaps, contemplation) than for battle, there was little he could do. Aedan was a servant of lords, a hired sword. He was the servant of his brother and of his cousin, the over-king. He could not rue his fate since he was to blame for it: it was as if he himself had hacked off his father's head.

No. There was nothing to do but to submit to his cousin's command; this command, and the countless ones that would come later. So he did.

He was nearly at the dock when he saw them, thirteen tonsured monks in their fair sea-going *curragh*, fifty feet in length, its bow covered, with two leather-sailed masts, a steering oar, four benches, and eight tough, ash oars. Water-proofed sacks were tucked neatly under each bench. It seemed a new vessel, grander than Aedan had expected an exiled abbot to commandeer; in fact quite magnificent. He quickly studied the middle-aged man who was the first to scramble onto the dock, taking him to be the abbot he had been sent to intercept. His attire—the cowled, grey cloak; the wooden cross dangling from his neck by its worn cord—bespoke his profession, or what little Aedan cared to remember of it from his fosterage in his youth with the Christian Britons of Gododdin. But to Aedan's practiced eye all was not as it appeared to be. As the abbot had caught the railing with a hand and pulled himself up onto the dock, his cloak had billowed open. He had quickly steadied himself and had settled his cloak about him again, but not before Aedan had glimpsed a frame which was taut and, for a man of his age, surprisingly hardened—unexpected, after all Aedan had learned in the past about monks. Where was the body wasted by asceticism? Where was the man unfit for the rigors of this world?

For that had been his abiding impression from his youth, that the god of the Christians was a soft god suited to courtly life, not to the hardships of the frontier, such as was Dal Riata. The Christ was a weak god, killed on a cross by his enemies without a struggle, yet they worshipped him. He was a god sacrificed to those enemies *by his own father*, yet they worshipped both him and the father. This made no sense to Aedan. The priests in Gododdin had tried manfully to convert him—he, the son of the pagan Scots' king would have been a fine, boast-worthy, prize—but he had rebuffed their repeated overtures as respectfully as he had been able. There was essentially one reason he did so, a belief learned as he had come of age on the truest of testing grounds, the battlefield, which time had only solidified. That was that south of his people,

south of Dal Riata, lay civilization, or what scraps of it the Empire had left to her British underlings when she had scurried home to Rome in the face of chaos. And that north of her lay that chaos: the Picts. His people, the people of Dal Riata, were the ones that held the door against the darkness. If the Scots did require gods, they required not Christ, but strong ones, gods capable of standing firm in the face of anarchy to protect the precious things that cowered behind.

A god of peace! What good was that? When had they ever known—when would they ever know?—such a thing as peace? His people required gods. He understood that. But he did not. He had stared evil in the face and no amount of prayer—for he had prayed! With his father's head under the blade, how he prayed!—had held that evil off.

The Picts. The Picts.

It was because of the Picts that he was the son of a slain king, a hired sword, and a godless man.

Beholding Columba that day, these thoughts came to Aedan, because in the man he saw a warrior more than a monk, one as large and as solid as many he had met on the battlefield, almost as large as he himself. And, though Aedan had little use for men who made a study of the divine, he began to wonder what fate had led this particular man to Dal Riata. He wondered what the abbot had done to anger those in power in Hibernia, what crime he had committed to have been exiled *here*, for there was no surer sign of two things: they needed him out of the way; and he was too powerful to be killed outright.

As the abbot climbed onto the dock, Aedan found to his vast surprise that he was actually intrigued. So, when, with the first blow, the guard awaiting the abbot unbalanced him and, with the second, sent him sprawling over the dock's edge, Aedan, despite himself, was moved to intercede on behalf of a man for whom on any other day he would have had absolutely no use at all.

With the water, memory of the battle came flooding. He, Columba, stumbling from that clean white tent. His cousin Ainmire shouting, calling him back, shouting for the guards, sounds which to Columba's sickened mind came muted and indistinct. Somehow he had gotten himself on horseback. He had to get away. But not to his dear monastery of Daire. How could he? He was unclean.

He could go home, he had thought suddenly, to his parents, the beloved countryside of his childhood. Maybe there sense could be made of it. Order the madness in his mind. A man had been alive and now he was dead! Weary beyond reckoning, he had swayed in the saddle all that wild ride from the battlefield, rain falling, the leagues racing by, feeling nothing even when the showers subsided and the hills rolled out wetly before him in spring's full bloom. He was in a place of darkness, his senses deadened and all rational thought deserted. If he did pray, he did not remember it.

Until, finally, his mare heaving with exhaustion, he had crested the hill-ridge above the place where he had been born, a gentle valley embracing a little loch. That was where he had swum as a child, his hound paddling valiantly beside, helping to keep him afloat. The water glistened below him, blue-grey in the dawn's light, so still, so inviting, beckoning him back. There, on the far hillside, was his childhood home, a *rath* of sweet-smelling stone, large, sprawling. His

eyes feasted upon the farmstead enclosed within its thick stone wall. Pigs snuffled about, chickens, the family's hunting dogs. Smoke rose from the central house, its door open to admit the slanting sunlight. Inside, with age-old rituals, the servants would be stoking the fire to heat stew in the cauldron and fry oatcakes on the griddle. His mother would be at her loom, his father regaling her with tales of the latest horse he had won at bet at the local fair, the best yet.

Columba hesitated. How could he go in?

Then somehow he was at the door. He was calling out. His mother was holding him. His father was shouting.

Then, darkness in his mind, and it was unkind.

Try as he had to forget it, what had happened next he remembered all too clearly. He had awoken sometime later in his old bed in the side-chamber which in his youth had served as the children's sleeping quarters. He had been bathed, his clerical robes, stained with blood, removed and washed and put on him again. He had the sense that he had been gone from himself for quite some time. His mother was slumbering in a chair beside him, holding his hand in sleep. When he moved, she sprang awake. In her eyes was comprehension: word of the battle must have preceded him, or stalked him home. Besides, there had been blood on his robes.

"It is true, Crimthann?" she whispered, using the childhood endearment he permitted only them. It meant *fox*—as a boy he had been full of mischief and very, very clever.

He looked away, unable to reply.

Her hands convulsed around his and she nodded grimly. Rising stiffly, she left him. He sat up and looked around. His mattress was soft, the best goose-down, a fire crackled in its brazier, the same rich furs he remembered from childhood hung on the walls, keeping out drafts, keeping them warm. There was a faded but unmistakable elegance to the chamber and its furnishings, which he saw with new appreciation. In his youth Columba had known only surfeit and ease. He had been one of the lucky ones. At the time, however, it had been, simply, home.

When his mother returned, she brought with her food and drink: cheese rounds wrapped in linen, smoked fish strips, the half-eaten bread loaf from the breakfast table. His father was with her. Columba had no appetite, but under their regard he forced himself to eat. His mother sat with him, a hand on his leg, his arm, any part of him, her soft, wrinkled palm a comfort. Columba looked with love upon her, her grey eyes cloudy with age, her skin lined by time and fear—for him. With a long stick, his father poked silently at the peat bricks in the brazier. The embers hissed.

There was a prolonged silence from which he drew solace. Whatever he had done, he was safe here, with them. Un-judged, he could not be found unworthy.

When he had finished his meal, his father stilled at the brazier, cradling the stick in his palms. Without turning from the flames, he said carefully, "Son, you should go to the flagstone".

Leaving them, he had trudged up the hill, finding it with no difficulty: a flagstone lying in the far pasture above the loch. With his boot he nudged away some of the overhanging grass to discover that the stone was much as he remembered it, unremarkable in most respects save that in places its surface had been hollowed and in those cups rainwater pooled. His father was correct to have suggested he come here. This was where he, when just a boy no more than five years of age, had had his first instinct of his God.

He recalled it so clearly, as one is wont to do those moments that mark and turn a life. It was a day much like any other. He had been tending the cattle in the field and they were lolling about him in the intermittent sun and the high green grass when he had come upon the flagstone embedded in the turf. He had bent down and poked his fingers in the water-filled holes, disturbing their still surfaces. Then he stepped upon the stone, just to make it in some sense his own, as any child would.

On that day, he had turned and turned about, faster and faster, carefree and giggling, until the fields about him blurred and he became dizzy. Abruptly, the cloud-cover broke and a shaft of sunlight beamed directly down upon him. It blinded him momentarily and he fell backwards onto the stone. Water from the stone's cup-holes seeped into his tunic and he was about to get to his feet again when he suddenly heard a voice in his ear, gentle, like the sighing of the wind or his mother's and father's voices blended, and it said, *Be still, Little One.*

Aside from the cattle he was quite alone. But instead of fear, he was filled with happiness. He felt so full of love that he thought his heart might burst. It threatened to spill right up out of his throat.

He had never felt such a thing before. That is, he loved his mother and his father and his brother and sisters, and he loved to run and to sing. He didn't even overmind the chores to which he was put. But this sort of love? He hadn't the words for it then, but it had been encompassing, as if it were both within him and seated next to him on the stone at the same time.

He looked all around, still finding himself alone. He asked the wind, "Who are you?"

It answered, *I am.*

He ran home to his parents. His mother was bustling about the *rath*, doing motherly things, his father was whittling a yew rod into a bow before the fire. When they smiled at his tale in a distracted way, he repeated himself to make them listen. His father ruffled his hair, saying teasingly that perhaps he had seen a god.

A god. Yes, it had rather felt like he supposed a god might feel. "Which one?" he asked them.

Still believing it a game (graced with a sharp, nimble intellect, Columba was ever-so-good at games, and his parents encouraged them), his father said, "Which god, you ask? Well, Crimthann, that would depend. Was he dark and terrible?" His father pulled a frightening face. "Did he growl and drool and try to snatch you up? If so, it was Arawn. If you see that one again, son, run the other way as quick as you can. He is lonely in his darkness and wants us living ones for company."

“Or,” his mother said with a quelling frown at his father, “it might have been Lugh. Was he terribly beautiful? Shining? So bright you had to look away?”

Columba considered this for a moment. “It was bright,” he agreed. “But not terrible. Gentle, like a friend. Or like you, Mama. It might have been Lugh. I know Lugh is good at many things. But does he love?”

“Love? What do you mean, *love*?”

“It made me very happy.”

His parents shared a confused look as they realized that for him, at least, this was no game.

“And it spoke to me.”

They were suddenly very still. “What did it say, Crimthann?” his father asked, his knife at rest for the first time.

“*I am.*”

Very slowly, his mother sat herself down, her hand over her heart. Laying aside the unfinished bow, his father stood up. And Columba knew not only that, at last, he had their attention, but that they seemed to be full of fear. For him.

It took him many years to fully comprehend why: he had been given a glimpse of a deity profoundly different from the ones that either of them had known. It was not that they were godless. They were as fervent in their devotions as any two had ever been. Rather, it was the nature of their gods, for the deities of his people were found in the natural world about them. They dwelt in the hollows in the hills, and in the seas, and the streams, and the woodlands. Their gods and goddesses loved secret caves welling with water. They loved oak groves. They loved, they inhabited, mountaintops and the ocean’s depths. They controlled the harvest and the hunt, battle-fury and fertility and sex. They were young and beautiful and had sons and daughters and were everlasting.

But neither his mother nor father had ever communed with any of the gods directly. No—for that they required the intercession of the learned ones, the *druidi*, who were the custodians of the gods’ lore, their prophecy, and their sacrifice. For, as Columba was later to discover for himself, the gods were capricious, vindictive, and tricky. They fought incessantly amongst themselves and, like willful and malicious children, delighted in confounding and tormenting their devotees. If a sacrifice displeased them, they would ruin a harvest. If a prayer sounded sour to their ears, they would take the life of a child. They could turn the tide of battle, they could bring flood or famine, they delighted in death and in anarchy. And it was difficult to appease them. Only the *druidi* knew how to propitiate them—and by their own admission the *druidi*, too, often got it wrong. This was the nature and the power of their gods and the lives of his parents—of all of them—were ruled by their whims.

But on that day, when the color had returned to his mother’s cheeks and his father had put aside his bow and his knife, not to take them up again until long after Columba was abed, his parents had told him of the new god, the one preached by Patrick. The one called the Christ. And when the name was uttered in the *rath* he heard again a voice which said, *I am.*

Standing over the flagstone now, the horror of the battlefield, of the white tent, the impulse, the flash of blood-spray, still echoing in his mind, he prayed. For his God to speak to him. To show him the way. That he might be forgiven.

*Orans*, shoulders thrown open and head back, arms splayed, mouth crying wide to heaven, he beseeched his Christ.

He prayed as the sun crept down the sky. He prayed as it set. He prayed deep into the night, but was granted neither vision nor a visitation by his God. Exhausted, he finally wrapped himself in his cloak, lay prostrate upon the flagstone, and fell into a dreamless sleep.

It was not the light of dawn which woke him. Rather, it was the sense that he was no longer alone, the surety, even with eyes tightly shut, that some presence lurked near. At first, exhilaration shot through him: *his God had come!*

But then, radiating from the presence, he felt malice and despair. He was instantly alert. It did not feel like his God. Whatever it was did not wish him well.

He wrested open his eyes. He realized that, though still prone, he was no longer lying against the cool, pockmarked stone. He was *above* it, hovering inches over its surface. He tried to shout, but was in the throes of some consuming malady—his arms were clamped to his sides. He could not move them. The only thing he could move was his eyes. Against his will—with all his heart, he did not want to *see* what it was that had taken control of his physicality—he looked down at his feet.

He tried to scream. No sound emerged. His throat was constricted by some invisible force.

Looming over him, staring down at him, was a dark, man-like, mass. Except that it was not a man. Where its head, its shoulders, arms, torso, legs should have been, was disfigured blackness, as if it was attempting to don the shape of man but was clumsy, wholly unfamiliar with corporeal form. Though the sun was gently rising in the east behind it, the entity cast no shadow. It did not so much block out the light as consume it. It was the absence of light.

The dark shape hovered there. It did not touch him. It did not move. It did not speak. Columba knew that it was waiting, but for what he knew not.

Then he heard it. It never moved, no mouth formed from the void where lips should have been to speak the words, but nevertheless Columba heard a guttural whisper in his mind.

*Come. Be mine.*

Columba was never able to say precisely what happened next. The thing was watching him, waiting; simply waiting for him to give himself over to it. He inhaled fresh air. He considered what it sought. Had he sunk so low? Was he damned? Behind it, the dawn bloomed.

Then, words again filled his mind, his own words which, until they arrived to ward off the evil, he had not known that he knew.

*No. I still have hope.*

With a clap like thunder, and a shriek, the thing vanished and Columba crashed back down upon the stone. Instantly, he scrambled up, brandishing his staff and whirling about.

He was shaking violently. He wiped the sweat from his brow. He sucked in breath but could not steady himself.

He had attracted evil. Worse: he had been propositioned by it. In his darkest hour of need, it was not his God which had come for him. His God was nowhere to be seen.

In the east the sun cleared the hills. Below him, light filled his family's loch. It had been impulse to come home. He had wanted comfort from his kin, to see their beloved faces, but now he could also admit that he had secretly hoped that they could help him avert the course he had foolishly laid for himself, that what would undoubtedly come next might yet be undone. Now, he knew that it could not be, and that he had a choice: to submit either to whatever his God would require of him, or to the darkness.

At that moment his path became clear to him, as bright, as blinding, as dawn: the light might now be denied him, but to the darkness he would never willingly go.

The abbot, Aedan could see, was fighting mightily for his life. He kicked and thrashed, his cloak billowing around him, but could not make headway against the guard who was keeping him under with his spear-butt. His monks were no help—they were being kept in the *curragh* at swordpoint.

"Hold!" Aedan shouted at the guard, perplexed. Hadn't the abbot been given safe passage?

The guard knew him and obeyed. But the abbot did not pop to the surface as Aedan had hoped. He had come too late. Rather, the abbot sank farther, arms outstretched as if he were upon the cross of his god.

This was going to require a bit more effort than Aedan had expected to expend. With a heartfelt curse, he dove belly-down onto the dock, leaned over the edge and fished around until he managed to grab hold of one of the abbot's hands which had floated up, a last grasp for the light.

With a grunt, he hauled the abbot onto the dock. The men in the boat were shouting. The abbot lay there, unseeing, his mouth agape very much like a dead fish. With more invective, Aedan flopped him over with a squelch and pounded on his back with both hands.

There was no response. Aedan cursed again—he was meant to *tend* to the abbot, not to oversee his demise: *what was this mischief?*—but he kept pounding until, finally, sea-water gushed from the abbot's mouth. His eyes fluttered open and he inhaled sharply. His body was taken by violent coughing, water continuing to dribble unceremoniously from his lips until he was at last able to gulp in air.

Masking his irritation, Aedan looked up at the guards looming over him and asked as casually as he could so as not to scare them into closing ranks, "Grillan, did Conall tell you to *drown* him?"

"Why, yes, my lord, he did," Grillan replied. "More or less."

"More or less?"

"We were told that when the Christian came, we should take care of him," Grillan answered. The other men were muttering their displeasure that their sport had been so summarily halted. "And here he is," Grillan exclaimed, "or my old mam's a sheep: look at him! Shiny forehead, and that ridiculous helmet of fuzz." Grillan pointed to the abbot's shaved forehead, the tonsure of hair that

grew from ear-to-ear over the top of his pate, in the Hibernian fashion, rather than around the back, in the Roman, splayed crazily now on the dock. “And the crossed sticks at his neck. Bah! Nothing but trouble, my lord. A good a gift as any to Manannan. The sea-god likes the holy ones best: so full of themselves they are, good fodder for his sea-steeds, helps ’em pull his bloody big water-chariot. So why bother yourself over it? Leave him to us.”

“Would that I could, Grillan,” Aedan said, settling back on his haunches as he eyed the abbot, taking in the details of his face: hair, blond once, now greying with age; grey eyes, sharp and clear, like the sea; face weathered, but strong and well-defined; a long nose, a mouth which looked more apt to smile than to scowl.

Columba looked as if he might live. Aedan got to his feet. “Would that I could. But what did Conall say to you, *precisely*?”

“It wasn’t him, my lord. What I mean is, one of his men came all the way down here last night, all the way down the river to bother us over our ale, saying that a Christian would be coming and that we were *to take care of him*.”

“That’s all?”

“Yes, but you know how he said it. He said that we should *take care of him*.” Grillan gave an exaggerated nod, winking one eye widely. Just in case Aedan had somehow mistaken his meaning despite his broad efforts, he repeated the gesture.

Aedan sighed. There was a mistake here, but it was unclear exactly who had made it. “Right,” he said. “Well, you have done that, to be sure. Best leave him to me, now. I will take care of him, and his men. Manannan shall have to wait for other sea-gifts: these men are for the king.”

### *These men are for the king?*

Though the young man spoke with a very formal dialect, an older form of Columba’s own speech, Columba could easily understand him. Breath labored, throat tortured, lungs screaming in pain, nonetheless a sense of hope shot through Columba as, still coughing, he got to his feet unsteadily: the *ruiri* had received notice of his coming, by whom Columba did not know, and had put him, and now his men, under the care of this young man.

But who was he, this stranger who had unaccountably saved them? Columba looked rapidly for signs. He was tall; they were of a height, in fact. He looked to be in his late twenties. His eyes and brows and long hair were as black as a raven’s. His cloak was unremittingly black, too, his short jacket the color of the sea after a messy storm: grey, with an angry undertone of deep green. His trews were faintly striped brown and black, and his calf-high boots, also black, were so well-worn as to fit like a second skin. The overall effect of his attire was to accentuate the blackness of his eyes. A great two-handed broad-sword was slung in a wooden scabbard over his back—the sword would have scraped the ground if he had worn it at his waist. From his belt hung a short sword; in his boot nestled a dagger.

A warrior then, but otherwise unadorned; he did not seem to favor the ostentatious gold and silver jewelry beloved by Columba’s people and, Columba had to presume, his own. These were literal signs of status; by them, one man or

woman knew the precise worth of another. Nor did he favor the long mustaches which Hibernian warriors sported almost as a rule. He was clean-shaven, with high cheekbones and full lips, and there was a forbidding look in his black eyes.

He was a warrior, that much was clear. But of how high a status? This Columba needed to know, but he could not say. Were the young man a high lord, his clothing would have been far more gaudy: back home, in Hibernia, a slave was permitted to wear only one color, and a farmer two, but a king could sport as many as six colors at once. This man before him? By the signs, not so high as that. Yet, despite his patent lack of display, Columba could almost believe that before him stood the *ruiri* himself: there was an air of ability and command about him. Despite what they had understood to be their orders, when the young man had spoken, the guards had instinctively obeyed.

“Who are you?” Columba croaked. “Where is the *ruiri*?”

“I am Aedan mac Gabran,” the young man said with a curt nod. “The king, my cousin Conall, is away. Gather your things. I am to take you—all of you—to Dun Ad.”

As halls of kings went, Aedan has always found the Great Hall of the *ruiri* of Dal Riata solid and sturdy and stalwart, just like its people. If it was neither so imposing as The Windy Hall of the kings of Strat Clut which clings to The Rock above the sea, nor so grand as The Eyrie of the kings of Gododdin, towering Din Eidyn, he did not mind. Aedan had seen those wonders of the Britons and, in them, had longed for his home.

At the hall’s center, its heart, was a great cooking pit, kerbed with slabs of dressed and ornamented granite. A fire crackled within, a fire which was never allowed to go out, and over that fire meats roasted on spits continuously, pork and beef and mutton, for, as his father had always said, on his hospitality is a king famed. Over that pit, suspended on iron chains from thick oak roof-beams, cauldrons bubbled and hissed with stews. Torches sputtered in sockets on the walls, and here and there oil lamps smoked on tall iron stands. The walls were lined with furs and wool tapestries, woven into intricate patterns in shades of sea and earth, hill and tree. Fresh rushes were strewn underfoot, and all about were couches and benches covered with the furs of beaver and sheep and seal. All these Aedan remembered with longing from his childhood: all these had been his father’s.

The hall was filling with people: the women of the Cenel Loarn, and the old men, now past war. Hunting dogs snuffed about, and children; and grumbling servants and slaves who by the whip had been taught over the long desperate years to serve in silence. But, save for himself, tonight there were no young men: they had been called to the hosting with Conall.

A woman, young, lush, regal, waited by the fire at the hall’s center, her gaze level and direct as they approached—Eithne, *rigain*, queen of Dal Riata. Her eyes were blue, her hair golden as wheat tufts, softly curling and long. She wore a gown of white linen trimmed with blue silk, a rare and precious commodity from the east for which his cousin had had to pay dearly. The silk was the color of a calm sea where it meets the strand—ultramarine and shimmering: the very

same blue as her eyes. On her neck was a string of river peals; on her head a diadem of gold.

She caught Aedan's gaze immediately, as he knew she would, and then her eyes never left him as he led the monks to her. With motions she meant to be imperceptible but which he, as familiar with her ways as anyone could be, read for the self-corrections they were, she arranged herself to her best advantage. She smoothed her gown with taut fingers. She fingered her gold rings until their jewels faced outwards, the better to catch and to reflect the torchlight. She breathed deeply. Settled, perfected, she achieved an arresting image; she always did.

With long practice, Aedan schooled his own expression, adopting the manner he always took with her now, becoming as remote in affection as the cold, bleak mountain fastnesses to the north. He did this to protect himself because she was the first—the only—woman he had ever loved.

When Aedan presented Columba and Columba his monks, Eithne accepted their oaths of friendship with a graciousness Aedan was certain she did not feel. Rather, she seemed peevish tonight, but also fevered, as if lit from within by a restless fire. Aedan suspected its source: lust and need. He could feel it emanating from her, like waves of a turmoiled sea.

Eithne offered Columba and his monks the hospitality of Conall's hall, at least for the evening. It was formulaic, expected. She was the queen. As always, she followed protocol to the letter. It was not her place to offer them her husband's protection, however. For that, Columba would have to wait for Conall's return. That was a boon which Aedan was uncertain the king would bestow—while Conall had commanded him to attend the abbot, he had in no way revealed his plans for him. Indeed, the mere presence of this new company in the hall was causing their people unease. They were eyeing the monks as if they were sea-creatures washed up from the deep, still thrashing. Columba was an abbot of the Christians, a disturbing faith that offered its adherents no discernable rewards in this life, a faith which the Scots had no wish to follow. Moreover, he was a Christian from Hibernia, whose claim on their dominion they sought ever to avoid.

Yet Aedan thought he might comprehend Conall's reasons for allowing this particular Christian an audience. The Picts harried them, year after year. They raided incessantly; from the petty warfare with the Picts they had no peace. Their prospects had not improved after the death of Aedan's father, Gabran, despite Conall's promises to their people at his acclamation. If anything, they had gotten worse, although this was an observation which Aedan would never willingly share with his cousin. Dal Riata needed a strong king, and it was not yet clear to him or, he believed, to any of them, if that man was Conall.

What was more, they had overzealous overlords on every other border. The Britons to the south and to the east, of Strat Clut, and Rheged, and Gododdin, demanded more tribute every year.

They needed allies, plain and simple, as many and as powerful as they could get. The abbot might yet prove useful. Until the man had been tested, it was impossible to say. Who were his people? Who cared for his life? Most importantly, what might he be able to offer Conall in exchange for it?

Until Conall revealed his full mind on the matter and either took the abbot and his men under his protection, or cast them out, or killed them, both Aedan and Eithne had best tread carefully. And so, Aedan asked for a place for Columba at her table and she assented. But, as they made their way to the food-laden table, she put a hand on his arm and deliberately held on. He held himself very still. She stole these intimacies from him whenever she could. Against his skin her hand was warm and firm, but it also quivered, as if she were a ravenous animal, shackled against its will, with the red meat of a kill just beyond the length of its chain.

He glanced about surreptitiously—they would be watching; all the women of the court, eager to be the first to bring proof of Eithne's infidelity to the king, which was a thing Aedan would not permit. He would not allow Eithne to harm herself, or to be harmed so, under the pretext of taking his own seat, he gently removed her hand. But when she took the seat beside him, resting herself against him, her thigh to his thigh, down the whole length of it, just as she had used to, he knew what she was thinking: it had to be tonight. Conall was not here. Neither were his men.

Their opportunity was at hand. Would he take it?

She turned blue eyes to him. "I did this, you know," she whispered, so softly that had to lean in to hear it.

He wanted to ignore her, but there was a subtext to her words which he found disturbing. So he faced her and, in his silent regard, she read permission to continue.

"Last night," she said, eyes aglow, "after Conall took me, after he planted his seed in me—he always does, you know, before he goes hosting; and when he does it is always you I think of—I told him what to do. Which of you to leave behind to see to the Christian, he had wondered? Whom to spare?"

She beamed at him triumphantly. "I pretended indifference, but when he pressed for my opinion, I told him. *Aedan will take it the hardest* was all I had to say. And you have, haven't you? You hate this."

She giggled, not precisely to hurt him, he was sure, but because she was full of the sense of her continued power over him. "Of course the idea pleased Conall—he knows to fear you, though he does not fully understand why. Honestly, he makes it too easy. But, you must understand that I did it for you. For *us*."

For *us*. *There is no longer an us*, he wanted to shout. *Except in memory*. Looking at her, at her luminous beauty, her hot gaze, Aedan replayed in his mind the decision she had made, not for the first time. He would never forget it. Before he had gone into the wild glens at the fore of his father's army, Eithne had promised to wait for him. He had gone to war so full of hope. But then ... but then ... His father's body, broken, befouled. Abandoned in the glen. Their army, their men. Aedan shuddered. Strewn. Wasted. He, staggering home, mad with despair. Chaos, here, at the foul news he bore. Their *rui*, dead. Who to acclaim king? His befuddlement when it was Conall chosen. Of all people! His cousin.

But Eithne, his beloved Eithne. She had kept her promise; the one true thing. She had come to him in his dark hut, in his madness, and loved him.

The memory of that last time came unerringly to mind. It never took any effort on his part: it was seared there. He had held onto her desperately, so very thankful to be proven capable of feeling. She was the proof that he was alive, that there were things for which he must continue to live. But after taking her fill, as she lay on him, she had whispered in his ear that, in his absence, even while his father was being stolen from him, his own cousin, Conall, had come calling. That that morning, after his acclamation, Conall had called for her again. That he wanted her and he would make her *rigain*, if she would have him.

Love or position? Passion or protection? With the death of his father, Aedan was so reduced in status as to be barely a lord. He had not a single client of his own and no cattle. But Conall had become the *ruiri* of Dal Riata. Of course it was Conall she had chosen.

Five years on, Aedan could no longer fault her for that. What he could fault her for was what had happened next. Aedan could still be her love, she had said, as long as what had been open and free and full of youthful joy became hidden.

Gutted by her betrayal, he had shoved her off him. She was stunned by his rejection, so she tried to hurt him, to turn him. It was a mistake. “You have given me the only peace I have ever known! The only joy!” she had cried. “This is your father’s fault!”

She pounded his chest, her radiant blond curls flying wildly about her face. “Foolish, weak man! You were so close to having it all! Ruling us all! And gladly would I have submitted! *Daily* would I have submitted! But now you are *nothing!*”

He had held her at bay by the wrists. She had not liked it. She hated any sort of imprisonment. It was a fear she carried with her from childhood. Remembering this, unable to truly hurt anything he loved, he released her. She bared her teeth. “He deserved it!” she snarled.

“Deserved what?” he had asked, knowing even as he did so that it was a mistake, because it was his father she was speaking of. He ought not open himself to her, to give her the opportunity to wound him further. But he was young and unschooled in these matters: he loved her and he was in pain and he could not help himself.

“He deserved to pay with his life! For sundering you from me!”

That was it. Out of pity and need, Aedan had been prepared to concede her many things—perhaps even her union with his cousin—but at that moment it became very simple: there would be no forgiving. Even now, five years later, as she caught and held his gaze for a long moment, then gazed even longer at his mouth, her craving for him palpable, a heat on her skin, he could not forgive her. He never would.

But she refused to see. It was not herself she blamed for her present predicament; rather she believed that the only impediment keeping them apart was his pride—that he would not stoop to lay with a woman who serviced his cousin.

She said, licking her lips, “I crave your mouth, the warmth of it, anywhere on me. You can put it anywhere you like. Let us leave this feast. Let us love under the stars, like we used to. Do you remember? How you craved me? And I you?”

He could not help but blush. He fingered the food on his trencher to avoid having to look at her, but not before he caught her knowing smile. “Aedan,” she whispered. “I am *rigain* now: I can protect us.”

“What about Dunchad?” What about her son by the king, the son who could have been his?

Her eyes narrowed. “Dunchad?” she asked. “Conall would never hurt him.” Then she leaned into him again, her smile seductive. “Come with me outside. I know you still love me.”

He looked her steadily in the eye. By the gods, it was not false: he had loved her. Their love was the sweetest thing he had ever known. But in one thing she was wholly correct: there was an impediment to his submitting to that love again, but it was not his pride.

It was his honor.

He was just about to tell this her when, suddenly, with a rending crash, the door of the Great Hall burst open and guards rushed in, shouting at the top of their lungs.

Eithne struggled to make sense of it. He was quicker. He was on his feet, drawing his sword from over his shoulder with a rasp, light glinting off the blade.

He focused on the shouting, tried to make sense of the words as the hall erupted in pandemonium.

“The Picts!”

Columba raced after the Scots as they flew to the gate. Down the winding steps of Dun Ad he ran, across the terraces, down, down, down, until he reached the vantage of the gate’s rampart. There, with Scots pressed close around him, the stink of their fear in his nostrils, Columba did not need moonlight to see where the battle raged: the farmsteads below him were on fire. Dark shadows—the Pictish host—skittered over the black landscape. It looked like an army of ants, a dense throng on the plains. There were so many. And yet, for their number, they moved quickly, being on horseback, which horrified him, wheeling and circling in an orchestrated mass, intent upon destruction.

Dear God, the Picts! Who more fearsome? Who more barbaric? None: the Picts, Britannia’s First People, were the only ones whom during their long occupation of this island the Romans had never subdued. In fear of them, across Britannia’s neck the Empire had stretched not one, but two Great Walls, of stone, of turf, Columba knew not, though he had heard that they spanned hundreds of leagues, formidable barriers against the chaos in the north. To no avail. Over those Walls the Picts still streamed to plunder, to reave, or around them by boat they sailed, and all to the south despaired.

The stories about them astounded even him—he who had lived in miracle daily. The Picts, it was said, were ruled by women, and mated with animals, and, after death in battle, re-animated to fight again. Each tribe possessed a great cauldron into which corpses were submerged for just this purpose. This is what made them so formidable an enemy—they fought to the death, a death of which they seemed to have no fear. How could one prevail against a foe for whom life had no value?

His breath rasped loudly in his ears, its syncopated cycle irregular with fear, like the beat of his heart. The cries of the men below were borne up to him on the wind, bitter with smoke and the reek of burning flesh. Already, he could smell death.

The queen, Eithne, scrambled up to join them. The rich folds of her tunic brushed his cloak as she clawed through her people for the best view of the fighting below. He caught her scent—lavender, an incongruous aroma which he always associated with far-off lands where, he had heard, civility once ruled hand-in-hand with Rome. But under that scent was the stench of ash and smoke.

“How do we fare?” he demanded.

Eithne fixed him with a blunt, assessing gaze. Her hair, as it brushed his arm, was as soft as silk, and her eyes were impossibly blue. *What is impossible is that such beauty should exist where Christ has no hold*, he thought. He found her so beautiful that he had a hard time meeting her gaze.

“Under normal circumstances, it would take a host ten times that size to breach our walls,” she said. Then, she gasped, crying out, “Oh, no! No! Look!”

A column of Pictish horse riders had broken away from the main host and was galloping towards outbuildings huddled under the lee of Dun Ad’s walls. By some miracle, these buildings had thus far escaped the flames. The lead riders flung torches into the air. The torches spun end-over-end, rotating wands of fire. Unerringly, they found the thatched roofs. With a roar audible from the walls, the buildings burst into flame.

Wails of fear and horror for the Scots trapped within those outbuildings rose from the watchers on the gate: the fortress could not open its gates to give them sanctuary lest the Picts also gain entry.

Pity welled within Columba. “And these?” he asked her.

“These what?”

“These circumstances.”

“Our fighting men are away on a hosting, so we are weak to the point of ruin. Yet, even with their number,”—she indicated with a lift of her chin the Picts below—“they can not hope to succeed with a direct assault. What can be their purpose? Dun Ad has never been taken from without! Not in all its days! Or since the sons of Erc built it, or records began, which in this case is the same thing. Surely they know that!”

She said these things hotly enough that Columba believed her. Besides, though she spoke as if to a child who knew nothing about the art of war, he did. Quite a lot. It was clear to Columba that as a fortress Dun Ad was nearly inviolable.

Then a spurt of fighting on the battlefield reclaimed their attention. Out on the plains, another building burst into flame.

“This is incomprehensible!” she cried. “The Picts do not *siege*, they *raid*. Why have they attacked us here, tonight? *Why this night?*” Fear and uncertainty creased her brow. “Thank the gods that Aedan is with us!”

“Aedan?” Columba asked, unable to keep the skepticism from his voice. It was an extraordinary proclamation. What could one man do against so many?

She huffed: it was as if he had insulted them all. “How well do you know ... what do you call them, your praise-poems to your god—”

“My *Psalms*?”

She shrugged. “No doubt you know them inside-and-out. It is the same for him. He has made a study of war: he has had to. He is canny. And yet he is an animal. It is a deadly combination, I assure you.”

“But there are a hundred Picts out there,” Columba pressed. “And the host is away with the king. How many men does Aedan have?”

“He led through the gates thirty-or-so ...”

“Warriors? Fighting men?”

“Old men and ... and boys.”

For a timeless moment he and Eithne simply stared at one other, unable to speak.

“*When does the king return?*” he asked.

“Not tonight,” she whispered.

She spun about, her tunic swirling as she clambered off the rampart. “The women must be armed!” she cried, running headlong up the path, screaming for her servants as she went.

Unbidden, then, on the ramparts with terrified Scots about him, muttering with fear, there came to Columba dark memories of another battle, and other bloodshed, and other men weeping. In those memories, he stood not on a rampart watching a battle which threatened to engulf him, but knee-deep in the muck of one, with men hacking one other all around; and then a tent of beautiful white linen and one man, one tricky, eager man, bearing down on him, determined, a mad light in his eyes; and in Columba’s hand was not his pastoral staff but a dagger which had felt to him meet and righteous and good.

Sweat broke out on his brow. But there was no escape—no escape from that bloodshed or the blood now before him; no escape from the bloodshed that seemed to stain his soul.

Not knowing what else to do, he prayed, a reflex of the divine communion which he had lost. That had been torn asunder with one true, slashing arc of a blade.

*Deo adiuuante ... with God’s help ...*

He knew not for whom he prayed. He did not pray for the Scots, or for the Picts. He did not pray for his monks, or for himself.

He supposed it made no difference: so he prayed for none of them; he prayed for them all.

# Douglas Dunn

## Retirement

*(For Frances)*

Somehow it all gets done and over with —  
The office emptied of its archival dross,  
Papers re-read, or binned, the years of breath  
Re-breathed, moment by moment. Why feel cross  
At this departure? Why feel worse than sad  
For rusted, faded memos, decisions taken,  
Or not taken, the good, indifferent, bad,  
Right ways of doing, and the mistaken?

Permit no tears, but still, allow a sigh  
Closing a door on what was once my life,  
My days, my work. Farewell, and so goodbye  
While haar is forming over North-East Fife.  
I feel like Jack Hawkins, his ship going down —  
“Confidential books over the side? Carry on.”  
And Number One fills bin-bags for the shredder.  
Not Donald Sinden, but I trust in her.

Not pushed, but oh-so-very-gently shoved  
Towards the book-loaded van and a pension,  
To shelving shadows with the books I’ve loved.  
Don’t laugh at Senex. Stuff your condescension.

# The Wash

So much time wasted wanting to be remembered  
Ends with desire to be forgotten,  
As one chirrup absent from the dawn chorus,  
An unclaimed seat in the theatre,  
A volume missing from the library shelf.

Ambition determines you, then trips over itself;  
But I was never a self-lover, or a self-hater.  
Is it age that creates this feeling, to bore us,  
Or twisted self-knowledge gone rotten,  
Or dreams allowed to be dismembered?

I look at the Spring's predictable daffodils  
Bugling yellow silences, snowdrops and crocus  
Already gone, fritillaries a-bloom,  
Tulips, bluebells and others still to come,  
And summer's lilies, lupins, and roses.

And all the rest of them, florals and edibles,  
And all the rest of botanical hocus-pocus  
In seasonal wonder, marguerites, delphinium,  
Periwinkles to be pressed in a slim volume,  
Honeysuckle, marigolds, whatever Hortus proposes.

It all depends on the luck of the weather,  
As everything else does, in a sense,  
And everyone. It all comes out in the wash?  
*Hmn.* But it could be in someone else's favour,  
With the gale and the sleet in your girning face.

Better off forgotten, like scorched heather,  
Your weathered and withered intelligence,  
Your talent thinning like hair, maladroit tosh  
Set down in a notebook as if to savour  
Another stab at despair and disgrace.

It's odd how ambition stumbles, and falls,  
As the young overtake you, with a pat on the back,  
If you're lucky, a smile from over the shoulder.  
I did that too. Or I suppose I did.  
No harm intended; it's just the way it is,

The way of the world, with its doors and its walls.  
Is this all because I've no Muse in my sack?  
I don't feel like Sisyphus, I feel like his boulder —  
Something used, or abused, for a task that's not ended,  
That won't be, and certainly not with this.

So, fall off a barstool swigging your hemlock  
For what we have here is perseverance's tedium.  
The bowler's seven feet tall and very fast,  
Their striker kicks like a camel and you're in goal,  
Their scrum-half's fleet-footed as destiny.

Don't worry. Your reputation's safe with me,  
Old pal of mine, shadow, my friend, old chum.  
How long does a book, or sheet of paper, last?  
If the answer is hundreds of years, does that console?  
Go early to bed and outstare the clock.

## Jana Laiz

# Alba Obsessed

What's a nice Jewish girl from Long Island doing with an obsession for all things Scottish? I'm not sure I can explain. I can only tell you that it all started that day in the mid-1980s when I heard *The Thistle and Shamrock* with host, Fiona Ritchie, for the first time. I can't tell you what was playing on the radio; I can only tell you that it felt like coming home. Like I remembered something very deep, so deep I couldn't place it, but there. This knowing. It was almost a physical pain, a longing.

I became obsessed with the music of Scotland. I bought albums. Archie Fisher, Cilla Fisher & Artie Trezise, Jean Redpath, Dougie MacLean, Dick Gaughan, Silly Wizard, The Tannahill Weavers, Battlefield Band, Ossian, Andy M. Stewart. I listened like a woman possessed. I began to sing to myself (I'm no singer). I seemed to understand what the Scots words meant. I read Robert Burns. I read Scottish folklore and legends of Tamlin and Arthur. I contemplated leaving NYU and going to Gaelic College in New Brunswick, Canada. I took penny whistle lessons and Celtic harp lessons. I went to concerts and festivals, and fell in love with live music. I read all there was to read about Scotland. Guidebooks became my thing. I watched Scottish movie upon Scottish movie; Gregory's Girl, Comfort & Joy, Dear Frankie, Local Hero... you get the picture.

I was in the midst of all this craziness while studying Chinese and working with Asian refugees in New York City.

But my love for things Scottish never diminished and in the mid-'90s I began to write my Scottish/American fantasy, *The Twelfth Stone*. It took years to write in the midst of raising a family and working full time. But as soon as I would I put on Dougie MacLean's Perthshire Amber, among others, I was transported to a land I had visited only in my imagination. And the writing flowed.

Later, I found a Scotsman and his Gaelic speaking, bagpipe-playing wife to be my consultants on the book. After reading my manuscript, they were shocked to learn I had never been to Scotland. They "knew" my characters. I was thrilled.

*The Twelfth Stone* came out last year to wonderful reviews and an award or two. I'll be taking a trip to Scotland in May 2014 with my Gaelic speaking consultant (and now best friend) and I know it will be like coming home.

# Michael Russell MSP Scottish Photographs



*Boat leaving Craignure, Mull*

I usually travel to my advice surgeries on Coll & Tiree by small plane from Oban. It gives me a great view of amazing scenery

Digital Photograph

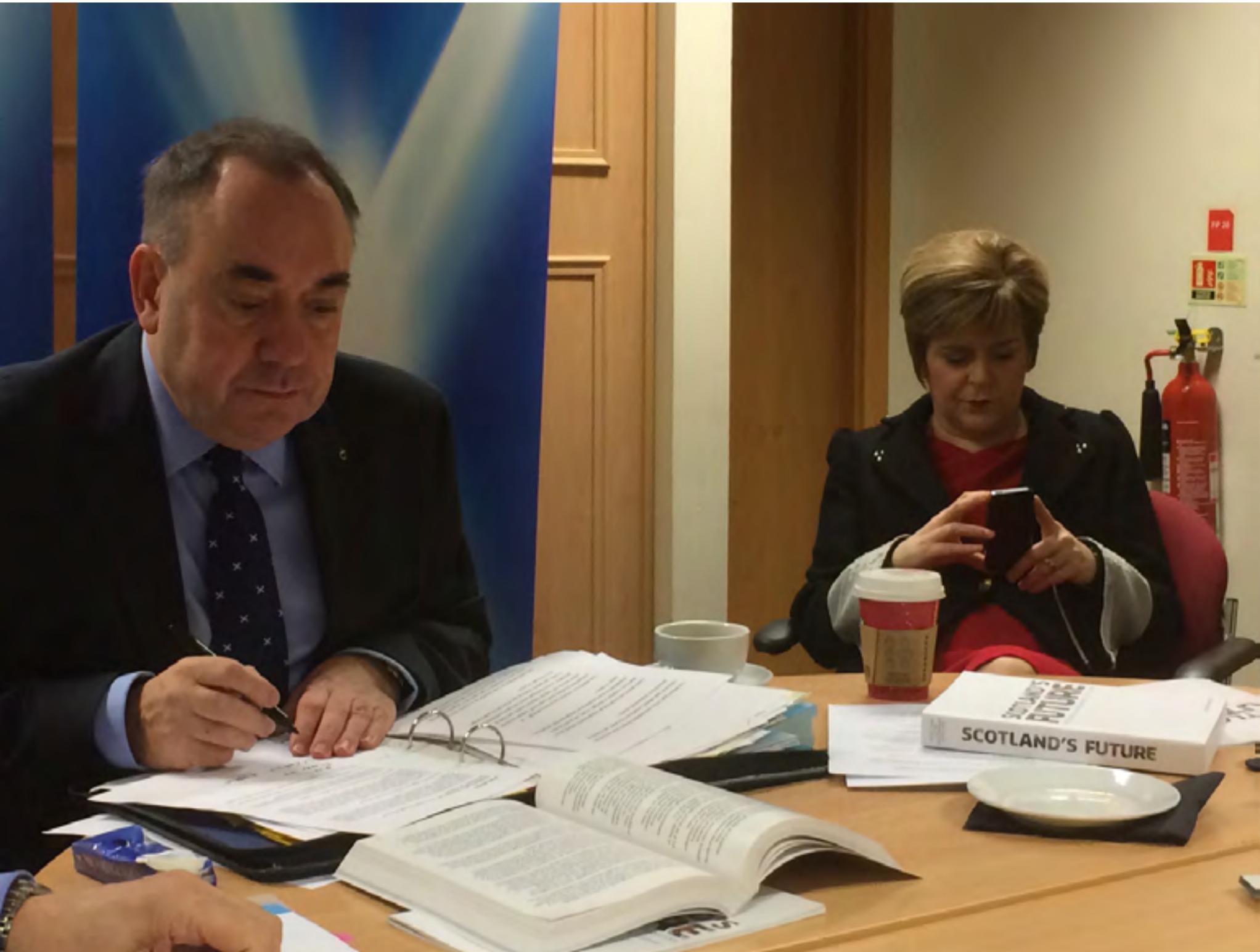


*Autumn Morning, Island of Bute*  
Digital Photograph



*Showers in the Kilbrannon Sound*

Digital Photograph



### *Preparation*

I am lucky to sometimes be in fascinating places, like here with my Cabinet colleagues the First Minister, Alex Salmond, and Deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, in the green room twenty minutes before the launch of the white paper on Independence

Digital Photograph



*Foggy Morning, Strathlachlan*  
Digital Photograph



*The Swans Say Farewell to the Paper Boats*

The artist George Wylie would have been 90 this year. His anarchic, original, irreverent talent opened up the idea of art to so many. The paper boats project involved hundreds of children and they were ceremonially set adrift on the Clyde this summer in an extraordinary ceremony

Digital Photograph



*Lone Tree, Lismore*

The small island of Lismore lies just off the village of Appin and is home to over a hundred people. The passenger ferry at the north of the island has a wonderful view north

Digital Photograph



### *Highland Funeral*

The graveyard at Clachan Duich in Kintail is a cold, but wonderfully sited, place. At the funeral of former Liberal Democrat MSP John Farquhar Munro, a man who was passionate about Gaelic Culture and the people he served in the Highlands I was in the first “lift” of the coffin, bearing the weight of a friend as we took him to his final resting place looking out to his home, and doing so alongside political opponents such as the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the UK Government (and Highland MP) Danny Alexander. The community and democracy of life - and death - in Highland Scotland is still strong.

Digital Photograph



*Iona - restored stone cross.*

I opened the museum at the Abbey on Pentecost Sunday 2013 - the 1450th anniversary of the landing of St Columba. These crosses have been raised for the first time in hundreds of years

Digital Photograph



*Glen Kinglas*  
Digital Photograph



*Across Loch Linnhe*  
Digital Photograph



*Addressing the Haggis*

The ritual of a Burns supper can sometimes seem inflexible. But it can be subverted and improved in all sorts of ways as the comedian Hardeep Singh Kholi demonstrated in Glasgow in January 2012

Digital Photograph



*Hogmanay, Again*

Some villages in Scotland celebrate two “new years” - the Gregorian and the Julian. According to Neil Munro, who wrote the famous “Para Handy” stories, Carindow was one such village

Digital Photograph



### *Glendaruel*

The “glen of the two red spots”, probably called after the profusion of bracken in the autumn, though perhaps also because of the blood that flowed from a battle here over a thousand years ago. It was the place where Deirdrie said farewell to Scotland in the 13th century Irish epic poem, and it has been my home for 20 years

Digital Photograph



*Cloudburst, Port Askaig*

Taken from the ferry from Jura. The torrential rain obscured almost everything as we docked

Digital Photograph



*Leaves*

I like experimenting with textures and effects. These are autumn leaves on a tree in my Argyll garden

Digital Photograph



*First Frost*  
Digital Photograph



*First Snow, Loch Fyne*  
Digital Photograph

## Susan Sellers

# *Given the Choice*

*novel excerpt (Cillian Press, October 2013)*

Marion owns an artists' agency in London and in the first passage Jean-Claude, a French painter Marion represents, is in New York on the eve of a solo show:

Jean-Claude leaned on the railings overlooking the Hudson River and gazed at the New York skyline. He had asked Celeste where he could go to view the island and she had recommended he take the Path train to Hoboken. She was right. From here the city spread out before him, a breathtaking vista of lights in the darkness. He found his tobacco and cigarette papers in his jacket pocket. From this side of the river he could take in the lower half of Manhattan in its entirety, gain his own perspective on the pulsating, frenetic onslaught of the metropolis. He had arrived in New York three days ago and his mind felt pulverized by sensory overload. At this distance, the city seemed a fantasy creation, an enchantment conjured by a magician from the sea. He lit his cigarette and walked along the esplanade, noting the extraordinary crenellation of illuminated buildings, the glittering jetties that stuck out from the shore like afterthoughts. The esplanade led him past a clump of shadowy trees and round a slight bend. The city's brilliance, he saw, derived from millions of individual lights, from the chequerboards of lit up windows that formed the facade of building after building. Most were interior lights, but there were also bands of colour: a glowing orange top floor, a tower in a tracery of red neon, a glass-front that sparkled an ethereal green-blue. Light hurled itself upwards into the sky, leaked onto the surface of the water where it settled in channels that appeared solid enough to walk on.

Tomorrow, his show opened in a gallery somewhere to his left. [...] He was nervous – not about his work, but because Celeste had asked him to make a speech. [...] A white beam winked at him from the other side of the river, splitting, as he observed it, into a many-pointed star. He thought about his London show. He had given Marion several reasons why he did not consider it appropriate for him to talk about his art. [...] He finished his cigarette and flicked the butt over the railing, listening for the hiss as the water extinguished its flare. He began rolling another. Though he believed everything he had told Marion, there was a further reason why he could not stand up tomorrow and speak. The paintings on display were as finished as he could make them. Consequently they no longer interested him. The process of creation was over and the pictures felt remote. He could no more describe what had been going through his mind as he worked than he could recall with any accuracy an event from his past. The

complex operation of choice and decision was lost to him. All he would achieve if he tried to articulate it in hindsight was a story that bore little relation to his experience.

He lit his cigarette. He knew his restlessness was only partly connected to tomorrow's opening. He had hoped New York would inspire him, but so far none of his sketches had caught alight. He felt exactly as he had after his show in London: unable to focus, alienated from everything round him. He sensed he was searching, waiting for an angle, a juxtaposition, a confrontation even that would fire him to begin painting.

Far out, he watched a boat passing. Its trajectory disturbed the lanes of light the metropolis cast onto the river, causing them to shiver, bleed into each other, dissolve and reappear. Yet they reformed differently, he noticed: the boat's crossing altered them. Ripples of black now streaked the red, yellow shone amidst pure silver. A purple plume illuminating a spire caught his eye. Lights came on, went out; the city was never still. He stared into the murky water. Even the river was moving, slapping the sides of the esplanade.

He started walking again. This activity was what was missing from his pictures. He had wanted to call his show *Still Lives* to draw attention to the singularity of the English art term, but now he saw the joke was on him. His own language might have taught him. French coined the phrase *Nature morte* to describe set pieces in painting – literally dead nature. He stared at the winking panoply of lights. He was on the wrong side of the river, too far away to see how all the millions of lives the lights represented interacted with each other. He had crossed the river in the hope of escaping the city's teeming, frenzied chaos, when what he should have done was immerse himself in it. His endeavour to distance himself and find a point of perspective was borne out of a futile desire for control. He needed to go back and focus on the intersections, to paint life in all its randomness and unpredictability. He tossed his cigarette end into the glassy water and hurried towards the station.

In this passage, Marion is listening to a young Estonian pianist play Messiaen's *style oiseau*:

'Peeter placed his hands over the keys. Suddenly the piano was alive. Marion settled back in her chair and closed her eyes. She did not know what she was listening to but within moments she was transported out of her surroundings into a dense jungle of sound. The piano was no longer a music-making machine but the source of a magical power. She could hear the swooping calls of birds as they darted through treetops or skimmed and dived in a free expanse of air. The bare walls of the practice room had metamorphosed into an enchanted forest, teeming with flashes of brilliant plumage and abrupt, raucous caws. As she opened her eyes she was reminded of the monastery of San Marco in Florence, its plain white cells transfigured by Fra Angelico's art. She thought of the ritual of Peeter's daily practice. The long hours he spent at the keyboard required the same devotion the monks expended in prayer. When Peeter finally stopped playing she felt as if he had taken her to a world beyond herself, where she had glimpsed something extraordinary.'

In this next passage, Marion, having agreed to represent Peeter, takes him to a contemporary art exhibition.

Together they stopped in front of a vast fish tank filled entirely with paper money. Pounds, dollar bills, euros, Japanese yen had all been crammed into the space. Above the tank a fish dangled from wires. It was real and in the warmth of the gallery had begun to smell.

‘What do you think?’ Marion asked.

Peeter stared at the installation.

‘Money has replaced the water so the fish has died. But I do not understand why all the notes have been torn in half. Is the money real?’

‘I’m sure it is.’

‘Then it is a waste. The fact the money is real adds nothing. Besides, it is a very simple idea.’

‘Can’t art be simple?’

‘Yes, but the simplicity must do something. This is a cliché.’ Peeter wrinkled his nose in disgust. ‘And the fish is going bad.’

‘Ah, that will be part of it. The smell of the rotting fish. We experience our revulsion viscerally as well as with our eyes. Perhaps the idea is not so simple after all.’

‘But how is it art?’ Peeter wanted to know. ‘Even if I were to agree with you that the idea is a good one – which I do not – anyone might have done it. There is no talent, no skill involved. This is designed to shock.’

‘Isn’t that what art should do? Make us think. Jolt us out of our complacency?’

Peeter appeared sceptical.

‘What will happen to this “art” when the exhibition is over?’

‘It will be bought,’ Marion told him. ‘Perhaps by a gallery, more likely by a private collector. All these artists are unknowns. Don’t worry, while the owner waits for the artist to become established the fish will be replaced by an imitation one.’

‘So it will no longer shock us “viscerally”?’

‘Well, no...’

‘It makes me angry,’ Peeter interrupted. ‘The artist will be paid for something which does not deserve it by someone who only buys in the hope of making money. This is not what art is for!’

‘You don’t like it because it isn’t beautiful,’ Marion teased him, remembering the jewel-like koi they had seen in her garden.

‘No,’ Peeter assured her. ‘I do not mind about that. Schoenberg is not beautiful, parts of Beethoven are not beautiful but they move us. I mind because this is a trick.’

People were staring.

‘Let’s read this,’ Marion suggested, steering him towards the plaque. ‘Perhaps we will discover what the artist intended.’

‘If the work is good I do not need to learn what the artist says.’

The next piece was a metal trolley on top of which a model heart, several foil-wrapped packs of butter and a scalpel had been set in a line. Sensing this would not appeal to Peeter either, Marion led the way upstairs. There was a video installation in the first room they came to. Two screens were projecting

simultaneously. In the first, a man was addressing a filled auditorium; in the second, a typed text consisting of the words 'me' and 'blah' ran across the screen. The piece was entitled 'Civilization.' They moved on to a painting.

'What is Kerashi?' Peeter queried, deciphering a series of mauve, shocking pink and lime green letters across an otherwise blank canvas.

'It's the name of a fashion house.'

'This I do not understand. Is it advertising for them? If not, why use a brand name? Or did they sponsor the artist?'

'Probably,' Marion answered. 'I've seen another piece by this artist. She specialises in using the alphabet in her work in innovative ways. I expect she's done a deal with Kerashi. You don't approve,' she observed, reading his expression. 'Someone has to pay for art.'

'But not like this! Governments pay for art, charities perhaps.... Of course people pay for it too, but not this blatant kissing with commerce.'

'And do you imagine governments and even charities don't have their agendas?' She pointed towards the exhibits. 'What do you think when you see all this?'

'The pop songs on everyone's ipod, television.'

'How?' Marion was curious.

'Yesterday I watched part of a film at a friend's lodging. It was about a woman who is made to work hard then all this changes because she falls in love. It was Cinderella with everything dark cut out.' He gestured round the room. 'This is the same, except here all you see is the stepmother made to dance in the red-hot shoes. It is the other side to all the sugar.'

In this next passage, Edward, Marion's husband, has quit his job in order to fulfil a long-held ambition to study classics.

On the top of his book pile was volume four of Virgil's *Aeneid*. He had studied it in the sixth form and the text was covered in his underlinings – though whether he had marked the passages for use in an exam or because they were important to him personally he could not now recall. It was an odd experience going back over terrain he had covered as a much younger man. He kept a copy of the English open beside him, but for practice he made himself stop whenever he came to a section he had highlighted in the original and translate it. First he copied the sentence, then tried a rough draft. He was aware he was the only member of his class who did not work on a computer, but writing the Latin out helped him focus. If any of the words were unfamiliar he looked them up in his dictionary. As he compared versions, he felt himself reconnecting to the pleasures of translation he had known at school. It was satisfying to grapple with what initially appeared impenetrable and tease out meanings until gradually the message became clear. What he loved about both Latin and Greek was their precision, the way a change of word-ending catapulted an event into a different tense, or shifted his perspective so that what had been the object of a sentence was suddenly its subject. Only when he was as certain as he could be that he had faithfully transcribed the sense of the original did he consider the English. Now, he focussed not only on semantic accuracy but on the onomatopoeia and cadence of the phrase. Finally, he came to the stage he liked best of all:

pondering its significance. There was no doubt the translation process assisted with this. He did not presume to understand everything Virgil or Homer or Herodotus wrote, but this close engagement with their thoughts brought him into an enriching and intimate dialogue with the great masters.

In this final passage, Marion, in New York, is looking at three of the paintings in Jean-Claude's show:

Marion crossed the gallery to the far wall. This held three large canvases none of which matched the description in her catalogue. The pictures formed a triptych, and according to the label beneath them were a late addition [...]

The three canvases were vertical bands of colour, painted in such a way they appeared liquid and mutable, like reflections on water. What fascinated her was although each picture contained the same proportion of scarlet and silver and viridian in an identical sequence, the effect in each case was different. This was partly connected to subtle alterations in focus that affected the play of shadow and light, and partly to the introduction of new elements – a streak of grey like an arrowhead in the painting to her right, traces of submerged gold in the one to her left. The consequence of these seemingly negligible modifications was electrifying. It was as if Jean-Claude had captured the way an unexpected appearance, a variation in mood, a coincidence of timing could transform an entire scene. His triumph was to have done this in terms of the medium of painting itself. It was clear from studying the triptych that it had been the repercussion of a brush stroke, the acceptance of an unforeseen coalescence or clash of colour which had wrought the changes. Looking across the three paintings was like listening to music where the performers improvised, or reading a novel in which characters were allowed a say. She stared at a spiral of turquoise flecks in the central canvas. It was not in either of the other two and she examined its impact on the crimson and magenta brushwork surrounding it. She felt she could, by following its trail, detect the precise moment when a previously inexorable trajectory had been diverted from its course.

# CONTRIBUTORS

## BERKLEE COMMUNITY

### Fiction

**Andrew Choi** (“Childhood”) is a student from Atlanta, GA, studying at Berklee College of Music in Boston who likes to talk to himself. When he isn’t doing music he is probably chasing girls or cooking, not necessarily exclusive events.

**Alexandra Groff** (“In Which The Time Passes”) is a 21-year-old recent Berklee graduate from Wilmington, Delaware. Her interests and aspirations include performing rock music, and marketing musicians, with fiction writing and poetry on the side.

**Kathleen Parks** (“Beacon”) is a diverse fiddler and songwriter originally from Newburgh, New York. She is a third semester Berklee student majoring in Songwriting and Performance. “Beacon” is based on true events.

At 23 years old, **James Sanderson** (“Three Words”) is a teacher at Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, MA. His other occupations include writing songs and stories, reading comic books, and watching films.

**Chris Stites** (“The Lion Boy”) is a 27-year-old musician and writer from California. He studied Electronic Production and Design at Berklee from 2009-2012 and is currently living outside Los Angeles.

**Inés Velasco** (“In Her Own Time”) is a 23-year-old drummer and composer from Guadalajara, Mexico. She lives in Boston and is finishing her studies at Berklee.

### Poetry

**Jordan Casty** is a recent alumnus of the songwriting program at Berklee. After touring with his band Eleven Dollar Bills for the last eight months, he is now diving into a brand new scene of music in Los Angeles.

**Emmett Ceglia** is a drummer, producer, and writer.

**Paige Chaplin** is a Berklee College of Music student where she has been named to the Dean’s List three times.

**Erica Charis** holds a B.F.A. from York University. Her poetry has been published in *Borderline* and *FUSION* and performed at *Lydia Fair*. She is a member of Poetry Slam, Inc. and the Berklee reVERB Poets club. She works as Outreach Librarian at the Stan Getz Library.

**April Gompers** graduated from Berklee in 2013 where she majored in Professional Music with a minor in Poetry. She is a vocalist and is currently living in New Jersey.

**Seph Hamilton** grew up in central California and is currently a Professional Music student at Berklee. He is the founder of Poetry-Exchange.com and has been published in *Boston Poetry Magazine*.

**Erin Snyder** graduated with a B.S. in Resource Conservation from The University of Montana, Missoula, before moving from her home state to Boston, MA to pursue a degree in music. She is currently a 7th semester student majoring in Songwriting, and her principal instrument is the fiddle.

## FUSION Translation Initiative

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, **Juana Aquerreta** grew up surrounded by folkloric music. Her first steps were accompanied by the guitar and song, and at the age of fifteen she started playing the Paraguayan harp. A Berklee student, she also lead the group "Juana Aquerreta and the Mouches Volantes" in which she plays her own original music as well as traditional Argentinean fusion songs. She performs, composes and writes music, but most of all she defines herself as a poet.

**Deborah Bennett** is *FUSION's* Global Poetry Editor.

**Nicholas Cazares** began composing music at the age of 13 and it has since become his life's passion. Nicholas is a recent Berklee College of Music graduate, finishing with a dual major in Music Composition and Film Scoring, with a minor in Orchestral Conducting.

**Madison Hockaday** is a third semester student, originally from the Chicago area, but grew up in Beijing, China. She is classically trained in both the violin and viola, and is majoring in music therapy.

**Sunhwa Kim** is from South Korea and is a second semester student at Berklee. She is a Professional music major and plays pop and jazz.

**Mandy Kowara** is a third semester student from Indonesia. She enjoys reading myths, legends, and folk tales, which is the reason why she did the translation in the first place!

**Jeongmin Lee** was born in South Korea and lived in Los Angeles from 2009 to 2012 to study music. He returned to Korea, where he married his wife, and together they came to Berklee to study music.

**Yiru Wang** is a fourth semester student at Berklee. She plays the Piano and is interested in classical music and jazz.

**Heemo Yang** is from South Korea, but his permanent home is in LA. He is a third semester student at Berklee and is a guitarist.

**Jihao Zhang** is from China and is a fourth semester student at Berklee. He is a vocalist who is interested in CWP and SW.

## Creative Nonfiction

**Nicholas Salvador** is from Chino Hills, California. He is a Drum Set Performance Major and loves jazz and all other types of music coming from African culture. He hopes to make a living playing music, in New York and all over the world.

**Cordelia Vizcaino Leal** is a Singer, Songwriter, and Producer studying Pro Music and Electronic Production and Design. She was born in 1989 in Houston, Texas, and raised in Mexico. She plays piano and guitar. Cordelia writes journalism, memoir, articles, essays, and short stories. She performs with her band, Cordelia and the Buffalo, and recently performed in Paula Cole's and Peter Eldridge's Songwriting Showcase.

## Interview

Singer-songwriter **Moana Avvenenti's** life comes straight out of a children's storybook. Born in 1989 on the Caribbean island of St Martin, she grew up on a sailboat, hopping from one island to another. She came to Berklee on a generous scholarship and graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2011. After a successful IndieGogo online crowd-funding campaign, she released her first solo album, "dotted," in October 2013. She recently moved to "The Entertainment Capital of the World," Los Angeles.

**Leah Hinton**, from North Carolina, is in her last year at Berklee College of Music majoring in Music Business. She is a jazz singer and writer and plans to manage artists, perform and compose for herself and other artists.

## Visual Art

**Diane Esmond** (1910-1981) was born in London and raised in Paris. She studied painting with the French artist Edouard MacAvoy in the 1930s. In 1940, she moved to New York, where she lived until 1952, at which time she returned to live in or near Paris for the rest of her life. Diane Esmond worked in the tradition of French impressionist and post-impressionist painters. Her major subjects were landscapes, interiors, and still lifes. Her landscapes were inspired notably by the Provençal countryside and by the Caribbean tropical forest. She conveyed these and other subjects, as well as related semi-abstract representations, in oils, gouaches, and ink drawings. Solo showings of her paintings were presented at galleries in New York, Paris, and London, including Carstairs, Chardin, Hammer, Knoedler, and Wildenstein. (The artist's son, Victor Wallis, is a Berklee Liberal Arts professor.)

**Callie Huber** is a Songwriting major. Along with music, she has a lifelong passion for photography and film. For Callie, photography creates another beautiful outlet to balance her creativity. This series was shot entirely in her hometown in Connecticut.

**Tiger Okoshi** is a jazz giant *and* an extraordinary visual artist. A self-taught trumpeter born in Japan, he came to Berklee to formalize his studies and after graduation, went on to perform and record with jazz legends, including Bela Fleck, Tony Bennett, Gary Burton, Dave Grusin, Dave Liebman, and Pat Metheny. He is not only a talented musician, but an inspiring teacher as well. He describes his approach with students as a form of diagnosis—he tries to assess their musical ability, personality, and potential and then guide them to develop goals and practices that will help them find their own path. He is also a painter. “When I play my trumpet, my horn is my brush, high/low, fast/slow, bright/dark... I paint the air one note at a time. I love to come home to unfinished musical compositions or paintings, color pencil, watercolor, oil... I used to love to come back to hotel rooms after concerts on the road and draw anything to think about and review what I have done that day. I wish I had more time to paint nowadays, but I know time will come again.”

**Edward Wersocki** (“Elation”) is a guitarist and undergraduate student studying Contemporary Writing and Production. He originally hails from New York City, but throughout the years has lived in various European countries. He has a keen interest in absurdity and surrealism as well as general aesthetic contrast and juxtaposition.

## FEATURED WRITERS

A native of Buffalo, New York, **Lacey Daley** is an MFA candidate at Boise State University and completely naive to life in the West. She recently had a story make the Top 25 in Glimmer Train's August 2013 Short Story Award for New

Writers. Aside from fiction, Lacey writes for *artscope* magazine, a New England arts and culture magazine.

**Amy Quan Barry's** most recent book, *Water Puppets*, won the 2010 AWP Donald Hall Poetry Prize and was published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. She currently teaches at the University of Wisconsin.

**Brian Burt's** poems have appeared in various literary journals in North America and Europe. He is also the recipient of the Michael Guterman Prize in Poetry from the University of Michigan. His first book of poems, *Past Continuous*, is forthcoming from Back Pages Publishers. He lives near Boston, Massachusetts.

**Amy M. Clark's** debut book of poems, *Stray Home* (Vassar Miller Prize in Poetry 2009, University of North Texas Press 2010), was a Must-Read 2011 selection by the Massachusetts Council for the Book. Her poems have been featured on the *Writer's Almanac* and *Verse Daily*; in the anthologies *Good Poems, American Places* (Viking 2011) and *Old Flame: 10 Years of 32 Poems Magazine* (WordFarm 2012); and in various journals, including *The Cincinnati Review*, *Cream City Review*, and *The Seattle Review*. She lives in Stow, Massachusetts.

**Carolina Ebeid** was selected as the 2012-2014 Stadler Fellow at Bucknell University. Her work appears widely in journals such as *Poetry*, *Crazyhorse* and *The Kenyon Review*. She is the poetry editor of the online journal *Better: Culture & Lit*.

**Major Jackson** is the recent recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship. He is the author of  *Holding Company* (Norton: 2010). He is the Richard A. Dennis Green & Gold Professor at the University of Vermont.

**Kirun Kapur** grew up in Hawaii and has since lived and worked in North America and South Asia. Her work has appeared in *AGNI*, *Poetry International*, *FIELD* and many other journals and magazines. She is the winner of the 2012 Arts & Letters/Rumi Prize for Poetry and her first book, *Visiting Indira Gandhi's Palmist*, was awarded the 2013 Antivenom prize (forthcoming from Elixir Press). Currently, she lives in Massachusetts, where she is co-director of The Tannery Series.

**Kent Maynard** is an anthropologist at Denison University, who also has received an MFA from New England College. His poetry frequently reflects his work in both Cameroon, West Africa and in Oxford, England. Recent poems appear in *The MacGuffin*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Sow's Ear* and *Spoon River*, and his chapbook, *Sunk Like God Behind the House*, received the Wick Prize for Ohio Poets.

**Jennifer Militello** is the author of *Body Thesaurus* (Tupelo Press, 2013), *Flinch of Song*, winner of the Tupelo Press First Book Award, and the chapbook *Anchor Chain, Open Sail*.

**Pete Mullineaux** lives in Galway Ireland where he teaches drama and creative writing. He grew up in Bristol, UK, where aged thirteen he had a poem 'Harvest Festival' published in an anthology, *Poetry & Song* (Macmillan) and recorded on Argo records with music by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. His poetry collections are *Zen Traffic Lights* (Lapwing 2005) *A Father's Day* (Salmon Poetry 2008) and *Session* (Salmon 2011.) He writes for the theatre and has had several plays produced for Irish national radio (RTE.) He is also a songwriter and musician, playing fiddle, guitar, and mandolin.

Poems by **Lynne Potts** have appeared in *Paris Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *New American Writing*, *National Poetry Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Crazy Horse*, *Denver Quarterly* and many others. She is currently Poetry Editor at AGNI. Her book *All Whiles Waiting on Beauty* won the 2012 National Poetry Review prize. Four other manuscripts have been finalist for contests. She was awarded Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship in 2012 and has won scholarships for three art-colony residencies. Lynne lives in Boston and New York.

**Leslie Williams'** first book, *Success of the Seed Plants*, won the 2010 Bellday Prize. Her work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Slate*, *Southern Review*, *Shenandoah* and many other magazines. She won the Robert Winner award from the Poetry Society of America and grants in poetry from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Illinois Arts Council.

## Celtic FUSION

### *The Scottish Feature*

**Iain Anderson** is the late-night voice of BBC Radio Scotland and plays all the great singer-songwriters, reads all kinds of poetry and never forgets his Gaelic heritage. See [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0074hkv](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0074hkv) He is a big sports fan, having played rugby football for many years and commentated on both rugby and shinty for the BBC. Scottish cultural concerns and identity are at the heart of his social and professional life.

**Louise Bichan** graduated from the Glasgow School of Art, specializing in Photography. She grew up in Orkney. Louise had an exhibition of her photography at The Reel in Kirkwall, Orkney and in 2008 she won a photography competition run by Young Scott. Her photos were hung at a gallery in the Pier Arts Centre in Stromness.

**Robert Crawford** was educated at the University of Glasgow and at Balliol College Oxford. His first collection of poems, *A Scottish Assembly*, was published in 1990, and his most recent collection is *Full Volume* (2008), shortlisted for the T S Eliot Prize. His versions of Latin poems by George Buchanan and Arthur Johnston were published in his book *Apollos of the North* (2006). He is also the author of an award-winning biography of Robert Burns, *The Bard*. Professor

of Modern Scottish Literature and Bishop Wardlaw Professor of Poetry at the University of St Andrews, he is a Fellow of the British Academy and the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

**Claudia Daventry** was born in London and studied at Oxford. She has lived in France, Spain and, most recently, the Netherlands, where she started writing and performing her poetry, before coming to St Andrews to do an MLitt with Don Paterson and Douglas Dunn. She has picked up several languages along the way and is currently doing a PhD on the process of translating poetry. She has won various awards and commendations for her work including the 2012 Bridport prize and is currently collaborating on an 'update' of Byron's Don Juan for publication in 2014.

The recipient of a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, **Paula de Fougerolles** has a doctorate in medieval history from the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, University of Cambridge. While she has lived in all the places you will meet in this series, she now splits her time between the Berkshires, Massachusetts, and Belgium. *Exile*, the first book in the acclaimed historical-fiction series *The Chronicles of Iona*, was named one of the Top 100 Books published in 2012 by Kirkus Reviews. It has also been awarded a Silver Prize in Historical Fiction by ForeWord Reviews Book of the Year Awards 2012. *Prophet*, the second book in *The Chronicles of Iona*, has been awarded "5 STARS out of 5" by ForeWord Reviews, which calls it "... no doubt deserving of the epithet *epic*." For Kirkus Reviews, it is "vivid, brutal and beautiful ... a rich feast." To learn more about the author and the series, see <http://pauladefougerolles.wordpress.com/>

"**Douglas Dunn** has won the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry 2013. Committee chair and poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy said he was one of 'the greatest poets Scotland has produced.'" <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-25429663> Born in Inchinnan, Renfrewshire in 1942, Dunn's most recent publications are *New Selected Poems*, (Faber, 2003), *A Line in the Water* (with etchings by Norman Ackroyd, (Royal Academy, 2008), and a chapbook *Invisible Ink* (Mariscat, 2011). He is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of St Andrews and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

**Jana Laiz** is the author of the triple award-winning novel, *Weeping Under This Same Moon*, Book of the Year Award nominee and Kids' Indie Next List pick, *The Twelfth Stone*, and *Elephants of the Tsunami*. Jana is the co-author of *A Free Woman On God's Earth*, *The True Story of Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman*, *The Slave Who Won Her Freedom* and *Thomas & Autumn*. Fascinated by other cultures, Jana studied anthropology and Chinese language at university. She is a teacher, writer, editor, mom, animal lover, musician, and dreamer. Laiz is the first writer-in-residence at Herman Melville's beloved Arrowhead. She lives in a 200-year-old farmhouse in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts.

**Norman McBeath** is a photographer and printmaker living in Edinburgh. His work focuses on people and places. The National Portrait Galleries in London

and Edinburgh have over fifty of his portraits in their permanent collections. A number of award-winning writers have produced original work in response to his photographs including Jeanette Winterson (*Oxford at Night*, 2006). *Oxford at Night* was shown at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the first exhibition in the museum's history by a living photographer. His collaborations with Paul Muldoon and Robert Crawford have been exhibited in Chicago, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Oxford and at Yale. [www.normanmcbeath.com](http://www.normanmcbeath.com)

Copies of *Simonides* available from Easel Press at: [www.easelpress.co.uk](http://www.easelpress.co.uk)

**Michael Russell** is the Member of the Scottish Parliament for Argyll & Bute and Cabinet Secretary for Education in the Scottish Government.

A writer and broadcaster he was elected to the first Scottish Parliament in 1999 after five years as the first full-time SNP Chief Executive and a previous period as a senior office bearer of that political party. He lost his seat in 2003 but returned in 2007 when he became Environment Minister in the first ever SNP Administration. In February 2009 he was made Minister for Culture, External Affairs & the Constitution, joining the Cabinet as Education Secretary at the end of that year. In the May 2011 Scottish Election he successfully moved from being a regional member for the South of Scotland to being the MSP for his home constituency of Argyll & Bute, widely regarded as one of the most scenically beautiful parts of Scotland, though also one of the least populated.

Brought up in his father's hometown of Troon in Ayrshire he is a graduate of Edinburgh University. When working in the media and associated industries he has lived in Edinburgh, the Western Isles, Inverness and South Lanarkshire before settling in Argyll 21 years ago, where his wife is a Primary Head Teacher.

In his media career he developed an interest in the history of photography and started to take a more professional approach to taking pictures himself. For the last three years he has contributed an image a day to the international photography website "Blipfoto" ([www.blipfoto.com](http://www.blipfoto.com)), where, under the name "Feorlean," he presents a unique record of his political and personal life.

**Susan Sellers** is Professor of English Literature at St Andrews University in Scotland and an author, editor, translator and novelist. Her first novel, *Vanessa and Virginia*, was published in the United States by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in 2009 and has been translated into seventeen languages and adapted as a play performed around the world. *Given the Choice* was published in October 2013 by Cillian Press. Susan is an editor of Virginia Woolf's writing for Cambridge University Press, has translated the French author Hélène Cixous, and has written several books on fiction.

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