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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

The volume you are currently reading is the Winter 2008-2009 issue of the Nassau Literary Review. It's taken quite a journey to get here; we are Princeton's oldest student publication, founded in 1842. Over the years, we have been proud to publish the prose, poetry and artwork of the Princeton University community. As that community has grown, however, our range of experience has broadened as well. This semester, we were able to collect a group of works that both transport us to other spaces and times—as close as Western Pennsylvania and as far as Soviet Russia—and play with the boundaries of genre and style. We've chosen to present playwriting, memoir and translation for the first time in this issue not only to showcase the full talents of our community, but also to capture the sense of excitement that travel inspires in us all. As you read, we hope you will be swept away by the curiosity and enchantment that runs through this issue. More than that, we hope you enjoy it.

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SUNSET, NEW MEXICO

ben knudsen

Sunlight drifts slowly upward,
spread across the sky like honey.

There are no clouds.

Through the window,
the world is old film footage.

Streetlamps like flamingos
dip their heads to drink.

There are no clouds.

SPRING CLEANING

justine drennan

ALEXANDROVSKY PARK

rob madole

I'll submit that it was the first time I had ever gone crazy. Or the first time I actually felt that I had no control over my own mind. That's being crazy, right? I was lying awake at some ungodly hour after midnight, and it was still light outside because it was a White Night in St. Petersburg, when I realized that I couldn't control my own thoughts. It was the mosquito that really convinced me. I had killed him five times before I realized that he couldn't be real, that I should probably just turn off the lamp, lie down, and stop worrying about his buzzing in my ear, since it wouldn't go away even if I killed him again.

My rollout bed was very uncomfortable. It was split into thirds by these hard wooden boards, and my mattress was too thin to cushion the rifts between them—the third above my shoulders was way higher than everything else, and it made my neck hurt. After a while, I had begun to think that this night might be permanent—that St. Petersburg twilight, masquerading as nightfall, was all that was left to me in the world. Eventually, I even stopped noticing the bed, or it just separated itself from what I could conceive of spatially. The convulsing itches and the draft making the door rattle were my only anchors to the physical realm, and during the moments they'd phase in and out of my perception, it became hard for me to differentiate what separated waking life from dreaming life. Or rather I became slowly convinced, as each insomniac night bled into the next, that the two were no different.

So it had happened that my waking life in Russia for those first few weeks seemed to be only an accessory to the life I was leading at night, in my brain. It's hard now, sorting through my memories of the time, to know how much of it was real, all things considered.

Maybe being crazy was just believing that the distinction didn't matter.

But before we descend into the impossibly deep metros of St. Petersburg, before we amble through the dingy park where the animal tamer is leading a baby bear on a leash, before we traverse her dank streets, all pulsing to the impossible brightness of a manic White Night and the strange accordion sounds and harsh consonants of Russian summers—before we bother with the *story* (for I'm rather aware that the machinations of my unconscious are far less interesting to you than they are to me), I'd like to assure all concerned that my madness ended the afternoon after Natasha left for Vienna. It was the most terrifying of my waking dreams. I had spent my afternoon in a café, getting drunker than is appropriate during the daylight hours, and decided to take a nap so that I could get even drunker that night. I thought I was in love with her, you see, and it felt right to go through all the motions of bereavement. But when you haven't been sleeping for a month, naps don't work regeneratively; it seemed that even before I laid my head on the pillow, my brain had taken off on its own. I then went through something decidedly different from the experience of a nightmare, and all the visual clichés that you would associate with it; the dream was more of an impression, a wordless thought, as if my insides were trying to vaguely assert something—it made me feel, quite tangibly, my own mind's authority over me. It took me, in wakeful consciousness (which those who've had night terrors know has a different, less spectatorial quality than nightmare consciousness), through featureless corridors, down septic hallways that I can't remember, and all the way up to the brink of some void. It's pointless to try to describe *how* I experienced the void, sensually; what's more important is that my mind managed to encounter it sensually at *all*; that is, though the void had no physical qualities, I could look into it without suspending any disbelief; whatever I was staring into seemed to fit into my catalogue of senses. I stood in the face of it, and it broke over me in peals like thunder, reverberating there where my heart was beating, and I found myself screaming as if to give it all shape. "It's meaningless. It's all nothing!" And I realized then that my eyes were open, and had been the whole time, and I was screaming gibberish out loud in the middle of the afternoon. The fever broke. The sweat on my forehead beaded and grew cold. It

was all over, and that night I finally slept in peace.

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But the story I want to tell happened before those times had ended, while I was still insane, before I ever thought I was in love with Natasha or had even met her. With that in mind, it's hard to say how much of it happened or not. For now, let's just call it real, and accept that at the time the word meant nothing to me anyway.

I was sitting on a bench, in Alexandrovsky Park, in St. Petersburg, late on a summer night, thinking about Russian winters. I was imagining (considering how crazy the sun never setting was making me feel) how the darkness and foreboding of black winter days would terrify me, what it would feel like to go crazy to the sound of just-since-barren tree limbs rattling their skeletal forearms at you as the wind whistled in the total dark of mid-afternoon (for Petersburg winters are as dark as the summers are bright—one feels lucky, it is said, to receive an hour of sunlight). It struck me that nature in Texas, even at its most extreme, doesn't position itself diametrically against you like it does in Russia. The heat at home, as it drenches and stifles you like a huge burlap sack drawing tightly over your head, is extreme in a dispassionate way; that is, if it seems to be stifling and drugging you, it's only so it can carry you from desert into air-conditioning with less protest. It's a weather that removes you from your mind, makes you dull to it, like a drug or some mind-numbing antidepressant, so your unconscious body can attend to the task of managing to keep standing in the heat of the sun.

In Russia the weather isolates you *in* your mind. Being there is being consumed in discomfort, being trapped in the conduits of your brain and its spiteful machinations. That's why they're all crazy. In Russian, the word is *sumashedshiy*. It means, literally, to step down from your brain. You can stay trapped in it as it spins out of control, or you step down from it and become senseless, and I was beginning to realize that in Russia, even if you didn't choose the latter, it would step down of its own accord—and either way you were in the same boat I was in.

Thinking about Russian winters in the summer, I was sitting on

a bench in Alexandrovsky Park, when a man sat down next to me and said something that I couldn't understand. I told him I couldn't, and he was surprised, and he asked me where I was from, which I managed to explain after a few tries. I heard him say George Bush, and I affected a laugh as he pantomimed a cowboy hat. He said things and I listened, chipping in the filler words I could to sustain the conversation, but understanding very little. I heard him say, —*They are beautiful girls*, by which I assumed he meant the two girls on a bench across the promenade from us. They were—I had been trying to make eye contact with one of them the entire time I was talking to this guy distractedly, because he was clearly very drunk and it never feels right to look a drunk man directly in the eyes. The girl had noticed me and dropped her eyes, but I couldn't tell if it was suggestive or not, so I looked at my drunk friend instead, flashing back at her neurotically every few seconds afterward. She was still looking down. —*Da, da*, I said. *Yes, they're beautiful.*

As if in response to what I had just said, he took out his phone and called somebody, winking over at me during the pauses of the ensuing conversation. When he was finished, he smiled, leaned back, and said something that I couldn't understand. I smiled back at him, less gregariously than he had. He was beginning to make me uncomfortable.

After a few minutes, two girls walked up. One was beautiful. They both hugged him, the pretty one first, and he gave her the same smile he had given me. Eyebrows knit, like a wink. Teeth all crooked. I began to be worried I was dreaming him. He introduced the girls to me, and I suddenly realized that the situation was different than I could have ever really anticipated. One was beautiful, and they were both about my age, and they were both lidding their eyes suggestively at me. And I think I knew right then what was going on.

—*You're American?* they said, in Russian, and I nodded, smiling. I was always smiling at these people. I suppose it's my simian way of ingratiating myself. The pretty one sat down next to me on the bench, but only the uglier one talked. And while she was talking about something I don't remember, it struck me that Sveta—Sveta was the pretty one's name—had eyes a remarkable shade of blue, almost purple, and they were both fixated on me, and she was smiling provocatively, which made me nervous. I decided to make eye contact

with the uglier one instead. But every lull in the conversation I'd gnaw at my nails and glance over for a moment at Sveta, whose eyes seemed to always have narrowed further into mine.

We hadn't been talking for long before the drunk man abruptly stood up, grinned at us all, shook my hand theatrically, and left. I felt uncomfortable. But he was gone, and I was with two girls on a bench in Russia in the hours approaching midnight, and it was still bright as day outside, and since I was getting drunker with every beer and really concentrating now on the ugly girl (as if to stave off my obvious attraction to Sveta, toward whom I was determinedly directing a platonic expression), my Russian was getting better and better as we spoke. Every time I completed a grammatically correct sentence or communicated a complete thought, I felt the utilitarian thrill a child must feel learning language, but the incentive this time was not a diaper change or a spoonful of apple gruel but that when I said something correctly I could feel some kind of filament of elemental understanding crackling in the air, as if the mundane pleasantries I could barely articulate were illuminating a universal syntax of mutual attraction. At a certain point, even though the ugly girl was talking, I felt the conversation was only taking place between me and Sveta; when we spoke in response to the ugly girl, we were talking more exclusively, almost quieter, as if to push her away. Even our posture was aligning with each other on the bench—my body was contorted perpendicularly to the rail so I had a better angle to frame her face in my vision, and she had brought her knees up on the bench, tucked under my arm. Her eyes were almost purple, and I could see the veins of her pale neck pulse every time I made her smile. The corners of her eyes were always smiling, but when her lips tried to follow suit they couldn't seem to communicate the happiness she was trying to emote; her smile was perfunctorily sensual, as if challenging me to press my own lips over them and take her breath in mine. She was a hooker, after all.

—*The metro is closing soon*, said the ugly one. The subtext was obvious, but in the event I was too dense to understand, it was supplemented by the hand Sveta placed delicately on my upper thigh.

Sveta considered me. —*So what will you do tonight, William?* she asked. My agitation increased in proportion to the leering suggestiveness of her smile.

—*I don't know*, I replied, head-swimmingly. *What's there to do in St. Petersburg?*

I don't think the ugly one could tell that my answer was me being terrified. That the latter had been asked, in fact, quite literally. She thought it was some kind of sexual overture. She had been trained to.

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I was having sex with the ugly one, and she was kind of clutching my neck. It was terrible. Her eyes were lolled back, her mouth gaped open, her hair was all damp, and I could see her tonsils (a part of the anatomy that's always made me uncomfortable) through the gaps of her teeth. I realized, suddenly, that I was having a nightmare, and I felt stupid for being afflicted by this perverse wet dream, a captive audience to some farce of my adolescent delusions that my mind was putting on for me. I tried to open my eyes and get out of it. But even when I had opened them, the dream scene played out behind my head, ready to snatch back control of my consciousness the moment I closed my eyes again. I could still feel the heat I had imagined from her mouth as she brought it to my ear and let out a dark moan—the sound lingered there. It was clear that my mind wouldn't let me escape her, so I closed my eyes and let the stand-in who my mind had cast have its way with me. I woke up in my room, alone and embarrassed, and damp in my boxers.

It was dark outside, which meant it was a few hours after midnight (and the sun would be coming up any minute). I hadn't been asleep very long. My insides were jittery and pulsive, as if some dull and distant metronome were keeping time within. Despite myself, I reached for my phone; even though I hadn't gone home with them that night, I had given them both my number. It was stupid, but the thought had given me a thrill then, when Sveta had been making eyes at me, and something in me couldn't resist the thought of trolling a hook through this illicit world that was all so alien to me. So I had bid goodbye, given them my phone number and walked alone to my apartment as the daylight finally began to be displaced by dusk, my walk home lit by the hazily contoured velvet evening that settles over Petersburg at midnight. As I fell asleep, the light was filtered a

LUXEMBOURG

eva marie wash

dark shade of oceanic blue through my shutters, and I drifted into my nightmare as the dark finally began to ebb over me.

When I woke up, my phone had a message on it from a few hours ago. In English. —*Where you are William?* I didn't recognize the number, but I was sure it was Sveta. Her face diffused over my thoughts, displacing whatever internal determination I had left. I would call her.

A woman with a deep and throaty voice answered, a voice that sounded like a serial killer's or a kidnapper's. It had that muffled, hoarse tone you imagine they summon when they're trying to threaten someone. It obviously wasn't meant to be scary. I think her voice caught in her throat as she was trying to sound sexy.

—*Hello?* I said.

She was talking quickly in Russian, and from all that she said I could only make out the word "park."

—*Who is this?* I asked.

—*Galya!* She breathed so heavily into the receiver that the syllables were engulfed in static.

—*Galya?* I asked. I realized I was talking to the ugly one. *Who is Galya?*

—*From the park!* she said, and then more Russian that I couldn't understand. Was this me who was talking on the phone? I stuttered for a moment. I was having trouble remembering where I was.

—*You are hearing me*, I said (my grammar was terrible then). *You are hearing me. I am difficult to talk on phone in Russian. Maybe we are talking on text message?* I hung up the phone and waited. My heart was beating very fast by the time the message came.

"Come to the park I will be waiting there for you."

"Are you with Sveta?" I answered.

The next message was in English, in capital letters. "YOU NO LIKE SVETA YOU LIKE ME."

I was very unsettled. My lack of sleep, the dream, her throaty voice… I remembered the feel of her tongue in my ear when I had dreamed it, her moan that still lingered darkly in my head. A mosquito was droning, and a car alarm blared outside my window. Someone shouted at it to fuck off. I didn't respond to her.

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I met Natasha a few days later. She was a student. She studied languages. She spoke English. There's a lot I could say about her, but it probably wouldn't interest you. When relationships are tempered by real life, when the veneer of mythology is shuffled off and you're forced to acknowledge another consciousness operating somewhere inside, there's a lot less you can generalize about a person's character. The more you know someone, the less you can say specifically about them. Sometimes I found myself mesmerized by some feature of hers, and I would begin the whole rigmarole of dissecting her and the contingencies of her life and abstracting it into some meaningful archetype of Russianness, or whatever other vain conceptions my idle speculation is prone to leap at. But more often than not, we would drink coffee and talk, or walk along the Neva River, and unreflectively enjoy one another's company. She isn't a story, after all. She's a person.

We were sitting at a table in the back of a bar when a number I didn't recognize began to ring on my phone. Russians' cell phone numbers are always changing because phone cards are so cheap. So I answered.

—*William*, said Galya's voice. I think I spoke some garbled Russian in reply.

—*Where are you William?* Her voice was so stuffed with breath that it sounded pixellated, and for the rest of the night it settled in my ear canal like the hum of static. I hung up on her.

She called back immediately. I didn't know how to silence the phone since the keys were all in Russian, so I had to make up some prevarication for Natasha's sake until it stopped ringing. It must have been the wrong number, I told her.

—*Your Russian is so very bad that I find it so, you know, funny*, Natasha said. I liked the way she enunciated. Her cadences always rose at the end of a clause, like she was constantly posing a question.

Galya called again. Under the table, I took out the phone's battery.

As I walked home that night the sun was already rising. I didn't manage to fall asleep, of course. Galya's voice had replaced the mosquito in the echo chamber in my head.

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As my dreams had determined to concern themselves chiefly with smut, it bothered me that they wouldn't at least let me have sex with Sveta. Instead I had Galya to populate my subconscious—she was becoming an almost nightly fixture in my increasingly vivid dreams. The word "dream," however, is inadequate for what was taking place; unfortunately, I don't know a word that approximates the experience I would have at night. The visions playing involuntarily in my head would transpire at the same time I could hear angry Russians outside my window throwing rocks at a car whose alarm wouldn't stop blaring—as if my hearing in the real world had no relation to the visions in my head, and the two senses were operating completely separately at the very same time. I would interact with people in my dreams whom I had entirely forgotten—resequenced by my imagination, unbidden, and performed in pantomime by my subconscious—at the same time I heard, in wakeful consciousness, a mosquito droning in my ear canals and felt his stinger sinking into my neck. And when I would open my eyes, the thought of me flickering through the slipstream of someone else's consciousness, the way Galya had flickered through mine, terrified me; I worried that I was also burrowed somewhere inside everyone I had ever known, that in their dreams I was being recalled as myself, whole, complete. I felt condemned to spending the rest of my life if not in my own insomnia, then pantomimed in someone else's.

One night, I tried calling the number Sveta had given me, but nobody had picked up. Galya, on the other hand, was calling me multiple times every day and bombarding me with incoherent text messages, which I could ignore for the most part unless she happened to switch to a new phone number. One such occasion happened late at night. For some reason, I didn't hang up immediately. I guess I was beginning to feel like we were friends.

—*William, I would like to see you*, she said, after pleasantries had been exchanged.

—*It would please me very much to see you too*, I found myself saying. Maybe you, me and Sveta can talk in the park again.

Maybe that isn't what I said. It is what I tried to say, at least, in my mangled Russian. Nothing in her response indicated that she

hadn't heard me say "Sveta."

—*Yes? We go to Alexandrovsky Park in thirty minutes?*

—*And Sveta is coming, right?*

—*Okay*, she said. *I see you at the park.*

The sun was already rising—deep velvet had coated the horizon syrupy, pushing out the dark. It had to be about four in the morning. Time, like everything else here, didn't mean anything to me anymore. And I wasn't going to be able to go back to sleep, anyway.

The streets were empty and dreary in the pallid light that would, in a normal part of the world, precede wakefulness. The kind of light that brings out the piss residue on the sidewalks, that illuminates everything it touches in a stale luster, presaging the day to come. I couldn't have known then that the streets I was passing would hold a hidden significance for me, or that I'd revisit them often in pale dreams whose recollection produces a better facsimile of the place than my actual presence there managed to. I don't remember what I looked at, or thought about, or what path I took walking to the park, whether I was plagued with misgiving or consumed with lust, or whether I had any emotions one should feel in such a circumstance. There were my feet underneath, the sensation of movement, scattered thoughts, and I was there, at the park. I saw Galya sitting alone on the bench.

I paused a distance from her. I was standing near a gaudily colored caravel, where yesterday a monkey in overalls had danced for money. She couldn't see me from where I stood. The park was completely empty. And she hadn't brought Sveta.

I looked at her. Her hands were folded in the paunch of her lap, and she was staring straight ahead, unblinkingly. She breathed in heavy breaths that made her bosom quiver. Her leg shook to some tune in her head, and her lips were moving, as if mouthing words. In another time, I thought, she might have been considered beautiful. It wasn't her face that was ugly; it was actually rather pleasant-looking, sort of cherubic, like the face of one of the anonymous angels in the background of an old master's painting. She wasn't used to being stared at, and that suddenly seemed nice to me for some reason, and I had this urge to paint her, to isolate her from the park, from the caravel, from whoever she was and whatever she did, from this tired effigy her personality had grown to inhabit over time and through

circumstance. To present her alone to the world on an empty canvas in painterly verisimilitude, sitting on the bench with her hands folded over her belly, gazing expectantly across the empty promenade.

But I've come to accept that reading pathos where it isn't written really stems from my own vanity—as if I were given the clairvoyance to divine a whole story from a single frame. And besides, I was so tired. I left her there, on the bench, and I walked to my apartment to fall into a deep sleep.

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Galya called me regularly and obsessively for the next few weeks, for the duration of my insomnia. Sometimes she would call as many as eight times in a row, almost daily. I couldn't imagine what about me compelled her to keep calling, and in my worst moments of self-absorption, I imagined that she was following me, or that when I got home, she would be waiting outside my apartment.

Months later, I saw her in a metro station, and I was so dumbstruck that, as I stared, I made eye contact by accident. But she didn't even recognize me. She smiled self-consciously, with a studied voracity, as if she had been practicing in front of a mirror for a long time but still couldn't displace her self-awareness. It all seemed fitting, somehow. In dreams I kept having sex with her, and afterward I couldn't stop hearing her voice slurring in my ear.

I had other dreams until she left me alone. They all came after I had spent the night thrashing on my foldout bed, my consciousness flickering from the mosquitoes gnawing at me down through the floor out onto the street where someone was bashing a car in because its alarm wouldn't go off of its own accord. In one dream I was in Natasha's apartment, which I've never seen, and we were baking Thanksgiving turkeys.

In another I was on a beach going home, sounds of surf in my ears and the ocean pulsing like the world's heart sloshing. I was hearing sea sounds, sand underfoot, trying to sequence it all, but I couldn't place a gentle breaking sound that reverberated in my head like song… why that sound of that distant crash of that water and why does it feel like home? And standing there on the beach, my

body draped uncomfortably on a hard bed in Petersburg, as it all conflated I felt there was nothing of myself to have to make sense of anymore… or rather, drifting into dream, finding another empty slate for another iteration of myself, I was leaving all the others behind. ■

THE WELL-SPOKEN MAN

adrienne raphel

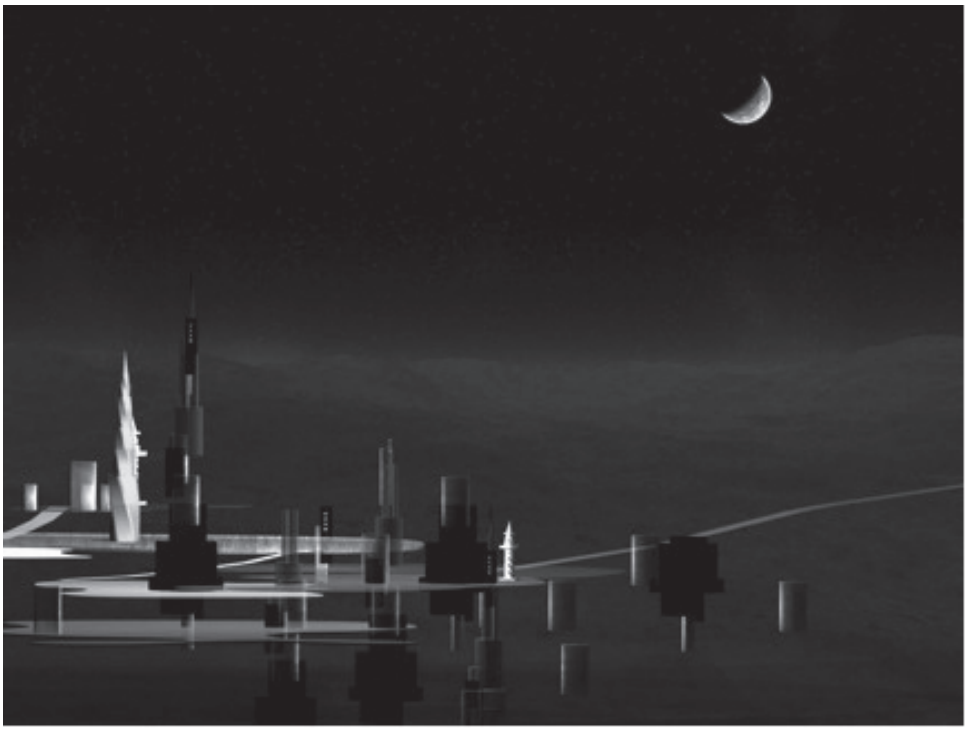
Once upon a time the well-spoken man finds
a mermaid, slick on the sand like an oil
spill, slippery and squinting against the sun.
He would like her tongue.

There is an epidemic of languages
and the well-spoken man collects them when they
die. He pins the tongues like moths in glass boxes.
He labels each one.

Etymology and entomology
are one and the same to the well-spoken man.
The tongues are like orange peels when oranges
are out of season.

Air swells in the mermaid's throat like a thorny
blowfish, blotting and choking a voice made for
water. Her hands flail like frenzied locusts at
the well-spoken man.

This is a common gesture in languages,
and the well-spoken man makes a note of it.
He parts his slick hair with an accent grave,
and cuts out her tongue.



FEDORA

waqas jawaid

(WITHOUT MUSIC)

madison priest

A man stands
on a bridge with his spit-smudged

saxophone and plays
along to a cassette,

the sound scratching
too softly against traffic to be heard.

The woman across
from me in the metro

sleeps upright, suspended
by the slim of her back.

Most things start without music,
but ask for it,

so that when the car turns,
she sways with it, as if dancing.

BEFORE

fiona miller

One weekend they decide to drive up to Montreal—
before grad school, before she's pregnant, before two guys
break into their blue house in Somerville and take the VCR
and his wedding ring that he'd left on the bathroom counter
because he didn't like wearing it in the operating room, before
they get tired of packing the toddler into a snowsuit just to get
to the daycare center, and before the first night he comes home
post-call and she's been up all night writing and they don't even
say hello, before she's pregnant again and they both get jobs
out west, before the afternoon she's sitting in her office and she thinks,
so, this is real life, and then realizes it's already been real life
for years, and for some reason it makes her so sad she almost cries,
before gymnastics and tee-ball and a full-time sitter, before
the miscarriage, before tenure, before he gets his own practice,
before the third child and buying in bulk, before the fourth child,
before they move, before middle school and high school
and being too tired to be worried, before everyone stops
coming home for dinner, before her diagnosis, before God's dead
and she gets a job back east and she takes it, before his children
are gone, before it's been twenty-five years and she serves him
the papers and it's an early morning, cool, and he doesn't know why
someone's ringing the doorbell at this hour, before three years in court
and half the kids are in college and before he rents a moving van
and goes to the house she's living in now and while they load his half
of the stuff they talk, they call each other by their first names—
so they get in the old brown Peugeot and they drive, they drive

around Montreal all night but there's some conference and all the hotels
are booked solid, so they get on the freeway back to Boston
and at around four in the morning they stop at a Denny's,
order pancakes, the situation's so ridiculous they can't stop laughing,
they're twenty-two and it's four in the morning, gas is cheap, life is long.

FIGURE STUDY

nathalie lagerfeld

The large sketchbook rested on her lap now, but her heels instinctively lifted from the floor and tilted it up towards her torso. Laura felt, like a cat, that her stomach was her most vulnerable spot, and protected it instinctively. It was the seat of all her emotions: it was a twisting fist when her fiancé's pickup appeared trailing a dust-wake down the long pointer finger of the driveway. These last weeks before the wedding, there was so much twisting in her stomach Laura had almost forgotten its original function; she'd fasted two days without really noticing. So now she tilted the sketchbook up to protect an empty space.

The nylon pencil case was unzipped slowly, quietly, and the slim black pen smuggled out. A sudden premonition of ink-mottled hands clutching the bridal bouquet—ink slowly creeping up her whole arm, like gangrene—Laura scrubbing panicked in a locked bathroom, a prenuptial Lady Macbeth—and she left the pen and took an HB pencil instead. Her favorite, usually tucked away in the corner of her bedside table drawer (still smelling of sandalwood now), it had traced the planes of Jonathan's face hundreds of times, maybe, as he lay next to her in the mornings when she woke up earlier—but she always woke up earlier, even when he had to go inspect a building site. Some of the sketches stuffed into more hidden parts of her dresser drawers in her apartment were full-length portraits, but more often she stole a toe, some fingers, an eye from him for her memory, little details. Her late mother, an accomplished sketch artist (an accomplished everything) had always chided her for being preoccupied with details. "Draw the basic shapes first. Give your figures mass." Crackle of white noise breaking against Laura's hunched

back. She'd spent dreamy afternoons reworking fabric texture on one corner of an ill-proportioned shirt collar, perfecting the glint of a platinum bracelet that shone from a handless stump. She never understood how her mother's gaze picked out the ribcage and pelvis even underneath Laura's loose dresses, so that her sketches of Laura seemed to her like X-rays. Laura, on the other hand, felt she mostly dealt in surfaces. Even full portraits of Jonathan were more maps of his skin: she knew by heart now where to place the three moles on his shoulder.

Laura was relieved: no one could blame her for not seeing to the bones of her model here. The bed's heaped blankets hid somewhere beneath them splayed legs and tilted hips, but the contours were hidden. Only Charlotte's shoulders were thrust from beneath the massive comforter, as if she had had to be weighed down and forced into sleep. The shoulders were naked, and the ridge of collarbone looked exposed, vulnerable. Laura imagined herself a carefully balanced Lilliputian walking across it tentatively, in her stocking feet. She walked on the collarbone the same way she walked here in Jonathan's parents' home, on their nicer oriental carpets.

And she looked at the nickel
And she looked at me
And she said, kind sir,
You can plainly see
There's a hole in the nickel,
And it runs right through!
Said I, there's a hole in the donut too.

"Thanks for the do-nut. So long!" The little girl waved furiously as if the customer in the song couldn't leave without a push.

"What a good song!" Laura said, scooping Meg into her lap. As much as Laura hated to pick favorites among children, Meg was her favorite of Jon's cousins, all of whom were scurrying around the house at the party tonight. "You know what? That makes me really hungry. Do you know what it makes me hungry for?"

"It makes me hungry for PICKLES," Meg squealed.

"Well, all right, then. Let's go to the kitchen!"

"Oh you wouldn't want to get that pretty dress dirty," a Barstow

aunt in a bejeweled sweater was saying. Charlotte insisted again on helping with the dishes as Laura squeezed by to grab the pickle jar out of the icebox. She wondered if this irrational fetching would be what social work was like, once she finished her degree. When next she glanced through the open kitchen door, the aunt was pouring herself some Diet Coke and Charlotte had successfully commandeered the sink. She would be the kind of guest who made good on polite offers. Her taut arms moved quickly, as if they were beating out a drum solo somewhere beneath the suds. Horribly, obscenely, she'd set all of Mrs. Barstow's best china in one two-foot-high wobbling stack, only a few inches from her jabbing elbow. Laura wanted to swoop in and tuck these threats away in their assigned cupboards, to neutralize them. She had just opened her mouth to say "excuse me" to Uncle Carter, who was speaking about his missionary work in the Congo, when she saw out of the corner of her eye that the plates were gone, and that Jonathan was there, framed by the doorway, in between the aunt and her Coke.

What was Charlotte? A half-niece, a friend of the family's, a cousin twice removed? Laura had seen her before. The single memory was sharp like flashes glinting off bracelets and mirrors and the pewter serving dishes that Mrs. Barstow laid out only for the largest family get-togethers (Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's): a hand skewing the doily on a banquette table, her straight back bending, her hand, cupped now at his nape, moving his ear closer so she could speak secrets into it, secrets that made him laugh, brightly like a gunshot. And there was this thoroughness to the gesture, as if Charlotte had known a trick for involving extra muscles in it.

In the evening she mounted the stairs to her room on the second floor. Tonight the Barstows' felt like home to her. It was possible to imagine, sometimes, in the dark, that this was really her mother's little house (where the clutter heaped in every corner had cocooned her, kept her safe) but blown up three times its size, inflated with cold mountain air that was pumped in through a window, along with the gleaming hardwood and high ceilings and new paint. It had been nice of the Barstows to take her in for the summer after graduation, when she'd had no future except the single point somewhere in August that would unite her forever to their son. But the fact that Jonathan had not wanted to share a room in his parents' house was a

relief really.

But then, when she came back from the bathroom with her toothbrush, he was there, incongruous on the twin. No room for two in there. His head was sunk low and she could tell he was in one of his moods. She sat by him, put her arms around him. "You're going to leave me," he said.

"No, honey."

"You're going to go away… to that stupid school." *Bawling children on all sides they needed help they needed walls raised round them to fence out the jungle the sickness they would not stop crying*

"Case Western is only a few hours away. I'll be home every weekend. We've been over this." *Cleveland is close. Far.* "I need the degree." *A wife is close. One flesh. Close forever.* "Stay. Promise you'll stay." *Lips. Come. No. We said. I know we said. Not again. Till after. But. Skinwarmth. Nostopplease. Unfurlingspineandhandsgodown ah. Mother. No. Hands. True intimacy. Holyforeachother. The white dress. Leave now. Bones sit up. Africa. Advancedpractitioners who are strategistsofchange. (Intone the holy name.) No. I won't leave until you stay. Our love. A fistinthebelly is a childinthewomb. Our child. No. Godislove. No. No. No. Youletmeupletmeupdoyouhearme mothercomesaveme motherhelp motherlove oh oh ohohh and the pain is punctured in thesoftandtendermiddle running, running straight through....*

They pulled into the parking lot fifteen minutes later. Charlotte's neck ached like she had been driving three hours. The radio was a thin whisper; Charlotte didn't dare turn it up to usual volume. Since she'd picked her up on the side of the road, wandering like a mental patient in a thin nightgown, Laura hadn't said a word. She'd even refused to get into the car at first. No, don't worry, I'll walk home, I'll go home now. It was only when Charlotte offered to let her come with her that Laura had given in. She'd told her that she'd like pho, it was like chicken soup for Vietnamese people, there was just this one restaurant in Lexington that sold it. But once Laura had settled into her seat it was like her capacity for expression was all used up, and she only nodded absently.

Now she stared at the unexpected foreignness of neon signs in the window, which you only saw here in liquor stores. Her arms were crossed tightly over her chest, as if without a bra she needed to hold

her breasts on manually. When Charlotte had shifted into park and turned off the engine, Laura made no move to get out of the car. "Coming?" Charlotte asked gently.

These delicate ladies, Charlotte thought as Laura slipped out of the car. Little floral patterns like barbed wire on all their upholstery, marking where you can't sit down; every wrong word like a shattered teacup, as if you were destroying their *property*, while someone is invading *yours*, uncles tromping their martial parades across great swaths of your mental territory, sullying your feelings towards other races, countries, friends—slipping their suspicions into your own second-guesses, until defense isn't even an issue and you smile, nod, and hope it's over soon. If her mother would finally move with her to Philly, she wouldn't have to put up with this anymore. But tonight she had refused again. Probably because of Andrew. Always because of Andrew. Charlotte sighed.

Pho 65 was fluorescent-lit, with backlit pictures on the menu and a crew of grungy high school age emo kids in the corner. They probably felt cool for knowing about this place. One of them, with a constellation of piercings on his lip, gave Charlotte the eye. She wondered if wearing a college t-shirt didn't make her look too young. They slid into the booth and she tried to make conversation by asking Laura about the wedding, but the girl didn't seem to want to talk about it. Understandable.

When the waiter came, Charlotte ordered for both of them. As he was turning to leave, though, Laura piped up, "Could you tell me how do they say 'thank you' in Vietnam?"

The stilted diction made Charlotte giggle. The girl was all right. Perfect earnestness is, in the right person, a kind of irony. Laura somehow gave off the impression that she was in on her own joke. She had the indulgent waiter repeat the words twice before she tried herself, producing a series of musical gulping noises.

"I sound like I'm trying to swallow a duck!" she exclaimed.

After that, Laura still didn't talk much, but Charlotte felt much more comfortable. She rambled on about weddings, her sister's, a college friend's, and she couldn't, of course, talk about her own wedding (had her mother told anyone that she'd married a…?) but she could talk about how "when we were together in high school, Jon and I planned out a whole wedding. Kind of as a joke. We were going to

have it on top of a mountain in winter, because I said no churches. We'd be right at the edge of a ski slope and, as soon as we said 'I do,' the priest would give us a push, and we'd go zooming straight down, *straight*, no parallel turn, no Stem Christie. And then finally at the bottom, when we were alone far away from the whole wedding party stuck at the top, then we'd do the kiss." Charlotte was plagued by a sudden, piercing desire for a cigarette, but she convinced herself Laura wouldn't like her smoking and drew willpower from the pillar of good across the table. So instead she gnawed a bit on her straw.

"But that's not actually what getting married feels like, is it?" Laura said, after a pause.

They exchanged local gossip until the pho came. Laura still had no appetite and mostly just sipped on the beef broth, leaving the weird thick noodles alone. The leaves sprinkled on top were a new thing—"cilantro," Charlotte said. She liked the name even more than the taste, and she found herself mouthing the word to herself silently, just to feel the air rush over her tongue. Giggles erupted from her at random, she couldn't focus on what Charlotte was saying about her own wedding. She wanted to tell Charlotte about the letter from Case Western, to ask her about how to live life in a faraway state. But she felt that the moment for revelations was past, and that Charlotte would probably hear about it soon enough, from her mother or from Jonathan or from any of the other people in this town. They would talk, she knew they would. But now she didn't care.

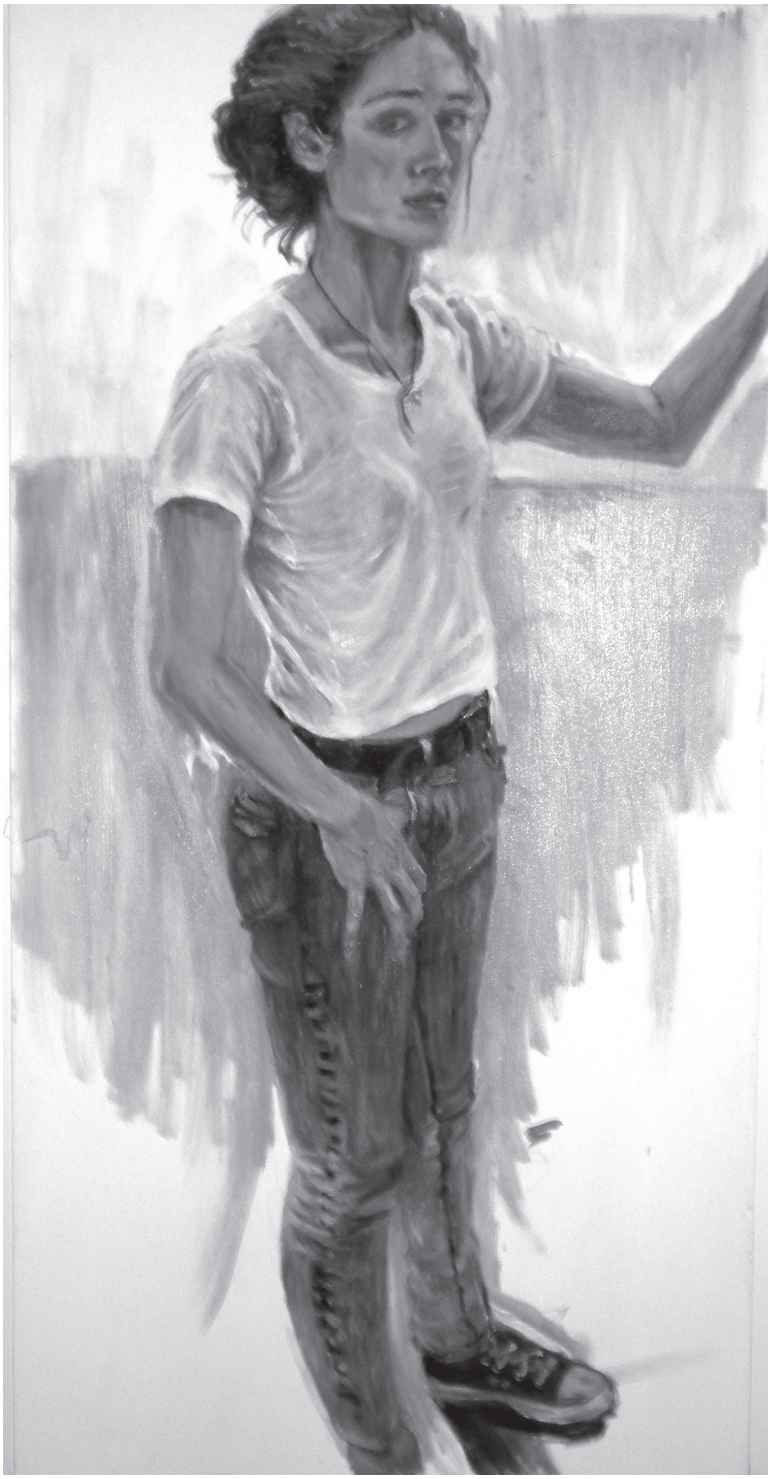
Now Laura set the HB to the white paper. The first tentative lines made her think of mountains, not the nearby Appalachians but the ancient Rockies she'd seen just once as a girl, on a ski trip with her mother to Utah. Not a flat map, a real mountain. And little Laura pushing, pushing, through slushy snow, head down and beating out the plodding rhythm of an uphill ski-walk, in a tiny universe of murky white. She had lifted her head at the brink of the slope, and suddenly the world had exploded in scale. Clear azure sky capped a great bowl of open air. The red valley beneath was wrinkled as a blanket resting over someone's knees, and the tiny tucked-in houses seemed precarious, as if the stirring of the sleeper could send them flying into the air.

Hands' weight on her shoulders. Jonathan was up. She felt in his

fingers his need to apologize. She stood to hold him, to comfort him (cooing "shh, shh" like a mother), and to kiss him good morning for the last time. ■

SELF PORTRAIT ▸

bridget menasche



SONNET 1: A RESPONSE TO SHAKESPEARE'S SONNET 23

kelly matula

From going to the theatre I know well
An actor's fear is fitted to his part,
And those who on much nobler themes do dwell
Are oft the most o'er-burdened with their art;
Thus, he that tells love's words in ready speech
Appeareth true, but yet his lie is proved;
To form in mind the words such man can reach,
A true love's heart would be too sorely moved.
So though you think your silence telleth not
To me your love, fear not, my player fair:
This very dumbness with which you are fraught
Bespeaks the burden that your heart doth bear.
    Your silence tells me more than you could write,
    For stealing pow'r of words is true love's might.

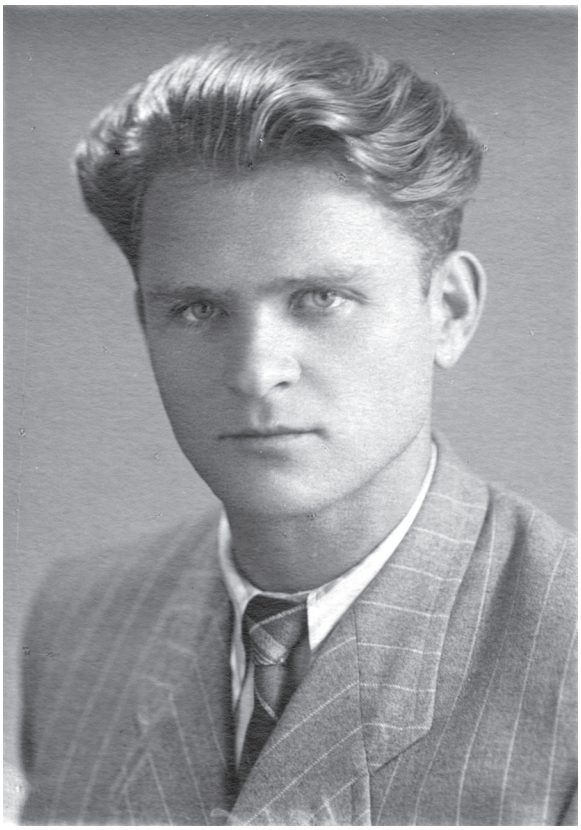
AN ALTERNATIVE, ADMITTEDLY-CROPPED SOLILOQUY

annabelle beaver

"To be or not to be: That is the question…
Enough iambs," cried Hamlet, pensive man,
"the word's a trochee anyhow.
And I can't bear a charlatan."

CITIZEN BOSS:
A GULAG MEMOIR

BY *fyodor mochulsky*
TRANSLATED BY *dr. deborah kaple*



Fyodor Mochulsky's memoir, *Citizen Boss*, is an important and unusual look at the inner workings of the GULAG prison labor system during the years 1940-1946. The GULAG was a system of forced, or slave, labor which at its height numbered at least 476 large and small camps. GULAG is simply an acronym for the Russian words *Glavniyi Upravlenie Lagerei*, which translate as "Main Administration of Camps." Between 1917 and 1953, this extensive system of slave labor camps that dotted Soviet Russia provided a significant labor source to the building of Soviet socialism. It also claimed at least 2.7 million lives.

This small book gives us a glimpse of a very important part of Russia's recent history, the years that Stalin, the Communist Party, and the NKVD (formerly KGB, now FSB) transformed the country using extreme methods of terror, fear, and torture. The NKVD, in particular, played a leading role in this tumultuous time, for between 1929 and 1953, an estimated 18-20 million people passed through the camps and 6 million more were exiled. The NKVD-run camps were crammed full of people wrongfully sentenced on trumped-up charges having to do with allegations that the person was "counter-revolutionary." Recent Russian estimates are that between 1931 and 1953, about 3.8 million people were arrested for "counter-revolutionary" crimes, of whom 786 thousand were simply shot.

Most Gulag memoirs were written by prisoners who survived the Gulag. What makes *Citizen Boss* so remarkable is that it was written by someone who worked for the camp system. That is, Fyodor Mochulsky was not a prisoner, but an employee of the NKVD. He was a staunch Communist Party member who, at age 22, was assigned by the Communist Party to work at Pechorlag, a prison camp so far north in Russia that it was above the Arctic Circle. There he worked as a boss of a unit of prisoners who were there to build a new 500-kilometer rail line over permafrost. In *Citizen Boss*, he details the everyday concerns of the GULAG employees, as well as describing the convicts, the guards, the bosses, and the system as he saw and experienced it.

In this excerpt, Mr. Mochulsky records his first impressions of the Gulag camp he is to live in and work at for the next 6 years.

He arrived at Pechorlag with two classmates who had also recently graduated from a railroad engineering school in Moscow, and this was what they found.

CHAPTER 6: COLD AND STARVATION

A few weeks after celebrating the 23rd Anniversary of the October Revolution[1], we three left the Camp Administration offices in a sleigh for our new jobs in the Sivaya Maska. As I said before, this was the northernmost section, also known as the Sixth Department of the Third Region of the labor camp. We rode the sleigh on the frozen Usa River to the buoy-keeper's house, where we had stored some of our belongings on our way in to Abez. All our things were there as we had left them, including our skis and ski boots.

Before we left, they gave us Army-issue short sheepskin coats, padded boots, and fur hats. On the advice of those who had lived in the far north longer than we had, we wore quilted pants and padded jackets under the sheepskins, and we shoved hay into our felt boots. Then we buried ourselves in hay on the sleigh. Prisoners who could freely travel in the camp without armed escorts[2] drove the sleighs. These men were also bundled up in padded clothing and felt boots. Our sleigh carefully headed down the banks of the frozen Usa River and started off towards the north along smooth tracks. We were on our way to meet our new fate.

As we rode in the sleigh, we noticed that our cheeks were starting to freeze from the snow and icy wind. First, we would see a light redness from the snow and wind on the cheeks, and then, suddenly a white spot would appear and quickly spread. Our driver had warned us that if the redness faded and the cheek no longer had any feeling, then we had to immediately rub snow on the cheek. The severity of the polar climate was rapidly becoming clear. After that, we always wrapped scarves over our faces when we rode on horses or in sleighs.

When we arrived at the Sivaya Maska, Nikolai was dropped off at his part of the camp, and Volodya and I then stayed the night in a tent "hotel." Early the next day, the two of us set out again. As we traveled, we could see, off to the right, a spur of the Ural Mountains

covered in dense forest. The tundra was buried under a thick layer of snow. Here and there shrubs stuck up. After traveling 14 kilometers northward from Sivaya Maska, I finally saw the prison camp watchtowers of my Unit, Pernashor, where my new life awaited me.

I will never forget our approach to that place. The road went alongside the prison camp. A heavy snow was falling. Just ahead, I saw a group of prisoners, about six of them, in padded jackets covered with Army-issue greatcoats, walking out from a thin stand of trees. They wore Army boots, and on their heads they had on Army caps without the star.[3] They were bent low, pulling the straps of a sleigh loaded with wood. Behind them, in a fur hat, felt boots, and a sheepskin coat with its collar upturned, paced a VOKhR guard carrying a bayoneted rifle under his arm. The whole group made its way to the camp gates. The gates opened; the prisoners and the sleigh disappeared into the zone. The gates closed.

The guard with the rifle walked to the long, snow-covered barracks that were located next to the camp, which, I was to find out later, was where the Security Platoon was located. Next to those barracks sat two dugouts. One belonged to the Commander of the Platoon, who, on the day of my arrival, was not in the zone. The

other dugout housed the Political Instructor and his wife. He had been notified by *Selektor*[4] that I was arriving. As he helped bring my things into his dugout, he seemed surprised that I had brought my skis from Moscow. Volodya traveled on to his new job in the camp Unit further north.

One of the first things the Political Instructor did for me was to choose a group of prisoners to build me my own dugout. While this was happening, I asked him to show me around Pernashor. When we entered the prison camp, I was gripped with horror at what I saw.[5]

There was not one barrack in our camp. Instead, the prisoners were lying on spots they had cleared off on the bare ground. They had scraped the snow off of several meters of frozen ground in the shape of squares, and had placed crudely-cut branches down as makeshift beds. On top of these branches lay the prisoners, dressed in their greatcoats and Army boots, "resting" after their 12-hour workday.

Under their greatcoats, the prisoners wore padded pants and padded jackets. On their heads were their forage caps. Several of them had wrapped their heads up in towels. Some of them had stuck fir branches into the snow around their heads, which they seemed to think would protect them a little from the icy wind. Each brigade had its own quadrant for sleeping, but depending on which way the wind was blowing, they switched places constantly to try to avoid the freezing air. Several prisoners were moving about the territory of the camp like shadows.

Near the gates at the end of the camp, a brigade of carpenters was building coffins.

At the same time, the Camp Administration officials continually screamed over the *Selektor* at the Unit Bosses, demanding an accounting of how many prisoners had worked and how many had fulfilled their norms for the 24-hour period. All they cared about was how much each prisoner needed to be fed, which was tied to how much work he had done that day. And to show how serious their demands were, they constantly cursed at us and threatened to slam us into prison, unless "by tomorrow all the prisoners went to work and fulfilled 100% of the plan." As I mentioned earlier, those who did not fulfill their work norms received 300 grams (about 10 ounces) of bread, and soup.

It was clear that winter had already arrived in full force, and the building of living quarters for the prisoners had not been included in the work plan. I immediately turned to the Political Instructor and asked him what was going on. Weren't we simply condemning all of these prisoners to an early death with such terrible conditions? To my questions, the Political Instructor only raised his hands, saying that it was not up to him, and that he himself could not understand what was happening. There was nobody to turn to, but we had to do something quickly to fix this. But what to do?

One morning shortly thereafter, Volodya came to see me from the neighboring camp Unit, and told me that it was the same dreadful situation in his camp. He said: "Fedya, what will we do? This is a nightmare! When they were sending us off in Moscow, they told us something absolutely different than this. What kind of labor re-education is going on with these prisoners if they are all just dying during the winter?"

He spoke to me to as a close friend, with full awareness that I was at the time a candidate member of the Communist Party. (Volodya never had joined the Komsomol, and did not belong to the Party.)[6]

But what could two young specialists who had just arrived at the GULAG—which was a state within the state—what could we actually do? We were far from Moscow and we had no way to get in touch with anyone there. Formally, we answered for our positions at Pechorlag both to Moscow and to the Party Obkom (Regional Communist Party) of Komi, ASSR, which was located in the capital of the republic, in Syktyvkar. But there were no roads to Syktyvkar, and neither the prison camp nor the Department had any kind of connections with them. But, still, the leadership of Pechorlag had to be aware of the actual situation at the camp, because every day, each camp Unit had to report to Pechorlag headquarters via the *Selektor*. Every Boss of a Unit of prisoners gave a summary of what the Unit had managed to build during the preceding 24-hour period. In this report, we always included the number of sick prisoners, how many had died, the situation with food, and so on. We did this every day.

Volodya waited for an answer from me. I agreed with his thinking. We discussed this terribly difficult situation for a long time, without coming up with a solution within the confines of the camp. Then, finally, we came to the following conclusions:

—According to what the GULAG officials had told us in Moscow, the prisoners were being held in the camps so that the Soviet State could re-educate them through labor. And after the prisoners had finished their sentences, they would return to a normal life.

—What clashed with this, though, was that in our camp, the living conditions were dangerous and were, in fact, just leading the prisoners straight to a quick death. With the onset of winter, we felt that, more than anything, we had to do what was necessary to save their lives, even if it meant stopping work on railroad building.

—In so far as we had neither the opportunity nor the time to convince the leadership in our camp Department and above in the GULAG hierarchy, and people were dying already right now, we decided that we had to act fast and work with the quickest methods available to save lives.

—At the same time, since the Soviet government had designated our camp as having importance to the war effort, and war could break out at any moment, we also had to fulfill the monthly construction plan.

Once we said all this to each other, we figured out what to do.

When we had first traveled to our Units in Pechorlag from Abez, both of us remembered remarking on the number of good-quality pine logs that were trapped in the banks of the Usa River. These

logs were supposed to float from the Ural Mountains to another destination, but many of them had gotten stuck in the mud. Volodya and I decided that our two camp Units could go and get those logs, bring them back, and do some building. We drew up plans up for some solid barracks, a mess house, a bathhouse, a "lice-fighter" (which was a place where you could turn up the temperature to 100 degrees Centigrade [212 degrees Fahrenheit] in order to kill lice) and other buildings we thought we might need.

In one night, then, we put together plans for all these buildings from our available materials. We did not even have one nail. There were none in either of our camp Units.

In order to construct stoves in the barracks, I took the risk of damaging "socialist property."[7] Someone at some time had thrown out several mining carts in my Unit. I thought that we could turn these carts upside down and cut holes in the bottom for pipes (we had tin plates). Then we could cut a door in the end of the cart for fuel, and line the whole thing with a base of stone and clay (bricks were not available). Then we only had to add the pipe and the stove was ready.

Volodya and I agreed to call a meeting with the prisoners in each of our camp Units and explain the situation to them. We planned our words carefully. We told them that their camp had been designated as significant to the war effort, and that war could break out any day. And because of this, the GULAG headquarters demanded that the prisoners fulfill their 24-hour plans. However, the Arctic winter was just beginning, and it would only get much worse. It was a huge problem that we did not have proper barracks and other buildings in our camp Unit.

We proposed to the prisoners that we all take two weeks from railroad building and devote the time to constructing our camp. We told them honestly that during these two weeks, we (the Unit Bosses) would be feeding the leadership *tufta*, or made-up numbers,[8] that would show all the prisoners fulfilling the daily plan by 100%. In this way, we would ensure that every prisoner would receive a normal amount of food during this two-week period.

We needed to be protected, so we made all of the prisoners promise not to tell the authorities anything. During these two weeks, we told them that we would build warm barracks, a mess hall, a

bathhouse, the lice-killer, through which we would immediately run all the linens, and supply the new camp. Then, after the two weeks spent on constructing our camp, we would work to fulfill the norms on track building by 200% for the next two weeks. In this way, we would still fulfill GULAG NKVD's monthly plan of construction. We told the prisoners that the Security Platoon had also agreed to go along with our plan. The VOKhR armed guards themselves had been suffering, like the prisoners, with no housing and little food, so they too were ready to support us.

Volodya left for his own camp Unit, fully ready to implement all that we had agreed on. Between shifts, I gathered all the prisoners in my camp Unit together. By this time, I already had a good idea of who was in my Unit. For instance, I knew I had many excellent skiers from Leningrad. In 1939, these men had volunteered to go to the Finnish front after the government had recruited them to join battalions of skiers that were sent to the enemy's rear.[9] At the time, Nikolai and I also had volunteered for these battalions, but the recruiters explained to us that for the time being, they were only taking men from Leningrad. We were told that we would be called if they decided to take volunteers from other cities. We did not get our turn. The war with Finland ended at the beginning of 1940.

In practice, when these battalions were thrown across the front line, they inevitably left ski trails. The Finnish aviators then cut off the trails, found the battalions by following their tracks, and destroyed them. They took as prisoners all the men who were left alive, which was mostly the wounded ones. Then the war ended, and our countries exchanged prisoners. But the Soviet Union, instead of sending the soldiers home, sent them to do forced labor at Pechorlag.[10]

In November 1940, these men still did not know their ultimate fates, since they had not been officially sentenced. In the meantime, they were being kept as convicts and treated as such. Several of these former soldiers were students, many of them my age. There are no words that could convey their suffering. When any of these unfortunate young people complained about their fate, I looked at them and could not find any way to comfort them. ■

[1]This was on November 7, 1940.

[2]Passes were issued to some prisoners, such as those who were experts in some job, so they were able to move about without being guarded by the VOKhR guards (the camp security guards). These passes were never given to political prisoners or the most dangerous recidivists.

[3]The prisoners were not allowed to wear the star on their clothing since it was thought that they would desecrate a beloved communist symbol. While prisoners, they no longer had the rights of Soviet citizens. Similarly, they could not use the word "comrade," and instead were forced to use the pre-revolutionary term "citizen."

[4]A type of walkie-talkie—their only form of communication with the headquarters of the camp.

[5]The temperature at that time hovered around 15 degrees Fahrenheit.

[6]He might have hesitated because the Communist Party ruled the USSR at that time, and its policies could not be questioned. Even Stalin's title as leader was General Secretary of the CPSU. So not being a Communist himself, Volodya would feel on shaky ground making policy recommendations to a Party member.

[7]A common charge that landed thousands of people in the GULAG.

[8]Tufta could mean forgery, deception, work done only for show, figures purposely inflated, and many other kinds of cheating on results.

[9]Finland appeared as one of the "spoils" in the secret protocols to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. When the USSR tried to establish bases in Finland, though, the Finns fought back. Known as the Winter War because it took place during the winter of 1939-1940, it was a humiliating defeat for the Soviet Union. The GULAG prisoners mentioned here were Soviets who had fought in this war. See Richard Overy, Stalin´s War.

[10]This was true of all Soviets who were taken prisoner, or ever had any kind of foreign contact. See Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago.

THERE ARE EXTRA FLOWERS IN THE WORLD

BY *yehuda amichai**
TRANSLATED BY *ari heistein*

There are extra flowers in the world,
Like the extra coffee produced in Brazil
That they throw into the ocean. Extra flowers
Decorate tables in empty rooms
And stone monuments.

The motion of the world market calms me.
Like the wandering of birds and a torn newspaper
That is dated, fluttering on the floor,
Make me feel at ease.

Fog wraps the end of the year
And the new beginning. I'm excluded from the knowledge
Of the future on the other side of my fog.
I am guarding the holy nothing in vain.
I am happy.

I am like a cannoneer, from whom they took
The target and his enemies and
His god and his shells and his cannon.

And he aims at the emptiness and he
Turns his head
And his face is radiating.

**The original piece is not included in this issue.*

ALTAZOR,
CANTO IV, LINES 262-308

BY *vicente huidobro**
TRANSLATED BY *anna sheaffer*

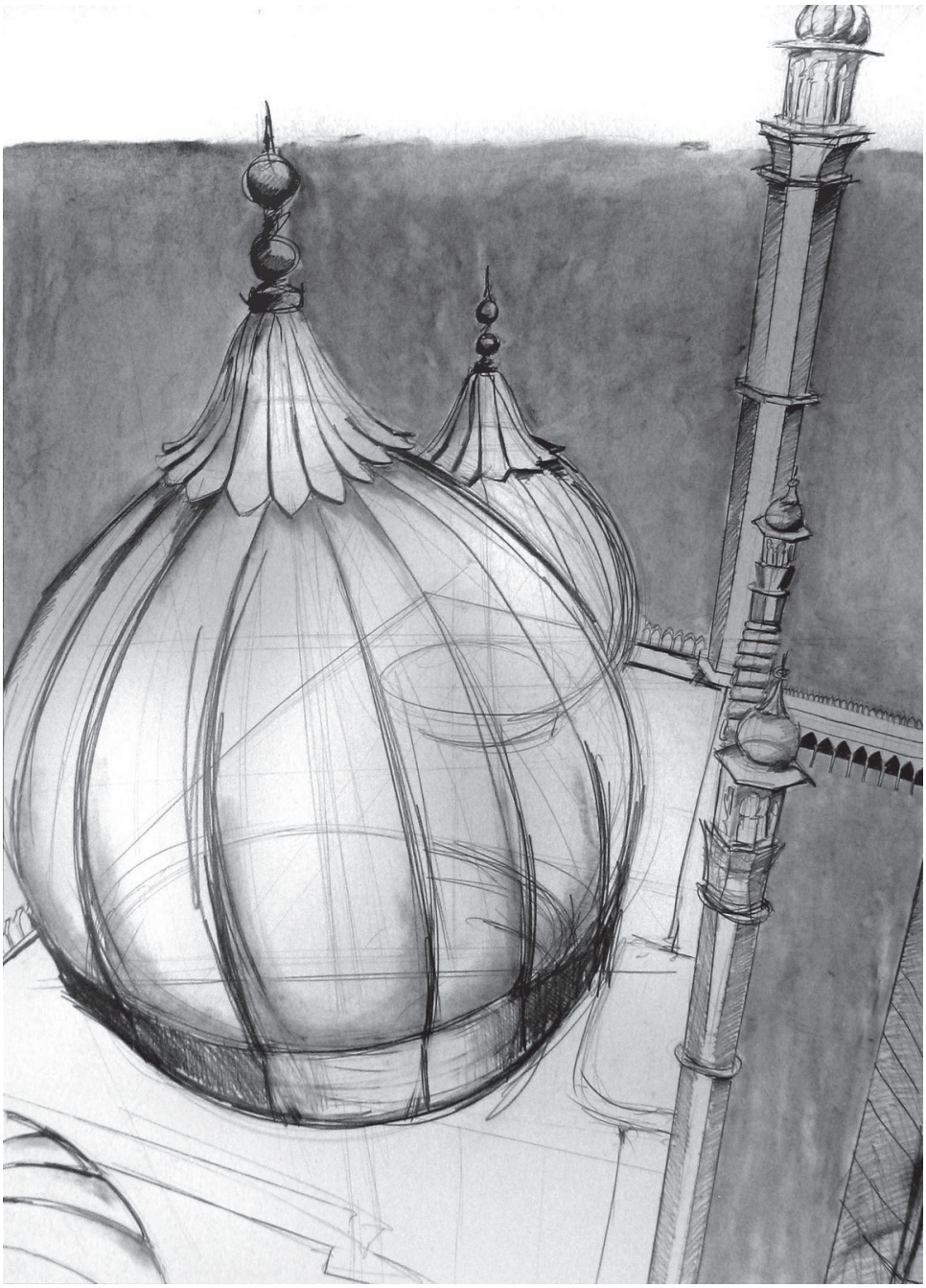
There's no time to lose
The icebergs that float in the eyes of the dead
Know the path
He who cries will be blind
Blackness of the boundless casket
Abolished hope
Torments transformed into cemetery inscriptions
Here lies Carlota maritime eyes
She fell and broke her satellite
Here lies Carl two sharks quarrel in his heart
Here lies Violet islet and inlet in the same violoncello
Here lies Susanna on and on analysis of oblivion
Here lies Bertha the earth that her eyes furrowed now covers her body
Here lies Angelica anchored in the harbor of her arms
Here lies Rosalind roses lined up to infinity
Here lies Raymond rays of roots through mounded earth are his veins
Here lies Clarissa clear whistle cloistered in starlight
Here lies Alexandra elixir and a six under sandbox
Here lies Gabriela dikes destroyed she rises in sap to the dream awaiting resurrection
Here lies Altazor soaring hawk shot down by altitude
Here lies Vicente antipoet and magician
He who cries will be blind
Blind like the comet that strolls with its staff
And the fog of spirits that follows it
Obedient to its instinctive whims

Unmindful of the meteors that hail from afar
And live in colonies according to season
The insolent meteore crosses the sky
The metesilver the metecopper
The metepebbles in the infinite
Meteopals beneath a gaze
Careful, aviator, with the stars
Careful with the aurora
In case the aeronaut commits auricide
A sky never had as many paths as this one
Nor was so hazardous
An errant star brings me greetings from a friend dead ten years
Hurry up hurry up
Planets ripen on the planetation
My eyes have seen the root of the birds
The furthest of the water lilies
The closer than close of the butterflies
Do you hear the sound of mandolins dying?
I am lost
There's nothing left but surrender
Before the war without barracks
And the nightly ambush of these stars

**The original piece is not included in this issue.*

JAMA MASJID, DELHI ▸

waqas jawaid



THE OWLS

BY *charles baudelaire*
TRANSLATED BY *diana chien*

Beneath the black yews, they wait:
The owls, resting in still arrays,
Like foreign gods whose crimson gaze
Darts forth. They meditate.

All imperturbable, not one
Stirs, till that melancholy hour
When shadows reclaim their power
And push aside the slanting sun.

Their demeanor instructs the wise
That in this world, one must despise
All turmoil, all unrest evade;

A man forever bears disgrace
Who, beguiled by passing shades,
Has once wished to change his place.

(original text)

Les Hiboux

Sous les ifs noirs qui les abritent
Les hiboux se tiennent rangés
Ainsi que des dieux étrangers
Dardant leur œil rouge. Ils méditent.

Sans remuer ils se tiendront
Jusqu'à l'heure mélancolique
Où, poussant le soleil oblique,
Les ténèbres s'établiront.

Leur attitude au sage enseigne
Qu'il faut en ce monde qu'il craigne
Le tumulte et le mouvement;

L'homme ivre d'une ombre qui passe
Porte toujours le châtiment
D'avoir voulu changer de place.

THE MOON

BY *jacinto de salas y quiroga*
TRANSLATED BY
anne frances durfee & will saborio

Their sky is foggy and their sun is cold.

Napoleon in Egypt.

Do not disturb me, for I anxiously contemplate
The beautiful body that in the sky shines
Unlike any I have seen, sad and faint,
From the Thames to the end.

Today marks a year the body wandered thus,
And seated on the moistened lawn,
Which I contemplated today,
My guise bathed in tears.
Wrapped I was in my heavy cloak,
And at a distance my sight discovered,
For pleasure and bliss,
Snow more beautiful than the light of day.

Not like the moon, with its grand visage,
Silver haired of age,
Nor from a healthy guise,
Did I discern a rose color.

The moon of Albion, amidst haze,
Does not shine, that which shines is Iberia's,

For ours is of loves,
Theirs of misery.
Two years this very day when in the ocean
That same body guided my ship;
With one glance I would forget my pains,
With one glance I did not tremble before the abyss.

Today, body of innocence and of comfort,
I see you from my country and without longing
Perhaps breathing… I am a poet!

But perhaps to understand
If I recall that dreary time
The flirt would sing to Pirra.

Up there other eyes on the moon
Will by chance find themselves with mine…
"Their light bothers you with inconvenience."
"The years are slow."

No, let me see, now that I may not
See what I want if my sight could;
What hope is left
if I do not dream a better destiny!

Look, can you not discover with me
Its framed eyes
In the witness body
Of its past withered loves?

Under the view, which repents my tears,
For I am fed up with crying;
Seek cover, oh moon, with your melancholy cloak,
For your sobbing beauty moves me.

(original text)

La Luna

Leur ciel est nébuleux et leur soleil est froid.
NAPOLÉON EN EGYPTE.

No me interrumpas, que contemplo ansioso
el astro bello que en el cielo brilla,
no cual le he visto, triste y nebuloso,
del Támesi a la orilla.
Hoy hace un año el astro así vagaba,
y sobre el césped húmedo sentado,
cual hoy le contemplaba,
el rostro mío en lágrimas bañado.
Envuelto estaba en mi pesado manto,
y mi vista a lo lejos descubría,
para placer y encanto,
nieve más bella que la luz del día.
No así la luna, con su faz hermosa,
Las canas plateaba del anciano,
ni del rostro lozano
yo distinguía la color de rosa.
La luna de Albión, entre vapores,
no alumbra, cual alumbra la de Iberia,
que la nuestra es de amores,
la suya de miseria.
Hoy mismo hace dos años que en los mares
guiaba mi bajel el astro mismo;
al verlo yo olvidaba mis pesares,
al verlo no temblaba ante el abismo.
Hoy, astro de inocencia y de consuelo,
te miro de mi patria y sin anhelo,
suspirando tal vez... ¡Si soy poeta!
Pero tal vez dichoso
si recuerdo aquel tiempo tenebroso
en que cantara a Pirra la coqueta.

Allá arriba otros ojos en la luna
se encontrarán acaso con los míos...
-«Su luz te es importuna.»-
-«Los años son tardíos.»-
No, déjame mirar, ya que no pueda
ver lo que quiero si la vista inclino;
¡Qué consuelo me queda
si no sueño más próspero destino!
Mira, ¿no puedes descubrir conmigo
sus ojos retratados
en el astro testigo
de sus amores lánguidos pasados?
Bajo la vista, que me brota el llanto,
y harto lloré en mi vida;
cúbrete, oh luna, con tu triste manto,
que tu belleza al lloro me convida.

THE EMBRACE

BY *valerio magrelli*
TRANSLATED BY *chenxin jiang*

You are sleeping next to me, so I turn my head
and, almost touching your face, fall asleep
like a lamp wick lit
by another wick's flame.
And the two lamps wait
as the flame is passed on and the sleep spun.
But while it spins, the boiler shudders
in the cellar.
A fossil nature burns down there,
deep underground, prehistory blazes, dead
submerged fermented peat,
blazing in my radiator.
In a dark aura of petroleum
the bedroom is a little nest warmed
by organic deposits, by pyres, by sewage.
And we, the wicks, are the two tongues
of that one Paleozoic torch.

(original text)

L'abbraccio

Tu dormi accanto a me così io mi inchino
e accostato al tuo viso prendo sonno
come fa lo stoppino
da uno stoppino che gli passa il fuoco.
E i due lumini stanno

mentre la fiamma passa e il sonno fila.
Ma mentre fila vibra
la caldaia nelle cantine.
Laggiù si brucia una natura fossile,
là in fondo arde la Preistoria, morte
torbe sommerse, fermentate,
avvampano nel mio termosifone.
In una buia aureola di petrolio
la cameretta è un nido riscaldato
da depositi organici, da roghi, da liquami.
E noi, stoppini, siamo le due lingue
di quell'unica torcia paleozoica.

SELF PORTRAIT *folasade john* ▾

A TRAVELOGUE

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO DRIVE THROUGH THE FORT PITT TUNNEL AS THE SUN RISES

halcyon person

This story begins in an old beat up Volvo station wagon. This story begins at the looming entrance of the Fort Pitt Tunnel, my headlights shaking in the night air. Pittsburgh is a city of tunnels and bridges. It's a city of humans being somewhere they're not supposed to be, drilling their way through the side of a mountain and stretching huge steel cables across rushing river water. If you've ever driven through the Fort Pitt Tunnel, you know there's this split second when you can't see anything, when everything in front of you is obscured by the gleaming lights that run along its length. It's a surreal thing, driving through the Fort Pitt Tunnel for the first time.

(*June*)

I spent the summer in Pittsburgh doing research on the steel mill industry in Western Pennsylvania—specifically Jones and Laughlin Steel Mill in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, a city just outside the heart of Pittsburgh. I'm hoping that the information I have compiled through interviews and research will help me to write a novel about the lives of the men and women who were affected by the mill, who lived the mill and breathed its heavy, soot-filled air. The mill was the ever-churning, thudding heartbeat of Aliquippa, the city's only major industry, and when it began to close down in 1982 it took

the life of Aliquippa with it. I did a series of thirty interviews, and when I talked to people about what happened after the mill closed, they kept referring to it like the death of a person, someone they were close to. A face growing pale, limbs stiffening, cold. Then most of them would shake their heads and fall silent for a moment, like some inescapable pain had stabbed at their stomach. They all looked very used to that feeling.

My father's family lived in Aliquippa for two generations. My grandfather moved there, with his six sisters, mother, and father, when he was fifteen, from the red dirt of Southern Georgia, and before a year had passed he and his father, my great-grandfather, were working at J&L Steel Mill. Over the years every man in the family did his time at the mill, with work gloves and steel-toed boots cladding their hands and feet. The work was hard, painful, and dangerous, and it wasn't uncommon for men to die: to get crushed by moving machinery or fall into the pits of a furnace. The mill was also a tough place to be black—every one of my family members has stories about working alongside racists and fearing for their jobs, and even their lives, because of it. None of them like to talk about it, but when I prodded my father during my first interview he explained, "J&L had a lot of ignorant people running around. It was hard, seeing that the world could be that way."

I didn't understand—when I drove down Route 60 for the first time, on my way to unlock my subletted apartment door and move in my belongings for the summer—how they all could have worked at J&L for so long. My grandfather put in thirty-five years before he took early retirement when the mill closed down. It was the one thing that I kept wondering as I talked with men and women: why J&L? Why this job, with all the hardships and danger attached to it? What kept them in Aliquippa for so long? When I asked my father what it was like growing up in Aliquippa, he laughed and said, "Aliquippa is a great place to be *from*."

I laughed, too. "To be *from*?"

"Yes, that's what I said." He laughed again. "I don't think I could stay in Aliquippa forever."

My station wagon sputtered and then jolted forwards as it climbed another steep hill. When I arrived, I jiggled the handle of the door for a few minutes before I finally got the key to do its job,

and I swung the door open to reveal my new home for the next ten weeks. It smelled like curry powder. It smelled like every surface in the place had been painted with curry, and as I ran my hand against the sticky white walls I wondered. It was on investigation of the kitchen that I realized every cupboard and cabinet was full of curry powder, and even the refrigerator had gallon sized plastic bags filled with the yellow stuff. The only other things in the kitchen were an apple that was rotting from the inside, decaying into itself, and half a gallon of curdled milk. All that plus two card tables, a beat up futon, and six or seven lawn chairs. I dropped my duffel bag onto the floor, realizing what "fully-furnished" actually meant on Craigslist.

One of my first interviews in Pittsburgh was with Donald McCoy, whose agreement to meet and talk with me was dependent on my promise to take him out to lunch at Burger King. I sat across from him in a plastic booth during the crowded lunch rush one June afternoon. The Burger King was rundown and dingy and the table I rested my elbows on was littered with crumbs of food that weren't mine. It was hot and humid like most summer days in Pittsburgh, like the whole city was inside a stuffy glass box. I was perched on an uncomfortable stool, and a piece of waxy yellow paper was the only remnant of the limp cheeseburger I had eaten, which had the faint taste of plastic, like everything in this restaurant. He ate with his mouth slightly open, and moved his hands as he spoke. I remember thinking then that I would describe his voice like a string of jazz notes, he spoke so smoothly and with a deep lilt that trailed off at the end of sentences. He took a bite of his fish sandwich and continued talking.

"I mean, at that time, the women really looked to me as a liberator. The whole mill called them Donald's Dozen, you know. They were my twelve girls, I got them their first mill jobs, I was their leader." He paused, and chewed thoughtfully. "I wouldn't say I was their Martin Luther King, but close."

At that moment I wished I could roll my eyes, but I just chewed absentmindedly on my drinking straw and nodded. He had thick hands that danced around the table, hovering in the air as he continued to speak, then jumping from his food to his drink, falling flat as the palms hit the table, and then aloft again as he scratched his wide, unkempt beard. He couldn't keep still, and I got caught up in

his movements and I let the sound of his smooth voice get lost in the din of the fast food restaurant. On his head was a brown fedora with a long red feather tucked in it, and when he was especially passionate about something, he would bob his head up and down in emphasis, and the feather would move slightly with him. I watched it quiver as he reached some great climax in his speech, the big band booming of his voice cutting through the shuffle of the restaurant. He stopped then, and so did the movement of the feather. My gaze stayed with his hat.

"Are you listening to me?" He glared, and I pulled myself back into the conversation.

"Of course. Please, I'm sorry, go on." My face was hot, and I felt like a child being scolded.

"All I'm trying to say is that I was a painter of history. I took my paintbrush, and with one stroke I changed everything. That's my legacy."

It wasn't until a few weeks later that I found out that the reason the whole mill called those first twelve female workers "Donald's Dozen" is because he had slept with all of them, until one of them filed a sexual harassment complaint and he almost lost his job. Another man, Jim Cooper, told me all this when I interviewed him, after groaning when I asked him about Donald's Dozen. He told me the whole story, about how Donald moved to a new job and found himself a wife who didn't know any better. Jim said, "Don't you ever say a word to Sherri about the dozen, though. Not a word. It would break her heart."

When I asked men about why they worked in the steel mill—why there and not someplace else—they all shrugged their shoulders. "What else was there?" my grandfather asked when I interviewed him one early summer afternoon. He swatted a fly away from his face and then rubbed the top of his bald head with one scarred hand. "You did what you needed to do to keep your family going. J&L's pay was good and they'd hire you if you worked hard, if you could do hard work." He paused then, and looked me in the eye. I thought maybe he was making sure I understood what he was saying. And at that moment, I don't think that I did—I couldn't see anything clearly, not then. It didn't make sense to me why he, and my whole family, would choose to live a life like that, a dangerous one

filled with struggle and pain and violent hate, drenched in beads of sweat. He sighed and leaned back on the plastic covered couch. "You just did what you needed to do."

(*July*)

You learn quickly that in Aliquippa everyone knows everyone. By the time I had conducted my fourth interview I had names of ten or fifteen more people who I could talk to. These were men, women, and their families who had known each other when they all worked at the mill, when they drove to work in the same cars, got the same paychecks, and shopped at the same stores. They got the same pink slips, too, when the mill started shutting down its different departments. One man told me that none of them saw it coming. One day they left work, drove home and when they arrived the next morning, putting their hardhats on their heads, a man in a cheap sport coat explained that there was no work to be done, that they could all go home and contact their local union rep about what to do now if one of their kids got sick. Art Scafidi was the president of the local 112, and he told me that he wrote a letter to Ronald Reagan. "I even got to talk to him on the phone," he said, smiling. "That was a big day. The *Pittsburgh Gazette* was there, and even a TV camera crew. There were a bunch of people all watching me. I sat on my living room couch, waiting for the phone to ring. I asked him what he was going to do for all the families in Aliquippa. I wanted to use more colorful language, but, you know, he's the President of the United States." He shook his head and chuckled softly. "He said that he was going to do everything in his power to help us." His face lost its smile in favor of a more sober look, and he tapped his fingers on the edge of his dining room table. "See what good that did."

I met two men through an interview I had done previously, and had been told that I could find them any morning before 8 AM if I went to George's Diner, out on a little strip of concrete that held a handful of flat-roofed businesses, like a barber shop and a travel agency. Peter Piroli and Eugene Hastings looked like a retirement-aged Laurel and Hardy: Peter was tall and thin and Eugene was short and round. I shook their hands and offered to buy them each a cup of coffee, which they refused. They bought me orders of George's eggs and grits and I sat down with them at a corner table.

"Peter here was management so, you know," Eugene rolled his eyes and chuckled, nudging Peter with his elbow. "But I worked in the Fourteen Inch Mill, making pipe. You know what that place was like?" I nodded. I'd seen pictures of the Fourteen Inch Mill, and I had driven out more than once to see the carcass that used to be J&L. It's a bunch of boarded up warehouses and dusty equipment left to bleach like bones in the sun.

"My dad worked in Fourteen Inch, too." I took another bite of eggs and felt the crooked metal tines of my fork scrape against the edge of my teeth.

"Now, Eugene here hated the management, but all we ever did was try and protect those union workers, make everything fair for everybody. We had a company to run, you know." Peter, I had been told before, was a manager at the Blooming Mill, where some of the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs were. "The union wouldn't let us do our job, you know. They complained every time they could."

I nodded again. "So, I've been asking everyone I interview about this, and I'd love to hear what you both think. What would you say caused the mill to close? I've heard a lot of answers, that business went overseas, or that it happened after LTV bought up J&L, but what do you say?"

"Well, it's tough to say for sure," Peter glanced at Eugene and then at the tape recorder on the table. He was wearing golfing gear, a pastel button down shirt and a pair of khaki shorts. He had a full head of bright white hair that he smoothed every so often with the palm of his hand. "I guess I'd say the unions probably take some blame. Like I said, they whined and whined and we couldn't keep up with their demands. They wanted more from us than we could give them. They don't have unions overseas. It was cheaper to get your steel someplace else, you see?"

"What are you talking about, Pete?" Eugene, who had small eyes that jumped when he spoke, slammed his open palm down on the table. "You don't honestly believe that! We were trying to feed our kids, damn it! It was all of you, you damn managers, you hung us out to dry. You could have fought LTV, you could have stood up for us, but you didn't. You didn't do a God-damned thing!" He pushed his chair back and stood up.

"Is that what you really believe, Gene?" Peter stood, too, and

pushed his face into Eugene's. I was frozen, completely clueless as to how I could stop this from becoming a brawl. Both men were silent, staring into the other's eyes.

"There's a lot of blame to go around." Eugene, finally diffusing himself, sat down and put his hand around his mug of coffee. "Let's leave it at that."

"Yeah." Peter sat, too. Both men seemed a little sheepish, embarrassed that they had gotten so riled up.

"You'll have to excuse my language, sweetheart." Eugene smiled and patted my hand. "You'd think after thirty years we wouldn't care about old J&L anymore, but we do."

"I remember, I was one of the last guys around, I stayed until 1991," Peter said. The mill closed down piece by piece, the Nail and Tin mills finally closing their doors in 1992. "I saw them pull the furnaces down with this giant crane. They wrapped one of them in steel cable and pulled it down, and I watched as the first fell and hit the second, and then it toppled into the third, and then the third one toppled the fourth." His eyes were welling up with tears, and he rubbed one of them with his finger. "Like a bunch of dominoes." He pushed his finger into the crevice of his other eye. "You wouldn't believe it."

(*August*)

Martin Castanza insisted that I call him Marty. He lived with his daughter, who was about the same age as both of my parents, in a nice little home right on the edge of Aliquippa. He sat across from me at a long dining room table and he spoke very softly, always looking down at his chest. He was the oldest person I interviewed during the summer, and as he told me the story of how he saw almost the entire world in the U.S. Navy, there were times when he faltered, back-tracked, and got time jumbled in his mind.

"The only place I never saw was Australia." Marty brushed some crumbs off of his shirt as he spoke. "I wanted to go so badly, but I never got there. I went to Antarctica, South America, and even France. But I never got to see Australia." He shook his head. "They told me I could after my second tour, we were all set to go, leave for another two years, but then Mary got pregnant." He looked up at his daughter, who was listening as she washed dishes in the next room.

"Becky, you know your knuckle-headed brother kept me from seeing Australia!" he shouted playfully to her, and I could hear her laughs stream in over the sound of splashing water.

"He's said that since Bobby and I were babies!" She walked into the room, a dishtowel between her wet hands. "You're awful, dad."

"So tell me about what happened when you came back to the mill."

"I was a welder. I had to get training, see, and I apprenticed for six months before I could weld. We went around to all the different departments and fixed broken machines, whenever they needed it."

"Tell her about the suits, dad." Becky walked back into the kitchen as she spoke.

"The suits. We had to wear these big jumpsuits to protect from the heat all day. We wore them over our clothes and they'd get so dirty! You know, a steel mill is the dirtiest place on earth, don't let anybody tell you differently. Never work in a steel mill." He said this with a new seriousness, and looked me square in the eyes.

"I won't, sir," I responded after a pause, because he seemed like he was waiting for an answer.

"We'd bring the suits home every night and all the wives would wash them. Mary washed mine every single night so that I could look clean and pressed in the morning. If you let your suit go one or two days without washing, you wouldn't be able to stand it, it was so dirty. But the thing is." He stopped for what seemed like a very long time. I waited, wondering if I should ask him another question, but he seemed lost in thought.

"The thing of it is, those suits were lined with asbestos. That's how they protected us from the heat. And when Mary washed those darn things every night, well, she got really sick that way. She got emphysema, and it killed her four years ago."

"I'm so sorry." I felt like something sharp was piercing the center of my chest. "I'm so sorry."

"You just wonder, you ask God." He was staring back down at his chest again. "I'm still healthy as a horse. You just wonder, you wonder why things are the way they are." I was struck silent by his story, and for a while the only sound in the house was water flowing out of the faucet.

After a minute he sat up in his chair and returned to the conver-

sation. "You know, there's a part of me that thinks steel might be king again someday. That people will stop using plastic and we'll all buy steel again like we did when I was at J&L. Steel might be king again." The water stopped and I could hear the clatter of dishes being put on shelves. "But, you know, if that ever does happen, I don't think I'll be around to see it."

It took a long time for me to understand what my grandfather was saying when he looked me in the eye and said, "You just did what you needed to do." It was the third time I was interviewing him, the last time before I went home for the summer, and we were sitting on the same plastic-covered couches in his stuffy living room. He had a yellow flyswatter in his right hand, and every so often he'd interrupt himself to bat at something invisible in the air, the fly long gone by the time he was able to swing.

"I think it was important to me that you, you and your brother, would never have to do what I did. That you could go to school, get a job where they paid you because your brain is big, not because you could fall in a furnace and the next day they could replace you with someone else. I think that's why. Our generation did things that I pray to the Lord you'll never have to see. That's just what it's all about. It's your duty, to work a little harder so that things won't always be the way they are." He stopped and swung his arm out towards an armchair. A lazy fly buzzed off, weaving through the thick air. While he wrestled with the fly, I was feeling that same sharp pain again, something inescapable at the center of my chest. My eyes blurred with tears.

"Aliquippa will always be my home, the place where I did the proudest thing in my life. I raised a family, I taught five boys how to hunt and shave their faces, how to be real men, and do for you what I did for them. I'm not sorry I worked at the mill. The pay was good and the job was steady. I never worried about what my family was going to eat for dinner. I owe J&L more than they ever paid me." He batted the end of the flyswatter against his palm. "I'm a lucky man."

In my last week in Pittsburgh before going home for the summer, I got up early and walked out to my car, wedged with little success between two pickup trucks on the side of the road. I had spent more than two months dealing with Pittsburgh's traffic, which consisted

mostly of one-way streets and parallel parking, but I was still no good at parking on the left side of the road. I started up the engine and slipped out of the spot, heading towards the water. I had gotten into the habit of driving early, before the morning traffic descended on Pittsburgh's highways, before dawn. Living on my own had given me a strange perception of time, and there were stretches when I would sleep all through the day and then write all night before getting in my car and driving around, going no place but just wanting to get out of my curry-filled apartment.

This story ends in an old beat up Volvo station wagon. I was deciding whether or not to keep my headlights on as the dark sky was beginning to turn gray with the advance of the sun. That's when the nose of my car shot through the Fort Pitt Tunnel, something that, by the end of the summer, I was used to doing. The best part about the Fort Pitt Tunnel is that when you exit, you're on this huge bridge that faces the entire city. You can turn to your right and see everything in Pittsburgh, the stadiums and the skyscrapers, opening towards you like an enormous postcard. When I came out of the tunnel dawn had just broken, cracked like the runny yolk of an egg across the silvery sky. It was beautiful. ■

DUST STORM SONG

phyllis heitjan

I got dust in my hair
It blew right up out of the ground in a desert second
Now when I shake my head
I make a rattlesnake sound
You can hear me from Tucson
Now when I shake my head
I fill my shirt with sand
It collects in my collarbones
And between my breasts
My scalp is raw, and my hands
But my face has been sandpapered smooth
Except for one long groove,
Like they have on the moon,
That got worn into my alabaster temple

I got dust in my eyes
So I wear them red like an angry man
I cry in mineral, stalactite tracks
My eyelids will hold the grains like lovers
And coat them steadily with tears
Until they grow into bitter pearls,
Which I pluck and give to strangers

My darling, dearest love,
I got dust in my mouth
And it shattered all my words
My teeth eroded to blunt sculpture

My tongue got all cut up in the crossfire
I do nothing these days but spit little pings
In my pretty copper pail
In the single room
Where you found me more beautiful
Than ten thousand miles of bronze, womanly dunes

CHRONOLOGY

jackie hedeman

If you were to lie on your back with your head on the tiles in front of the fireplace, it was possible to see the place under the mantelpiece that was chipped when the last owner of the house shot himself in the head. When my mother caught my cousin Frank and me doing just that, she sent us outside with the expectation, as she put it, that we would do something constructive and stop being so morbid.

The gravel path outside was white and dusty. Every step brought up a cloud of chalky dirt that coated our sandaled feet and came off in the shower in grainy streams. Sometimes my father and Frank's would get the owner in the evening and they would play *pétanque* (explained to me as French bocce ball), which was played a lot here in the Alpes-Maritimes, up and down the path until dinner was ready. Mom would yell at them if they got too much gravel in the garden and Dad would raise his eyebrows (his "it's not *my* problem" face) and gesture at the owner, who would assure Mother that, since it was his gravel, he would rake it back together.

The house belonged to this owner, Monsieur Martel. It was his *gîte* (explained to me as a French vacation home). Monsieur Martel's own home was a half-kilometer down the road. It was small and dark and smelled of chickens, mostly because there was a chicken coop behind the house, from which Monsieur Martel got his eggs and, occasionally, his chicken dinners. He also shot wild boar. He was particularly proud of this, and he climbed on a rickety chair to lift down the foot-and-a-half long wild boar skull from his last kill. It had

been sitting on top of a shabby wardrobe, surveying the TV room where he had dragged Frank and me to show us an ancient animated Astérix film. Apparently wild boars always come back to the place where they were born, which for Monsieur Martel means an endless supply of meat. Frank and I were more interested in the skull than in Astérix. We were high school juniors, soon to be seniors, and felt that cartoons were beneath our dignity.

Before Mom kicked us out, Frank and I had been lying on our backs and looking at the chipped mantelpiece mostly on account of the heat. It was at least ninety degrees outside and the only cool place in the house was stretched out on the tiles. Monsieur Martel had told us about the chip and the previous owner with the utmost vagueness. We knew that the chip was a result of the previous owner shooting himself in the head. We knew that the previous owner had the house until his death, when Monsieur Martel's late wife's family had bought it in the early 1900s. Beyond that, we had to imagine, and we did. What else was there to do?

"Go on a hike," my mother said. "Read a book. Ask your father if he'll drive you to the beach."

"We'll be lying on our backs there too," said Frank. "And soaking up harmful rays. In front of the fireplace there are no harmful rays." If I had said that, my mother would have done more than grin and roll her eyes and go back into the house, leaving us on the path.

Without waiting for me to follow him, Frank started for the olive trees at the edge of the garden, scattering gravel every which way with his first leap into the lettuce (no flowers were growing in the garden, just lettuce). Once there, he sprawled on his front in the shade and started picking at the long and scratchy grass. I patted the ground and sat down next to him. "This is almost as cool," I said.

"No it's not," he said. "What kind of place doesn't have air conditioning?"

I shrugged. "France."

"I don't know why my dad brought me here."

I didn't speak. There were things about which I knew it was best to say nothing. When Dad had told me that Frank and Uncle Chris would be joining us for our trip to France, sans Aunt Judy, he had had a tone in his voice. It was interesting. There were still things my parents, who claimed to be open about everything with me, decided

not to spell out. Perhaps they credited me with a better ability to read between the lines than I actually possessed. Perhaps they just didn't want to tell me, although whether what they hoped to avoid was the act of telling, or the information itself, was unclear.

Whatever the reason, I did not know why Frank's father had brought Frank here either, but I got the sense that Frank's statement had been more rhetorical than anything else. Obviously he knew what had happened to bring them here. What made things awkward that summer was that he seemed to assume that I knew as well.

Frank sighed and rolled onto his back. "So what do we know about the count so far?"

"The count?"

"The guy who shot himself."

"Who said he was a count?"

Frank pulled at an especially long piece of grass until it came free in his hand. He started to twirl it in the air above his head. The shadow it cast on his face looked like an insect. I wanted to swat at it. "Okay," he said. "No one. But he should've been, don't you think?"

"Fine." I had the beginnings of a headache and was in no mood to argue the point. It was mid afternoon and the air was buzzing. Insects flew by making clacking noises and the dry grass in the heat seemed about to burst into flame.

"So we know he died in 1905. What happened in 1905?"

I leaned against the tree. "I don't know, Frank. It's July."

Frank glanced up at me. "You have to know that stuff year round," he said, "not just while school's in session. Otherwise why learn anything?"

"I was being sarcastic. Sheesh." The bark was digging into my back, and I tried to find a better position. "I don't know. I think something happened in Russia."

"Something's always going on somewhere," said Frank. "I meant here. Lie down if you're uncomfortable."

I did, but the sun was in my eyes, so I rolled over and propped myself up on my elbows. In doing so, I brushed against Frank's side.

Lying next to him on the cool tiles in front of the fireplace had been no big deal. We were cousins and we were trying to find some sort of relief from feeling perpetually warm and disgusting and we were looking at the remnants of someone's demise. Out here some-

thing else had been added to the mix. I could feel the heat his body was giving off through his t-shirt. Now that we were outside he was sweating and the way he smelled reminded me of the boys in my class who would pull off their shirts and pour water over their heads on hot days. I scooted sideways away from him.

It had been clear from the moment Dad told me that Frank and Uncle Chris were coming to France with us that I would be responsible for entertaining Frank. Frank and I were born a day apart, as Aunt Judy never failed to remind us. Uncle Chris once slipped in that we must have been conceived on the same day in the same motel during the same family reunion, but I tried to put that image out of my mind. Regardless of what led up to it, Frank and I were always referred to as one unit by aunts and uncles and other cousins. "Frank and Jenny want to order pizza. Ask Frank and Jenny if you can watch TV with them. Can Frank and Jenny drive us to the mall? Jenny and Frank are hogging the ice cream," and so on. They were right. In groups we tended to stick together; when faced with a wall of younger cousins, we kept to ourselves. Here, though, in France, it was as if those moments of unity had never existed. We were cousins, maybe even friends, but there was no more Frank-and-Jenny.

But we had been, and it was impossible not to notice the look Frank gave me when I moved away from him.

"A rock was stabbing me," I said, pointing towards the ground between us.

Frank nodded and, thank God, said nothing.

"So," I said, pulling out a clump of grass, "we know that he died in 1905, we know that he was a count, and we know that he lived here." I looked at Frank. His eyes were closed.

"I'm going to take a nap," he said. "Just a short one. Will you wake me up in twenty minutes?"

I nodded, and then remembered he couldn't see me. "Sure."

He moved his shoulders back and forth, as if he expected to mould the ground into a softer mattress. He brought his arm under his head. He soon began to breathe more slowly.

I squinted out from the shade at the garden. The lettuce heads were really quite impressive. Monsieur Martel had declined Mom's offer of help and continued to look after them himself. Sometimes in the early mornings, if I were awake, I would sit on the kitchen's win-

dowsill, my legs dangling out, and watch him. Once Dad walked in behind me and told me to get my bottom out of the sink. That was the only time anyone else came into the kitchen while I was there watching Monsieur Martel tend the lettuce. It was a strange light, that early in the morning. It was already bright, of course, but softer somehow.

Frank wouldn't wake up until almost noon, most days. Uncle Chris told him off for it at first, but Dad advised Frank to sleep as much as he wanted while he still had the ability. That was one of those moments that hinted at something strange, like when Mom would let Frank get away with sarcasm that would earn me a reprimand. I resigned myself to not knowing why Frank was allowed these things, which had to be related to the reason why Frank and Uncle Chris had joined us, because I didn't want to ask and no one showed any signs of telling me.

I wondered if Frank preferred his mother or his father. I wondered if he minded spending two months without his mother, or if he was happy to be spending them with his dad. That was another question I couldn't ask. It was like asking parents of multiple children if they had a favorite child. I had asked my grandmother once. She had teared up and looked at the living room, where my mother and six aunts and uncles were gathered and had not hesitated before giving me some answer about "loving them all equally for different reasons." Making my grandmother cry is not difficult. Sometimes it consists of as little as thanking her for a good meal, or doing well in school. Her tears were not what bothered me. It was the fact that she did not have to think before she answered me, as if what she was saying was true. The answer in our family would always be, "Of course not! How could I choose? I love them equally," whether it was true or not. I knew this because I knew it was what I would say. What would make me different from my grandmother would not be hesitation—I would not hesitate; I've learned the phrase by heart—but the knowledge that I would be lying as I said it.

Frank made a sound and scratched his head, but I was pretty sure he was still asleep. I knew how he sounded when he was awake but pretending to sleep, which had happened the last time we saw our cousin Emma and she had wanted to play Candy Land with Frank. He had curled up on the couch and shut his eyes the minute

he heard she was looking for him. Then he had been silent and still. Now he was restless, and I knew he was asleep. I realized that I had never started timing from the beginning of his nap, and decided to wake him up after another five minutes passed. He would never know the difference.

The thing that made it hard to be with Frank was not that he was good looking and related to me (that had only been a split-second concern), or that he assumed I knew something that I did not, or even that he so clearly disliked this country that I loved, but that it was so hard to tell, even after all these years, what he was thinking. I didn't know whether his cataloguing of the count's attributes was just a curious mind at work, or if it was a surface symptom of some deeper thing I should be concerned about, or if it meant nothing at all. And all of a sudden I couldn't ask him, though I always might have before.

Frank had woken up while I was thinking. I became aware of stillness where before there had been the sound of his sleeping. "I know you're awake," I said. "Stop staring at me through your eyelashes."

Frank chuckled and opened his eyes. He sat up. There was grass stuck to his back and in his hair. I started laughing. "What?" he said. "What?"

I started brushing him off.

Suddenly he twisted and grabbed my forearm, hard, leaning against me and pressing my back into the tree. His mouth was an inch from mine. "What are you—?"

"Ssh. Don't move." Slowly, he nodded at a spot over my left shoulder. "There's a huge wild boar. Right there."

Slowly, I turned my head. I couldn't move it far because of the angle at which Frank had shoved me into the tree, but it was enough to see that he was right. There was a boar, hairy and much, much bigger than the skull had led me to believe, standing two feet away. I looked away. It seemed a good time to apply the logic that if I couldn't see it, it couldn't see me.

"We should sneak away," said Frank.

"Maybe it's okay," I said, not looking forward to creeping through the lettuce, which was not likely to be at all subtle.

"Mr. Martel said they slash with their tusks," said Frank.

I had a brief thought of what that might entail, but was interrupted by a shot. Frank froze. "Monsieur Martel to the rescue," I said. There was another shot and I looked back at the boar, which was now dead and bloody, and Monsieur Martel was standing over it.

Mom, Dad, and Uncle Chris appeared. I had not heard them arrive but it occurred to me that the sound of a shot would probably get them outside.

Mom clutched my shoulder and Dad tried to talk to Monsieur Martel to find out what had happened (I should have thought it was fairly obvious) but his French was failing him and he had to settle for standing there and looking inquisitive.

"I need to go inside," said Frank. He looked as if he might be sick.

None of the adults heard him. Instead, they stood and stared at the boar, in shock. The thought crossed my mind that if anyone had the right to be in shock it was Frank and me, but I abandoned the thought of telling them so in favor of following Frank into the house.

He went straight to the tiles in front of the fireplace and lay down. He turned his head and pressed his cheek onto the tiles. "I just need to stay here for a while. I need to cool down."

"Are you alright, Frank," I finally asked. "Is there anything I should do?"

"No," he said.

I sat down next to him.

"So," he said, after a while, "we know that he was a count. We know that he lived here. We know that in 1905 he took a gun and shot himself in the head. Is there anything else you think we should know?" ■

INVERSE-SQUARE LAW

ben knudsen

Feeling the tug from the top of the tree,
the crow shrugs his crooked shoulders; below,
the earth shifts infinitesimally.

The sift of the sand as it elbows
its way to the shoreline mirrors the smile
of the moon, motherly, watching it go.

The atoms of my body, across the miles,
align themselves and face toward the sea,
greeting each of yours by turn in single file.

APPLE

ruthie schwab

BOARDWALK BLOCK

adrienne raphel

Big Bop Pop's got his five-buck shop
Chock-a-block stocked with stuff that's hocked,
Watches stopped at the two o'clock,
Hockey puck hermit crabs, legs pock-marked.

Big Bop Pop's got a lemon-pie grin
For the ring-a-ding pinball crowd reeling with gin,
For the pinstriped belly boys, lips pasty-thin,
They stop by the shop but they never come in.

Big Bop'll trade a B-flat for a B,
A neck for a neck, a tooth for a tee,
A downy quilt bedbug for a fur-cap-fat flea—
A kickline of one, knobbly-kneed.

Big Bop Pop's got an arcade Claw
That prized up the filling from the hole in his jaw,
Bobbled around like a brassy gumball
And dropped it again near a rabbit's foot paw.

Big Bop Pop's got a nose like the flu,
Loose elbows goosed with stale Crazy Glue
If you need eyes, he's got some that'll do—
They used to be blue, but he's secondhand new.

DIVINATION

annabelle beaver

Twenty-pound carp about to be gefilted
whispered Hebrew through its gills.
This was odd. Was it God?

Someone heard the burble
Was it the slop sink? Was it the shop's cat
or the creak of packing crates?
Alas, it was the fish carping.

"Torah reading is in order,"
intoned the fish before its certain slaughter,
"and the end is near."
(The end has now been near for nearly four years.)

Someone killed the proselytizer,
one not fooled by babbled fables,
a gentile.
He clubbed the seer upon his head.

Someone ate the largemouth prophet
selfishly and breaking fast
before it could object.

Who was fooled
by an oracle unschooled?

UNTITLED, FALL 2006

talia nussbaum

WHY A MOTHER LOCKED SOME OF HER CHILDREN IN THE BASEMENT

mara nelson-greenberg

(MOTHER, in her late 40's and very pregnant, sits at the round table in her kitchen. The kitchen should look like one that is used quite frequently and rarely cleaned, as MOTHER has three sons and has lost her patience for housekeeping. She should always seem mildly impatient but very high energy—like she is slightly manic but makes an active effort to keep it together at all times)

MOTHER:
I had a dream recently that I was supposed to be following all these people, but I kept getting very upset. Oh, God! *(Begins laughing)* I was about to say something about my nipples, and then I realized that I need to supply some context. Well, so, I just watched this documentary about women in Africa, and they have those long nipples. *(Pause)* That's sort of it. So in my dream, my nipples were down to the floor, they were like these thin, sort of slippery ropes just… *(Makes hand motion downward)* just down, down, down. And I was supposed to follow these people; I don't know who they were or why I was supposed to follow them… I wish I did. Anyways, I was supposed to follow these people, and my kids were with me, my boys, all my little kings, and none of them could keep up. And my hands were full—or, maybe they weren't, but really, I can't carry my boys anymore, they're all much too big for me to do that. And I knew that my nipples could carry them! I could just tell, if my boys grabbed onto my nipples, I could carry them all the way, and we wouldn't lose sight of this—of this whatever, whoever guys we were following. So I told them to just grab on, just to grab onto either one of

my nipples, and then we could keep up. And none of them would do it! They reacted negatively—they were really grossed out. And now, the thing is, I understand that. How could I expect anyone to want to swing from my nipples as I walk? It's disgusting, I know! But in my dream, I was so mad at them, for not grabbing onto me. I took it really personally. I mean, I wasn't just offended, as I said, I was *mad.* They were rejecting me, see, that's what it was. And I forgot about it in the morning, for the most part, but every now and then when one of them… when one of them seems to lack that chip that girls have, that one that allows them to understand me the way a girl would, I just have a flash of that dream and I become a little mad again. For just a short moment, though, really, and then it goes away just as quickly as it came. *(Pause)* When I was giving birth for the first time, I never thought that I would face nipple battles with my sons, even in my dreams. I can tell you this, though: if I had daughters, I don't think they would mind grabbing onto my nipples quite as much. It's different with boys and girls, you know.

(MOTHER puts her legs up onto two other chairs and leans back, as if she is in a hospital and has just received an examination. If it needs to be made clearer where she is, she can bring some "hospital props" out from under the table: a stethoscope, maybe, or a sign that says "HOSPITAL." MOTHER relaxes)

FATHER:
(Rushing in)
Am I too late? Have they already told you?

MOTHER:
No, I was waiting for you. I've been waiting here for an hour.

FATHER:
I'm sorry, honey, I had to do the taxes. He checked you out and everything?

MOTHER:
Yes, he ran the tests. I think he already knows the answer. I just… I asked him to wait for you to get here. I didn't want to find out with-

out you.

FATHER:
So… we'll know very soon.

MOTHER:
Oh, I have knots in my stomach! What do you think?

FATHER:
I don't know. What do you think?

MOTHER:
I think… you tell me first. What do you think?

FATHER:
I don't know, Mommy. Does it feel like… does it feel like it could be one in particular? From the inside?

MOTHER:
No. Maybe. I can't tell.

FATHER:
Do you… well, do you have a preference?

MOTHER:
It's too late to play this game; we're about to find out I don't have a preference.

FATHER:
I don't either. I'm happy with anything.

MOTHER:
I'm happy with anything, too.

FATHER:
You want a girl.

MOTHER:

Oh, I'd be happy with a boy, too! No preference.

FATHER:
I'd be happy with a boy. Or a girl. I'd be happy with anything! Let's not jinx it. I'll get the Doctor. *(DOCTOR ENTERS with something behind his back)*

DOCTOR:
So… the father is here?

FATHER:
Oh, we're so excited, Doctor! We're so excited to know, do you know?

MOTHER:
Daddy, I have a preference.

(FATHER doesn't hear her)

FATHER:
We can't wait to find out! Just tell us now… did you say something, Mommy?

MOTHER:
Oh God, Daddy, I have a preference. I want a girl. I want him to say girl right now.

FATHER:
I can't hear you Mommy, but look! It's the Doctor! He's about to tell us whether we're going to have a son or a daughter.

MOTHER:
A daughter, a daughter, a daughter, I want a daughter… oh God, I feel sick. Preference! I have a preference. Can you choose?

FATHER:
Stop shouting, Mommy, you're not making any sense. We're about to find out! Don't you want to know?

MOTHER:
No, no, I don't want to, I don't want to find out, I want to choose—

DOCTOR:
(Handing her the blue balloon that has been behind his back; if more than one can be concealed, he hands her more than one)
Congratulations! It's a boy!

FATHER:
Oh! Oh, God! A boy! A boy! A boy! A perfect, perfect boy! Did you hear that, Mommy?

(MOTHER is so overwhelmed that she begins to weep)
She can't even speak, we're so happy; I wanted a boy! I did! I know I shouldn't have wanted it one way or the other—good parents aren't supposed to—but I wanted a boy! Did you hear that, honey? Oh, God! Thank you, Doctor. Thank you.

MOTHER:
I'm pregnant, I'm pregnant… we're having a boy… *(continues weeping, and then, still overwhelmed, turns to the audience and sobs)* Over and over and over again… it just kept happening, each and every time.

(A new DOCTOR ENTERS and stands beside the other Doctor, smiling very widely. As each Doctor enters, he or she shoves more blue balloons into her hand)

DOCTOR 2:
Congratulations! It's a boy!

(Another Doctor follows)

DOCTOR 3:
Congratulations! You're having a boy!

(FATHER checks his watch)

FATHER:
Do you mind if I run out? Do you need me here for this? I just need to see about our lease on the car.

DOCTOR 4:
(ENTERING as FATHER EXITS)
I bet you can't wait to tell your husband—where did he go?—you're having another boy! Congratulations!

DOCTOR 5:
Another king for the house of kings! You've got a boy on his way!

(All five Doctors say congratulations)

MOTHER:
Thank you all. I just need a minute. *(To audience)* So after a certain point, I decided to keep them in my basement, the boys that kept coming. Don't tell Daddy, though. He doesn't know.

(The Doctors file out as MOTHER ties three balloons to the back of her chair and lets the remainder of them float up to the ceiling. Then, finally with a little peace, she stands up and begins making a salad. She is so pregnant that she must move very slowly. FATHER ENTERS)

FATHER:
Were you just pregnant?

MOTHER:
What? When?

FATHER:
Just yesterday, I could have sworn you were pregnant. Are you pregnant now?

MOTHER:
Don't be ridiculous.

FATHER:

Wasn't that you? With the swollen belly and the swollen fingers and the swollen toes?

MOTHER:
You must be thinking of someone else. You're thinking of my sister. My sister's pregnant. Her feet are the size of watermelons.

FATHER:
Oh. That must be who I'm thinking of. *(Pause)* You haven't been pregnant for a while now?

MOTHER:
Daddy, do I look pregnant to you?

FATHER:
I can't tell. I've forgotten what you normally look like. Is this what you look like pregnant, or not pregnant?

MOTHER:
Not pregnant.

FATHER:
Very well. You'd tell me? If you were? Not that we could even handle anther one… *(More shouts)* Boys! Can you come in here? I thought I just heard them making a racket. *(The two listen closely for sounds. A few moments later, MILO, JOSH and JAY ENTER. They are all extremely close in age and look remarkably similar. All three are somewhere between 14 and 18. MILO is the oldest)* Has your mother been pregnant recently?

MILO:
I don't know. What would she look like if she has?

FATHER:
Round around her stomach.

MILO:
She hasn't been pregnant, I don't think. She's always been consis-

tently round.

MOTHER:
Thank you, honey.

JAY:
Have you been eating a lot recently or something? No offense. *(Rubs her belly)* You feel full. You feel pregnant.

MOTHER:
It's not real. It's what my stomach does to me when it's unhappy that I'm not pregnant.

JAY:
I just felt something kick from inside.

MOTHER:
Yes, that's from the Indian food we had last night.

JAY:
Are you sure that wasn't a baby kicking?

MOTHER:
You think I wouldn't tell you? My body is reacting to the fact that I haven't been pregnant in so long. Because my body was made to pop out babies! Take a look at you and your brothers. All three, in a row. From my belly.

JAY:
I know.

MILO:
Believe me, Mom, we know.

MOTHER:
So many babies in a row that I lost track of the names. I had to write your names down on my arm, even when I was breastfeeding you. Can you believe it? Your mouth on my nipple, your name on my arm.

JOSH:
We all know this already. You love this story.

MOTHER:
I do love it, *(Checks her arm and points at his name on it)* Josh. See? JOSH. Right here.

JOSH:
I see.

MOTHER:
And to think that none of these names are girls' names!

MILO:
That's because you didn't have any girls.

MOTHER:
That's right! You're right, Milo. But don't get too comfortable as the only children, boys—you never know when a whole new army of kings will be coming up right behind you.

(Sounds come from the basement through the vent in the kitchen: a trumpet for a king, and laughter)

JOSH:
What did you say that was again? A washing machine?

MOTHER:
The neighbors' washing machine.

JOSH:
I hate it when their washing machine laughs like that. It makes me feel self-conscious.

SHADOW

hijung shin

OPA

jenna devine

I didn't like my grandfather.
I hated the old buttons and mismatched socks
he hoarded in his dresser,
the bags upon bags of potatoes in the basement,
how he hid cash from my grandmother,
how he once cooked rancid bacon.

I hated the calluses on his hands
when he'd pull me away from the table
before prayers, hated the white fur
that sprouted from his ears
and his pants that were always too short.

I hated his hard edges, his grating accent,
the slaps or pinches for no reason,
how when I was a baby he held me
like one of the bricks he spent his life laying.

I hated how he once made my mother
eat a wet loaf of bread he'd wrung out
like a dish towel, how they were always dirt poor,
how she once asked him if she was pretty
and he told her not to be so vain

how he treated his roses
with more tenderness than he'd ever shown her,
how she grew up in a house
that was always cold in the morning
and married someone just like him.

SHRIMP SEASON

adrienne raphel

The dog buries shrimp tails like bones
in the backyard and by spring
the shrimp are ripe for the picking.
They swivel a little in the
unfamiliarity
of air, not unlike mountain climbers
swaying a little at the summit,
heads bubbling, mouths like moths.

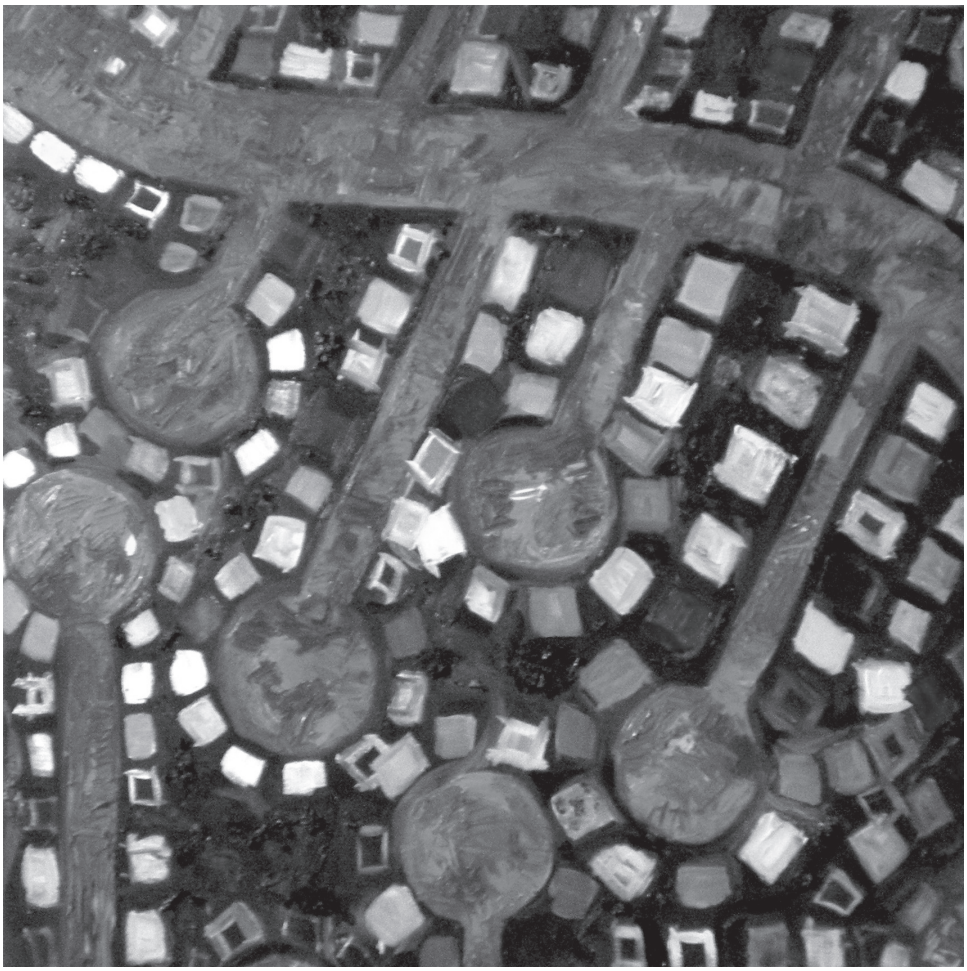
The dog's got a job like a dowser.
Shrimp season is very short
and the divers who come in the
je ne sais quoi of full scuba gear
plunge to the tops of the trees
so they can pick the shrimp before
they wilt into shriveled tongues,
dentures in a dry socket,
dead languages.

There is a shrimp cocktail party
where the wine is squeezed from sea grapes
and someone makes a witty joke
about suburbs like oceans.
The animal rights activists
don't know whether to call them
animal or vegetable or mineral.

When the dog dies, it is buried,
but it fails to sprout Dalmatians.

UNTITLED, FALL 2006

talia nussbaum



TICKY TACKY

annie haslam

LANDING

ting gou

You'd have wanted more lights,
a thousand cobwebs gold-strung
to crystallize the stillness of the
invisible houses below. This is not
Chicago: there are no lights, no filigree
overlaying gridded streets, no electric
lamps tracing city lines like loose stitching
on flappers' dresses. When the city
comes, you are almost too late for it.
Outside, a million things zip around.
Windows pass. Galaxies are born. The ground
comes fast and hard, but tactfully. If this
is the end, then it isn't so bad at all.

BIOS

Diana Chien is an EEB major in the class of 2010 who enjoys algae and fairy tales.

Jenna Devine is a freshman who has recently become obsessed with ballroom dance and enjoys checking her email every five seconds. She hopes to pursue a career in the lucrative romance novel industry, writing under the pen name Jenna DeVine and overusing the words "panting" and "bosom."

Justine Drennan is a sophomore history major, hoping to get certificates in visual arts and creative writing. She also sings in the Tigressions and in Chapel Choir and wants to participate in a popular uprising someday.

Ting Gou wishes she could one day dedicate more poems to the late poet and cardiologist John Stone.

Annie Haslam is a senior from Tennessee who is studying Anthropology and African Studies. If she were a shoe, she would be a cowboy boot.

Jackie Hedeman was told by an old French guy that she could never marry a Frenchman (of any age) because she does not like olives. She was ten. Now she is 20, a sophomore English major from Champaign, IL. She still does not like olives. C'est la vie.

Waqas Jawaid is a junior from Karachi. He loves cities and skyscrapers and Pepsi.

Chenxin Jiang is a senior in the Comparative Literature Department from Hong Kong. She is writing a creative thesis in translation.

Professor Deborah Kaple is a scholar of communism and the Cold War. She teaches courses in the Sociology Department on the Soviet Union, China, Communist systems, Stalin's Gulag, and the American immigrant experience. She is the author of Dream of a Red Factory (Oxford University Press) that focuses on the relationship between China and the USSR in the 1950s.

Jeff Kirchick is a junior in the English Department pursuing certificates in Creative Writing and French. He hails from Dover, MA and is an avid fan of the Boston Red Sox and sleeping. His Jewish mother and Bubbe are very proud of him.

Benjamin Knudsen is fifteen feet tall.

Nathalie Lagerfeld is a senior in the Comparative Literature Department.

Kelly A. Matula is an English major from Marlton, NJ. Her literary interests include Victorian literature, fantasy and science fiction, and poetry. After graduation, she plans to pursue studies in psychology.

Fiona Miller is a senior in the cLit department, and is currently flying high under the radar writing poems for her thesis -- until the grown-ups find out. As of late she enjoys Zoopals funtensils, pictures of Univega bicylces, the daydream of owning a Univega bicycle, and rainbow stuff. Shout outs to Mr. Bojangles and Rachel Maddow. ROASTY TOASTY = LOVE.

Mara Nelson-Greenberg is a sophomore from Brooklyn, New York.

Zachary Newick believes himself to be most honest and real and genuine when he is making things up.

Talia Nussbaum is a junior from Boston in the visual arts track of Art and Archaeology. Her current project is an exploration of Israeli youth serving in the army at an age when most Americans go to university, and she especially focuses on their relationships. Her photos in this issue are from her first semester in intro photography.

Halcyon Person is a Junior Architecture Major from Plainfield, New Jersey. Her proudest achievements are learning to tie her shoes (1992), punching a shark in the nose (1997), releasing three multi-platinum space-reggae albums (2026), and becoming the first Supreme Court Justice to also be President of the United States (1921).

Adrienne Raphel is a junior from Vermont. As a child, she had to hike through the snow uphill both ways to get to school. No, seriously.

Anna Sheaffer cannot diagnose your spider bites. Ask someone else.

Ruthie Schwab is a senior in the EEB Department, with certificates in Visual Art and Environmental Studies. She has been drawing and painting since elementary school and also does work in printmaking, photography, ceramics, and sculpture. This spring Ruthie's thesis show will be primarily oil paintings of fruit.

Hijung Shin is a sophomore majoring in computer science. She is interested in black and white photos, and occasionally takes pictures for the Daily Princetonian.

Eva Marie Wash loves drawing, dancing, and singing. She enjoys the smell of fresh mint and once jumped into the Seine.

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