

2012-13

FRIENDS



CENTRAL SCHOOL

LINK

...VISUAL & LITERARY ARTS MAGAZINE...

Congratulations on picking up your copy of INK's 2013 issue! We're quite proud of this year's issue and hope you enjoy the incredible art and literature within. If you haven't already been convinced of your fellow classmate's wonderful talents then hopefully this will help convince you.

We would also like for you to remember to check out more of your classmate's creative work at

friendscentralink.tumblr.com

Ink Staff Credits:

Editor in Chief/Layout Manager: Anneka Allman

Arts Editors: Andrew Feldman and Andrew Vickery

Prose Editors: Lindsay Saligman and Jen Thal

Poetry Editors: Grant McCord and Rebecca Buxbaum

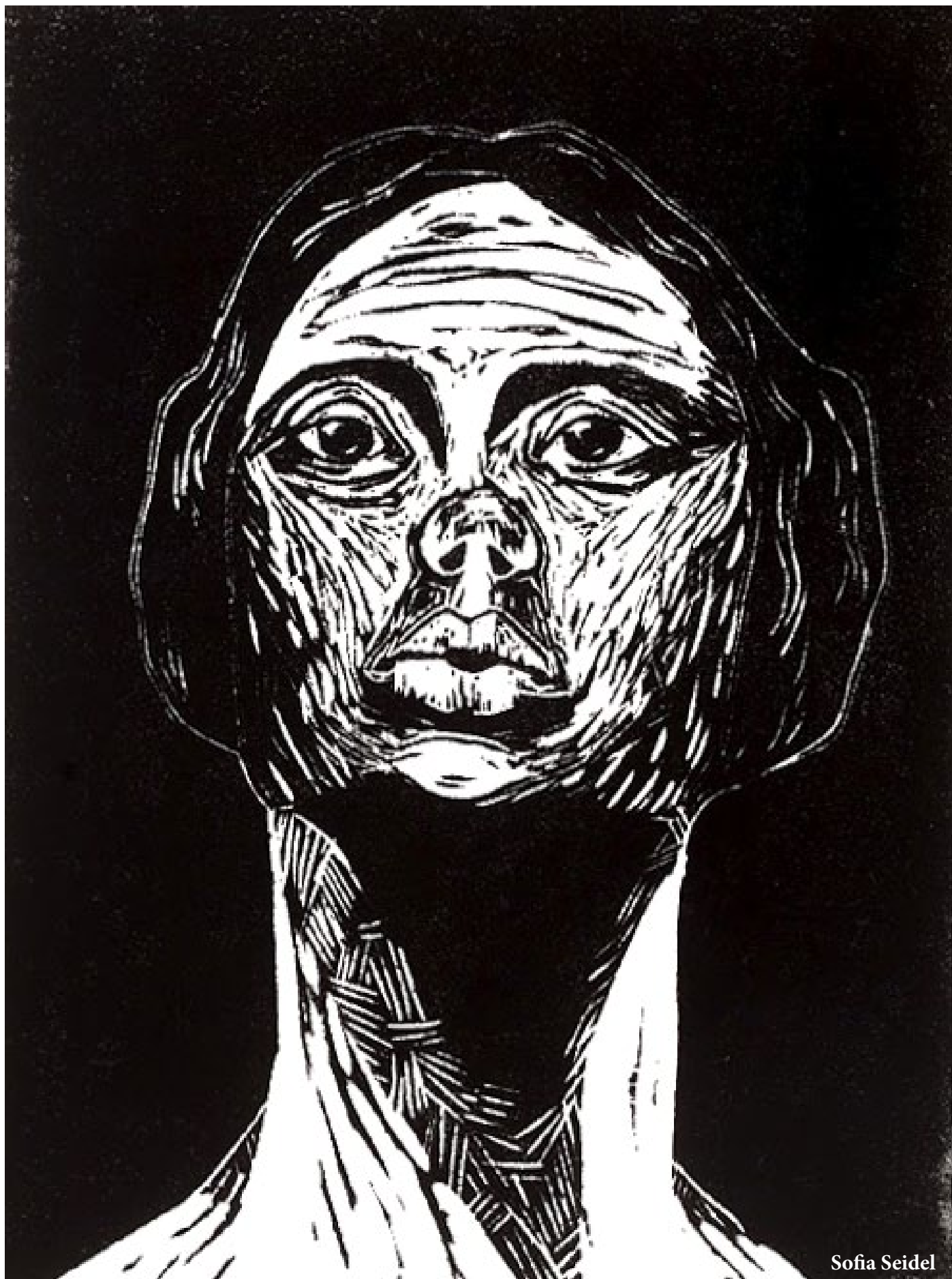
Other Staff: Amy Goldfischer and Grace Kauffman - Rosengarten

Cover made by Andrew Vickery

Many thanks to Mr. Macfarlane and Mrs. Novo for being our faculty advisors!

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Sofia Seidel

Dreaming Creatures

They were here, but they are sailing away to places uncreated in these hours. Their boats – vessels paneled with collaged, translucent fragments of the sky – skim the silver waters, breathing against the land that memory brought about.

In, out, in, out.

The waters exhale into the sides of their boats and those same liquid sighs guide the patterns of the sands into the waking scenes of later days. There, they will eventually crumble and decay.

Melt away, melt away.

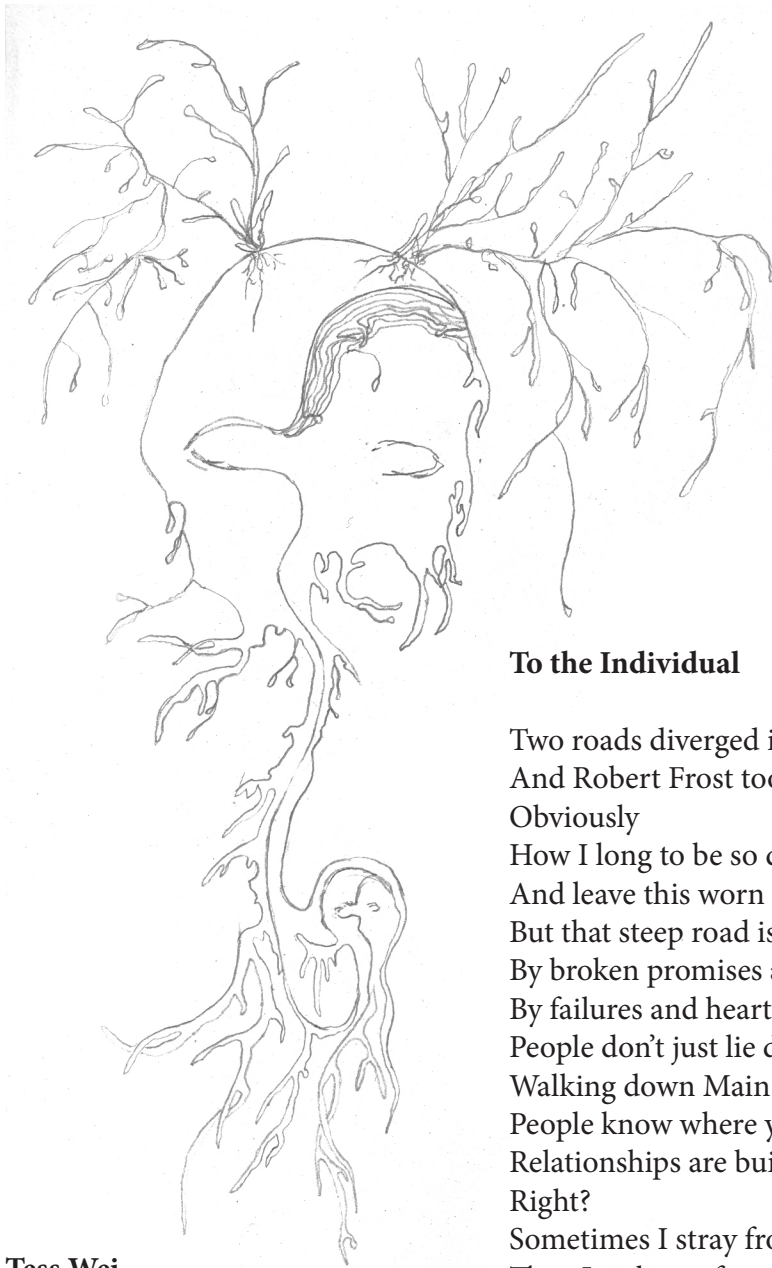
Are those reflections dancing among the swells? Those disordered perceptions are indistinguishable by now. They fell in whispering tumult and clung to the waters until their souls were washed clean.

Remain unseen, remain unseen.

They are Converted, Inverted visions birthed from time lapses on the moonlit edges of Ultima Thule. Perhaps this is where the wasteland of waves seeks to guide them – the waking exposure rising higher and higher before awakening it all.

Internal freefall, eternal freefall.

-Tess Wei



Tess Wei

To the Individual

Two roads diverged in a wood
And Robert Frost took the path less traveled by
Obviously
How I long to be so daring
And leave this worn path
But that steep road is plagued by trouble
By broken promises and dreams
By failures and heartaches. It's a wonder
People don't just lie down and die.
Walking down Main Street is easier
People know where you're coming from
Relationships are built on common experiences,
Right?
Sometimes I stray from the path just a little
Then I wake up from this naïve dream of mine
I'm no more special than the average Joe
Verses don't flow from me like our precious, literate snowman
So when I visit a college campus up in New England
And the face of old Frosty stares down at me from a cold, stone
throne
I turn in shame
I taunt, I lie, I give up because that's all I can do
I resent Frost, I suppose
For being the biggest hipster of them all
For being an individual
For being so much braver than me
Two roads diverged in a wood
And I
Just sat down and cried.

-Rebecca Buxbaum



Drew Leventhal



Dan Nemroff

Old Man and The Sea

His heart belonged to the sea.
The waves pigmented his eyes, and his soul,
tossed so like the crests he sailed upon.
His eyes dance and shine with eternal youth
standing out of a face so creased and worn by the rough winds,
full of stinging salt, whipping cords across his cheeks,
so ruddy- permanent roses worn on his cheekbones.
His beard, tangled and grey, hangs like drapes,
framing lips that forever dip down- a memory not quite forgotten.

If you look out to the sea,
a grey, early dawn,
new born sun kisses the water's surface, rays bounce and glitter,
there, on the edge of the horizon- squint, if you must-
a hazy outline, not entirely present- a grand ship-
standing tall, like the old man's skeleton, not yet bended by time
gleaming, sails billowing in the passing currents- just visiting-
the old man stands, sometimes looking out beyond,
what he sees, no one knows,
and sometimes staring at the sea itself, eyes sweeping the opaque depths,
we know what he is searching for.

Long before this old sailor became withered and hardened,
he was fresh and naive, softened by youthful love.
A maiden, delicate and sweet,
stood waiting for him by the sea.
Her hair was long, ropes swinging down her mast and around her waist,
a harness to support her heart, tick-tocking away beneath her supple breast
Her perfume, roses and honey, sickeningly sweet and luscious,
the bouquet of love,
infiltrated the sailor's lungs, and he became intoxicated.

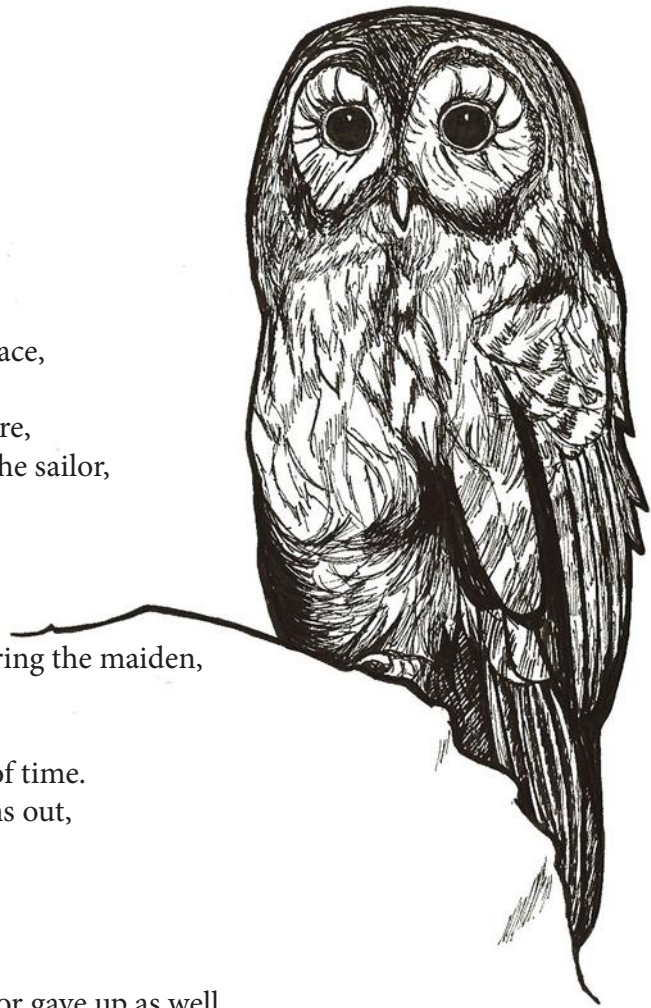
And as the sailor bid his maiden goodbye, time and time again,
to dangle at the horizon's fingertips,
the young maiden wept,
for she so longed to be with her sailor.
She yearned to waltz along the realm's edge,
her soul begged to feel the gales of the sea
which entranced her so;
bottomless and infinite, immortal and ruthless.
And so the sailor saw the plea in his maiden's divine eyes,
and brought her along to peer over the world's edge.
Together, in the vessel the sailor called home, they travelled
to the limits of the earth, and gazed at the beyond.
As the two lovers, hands entwined, stood,
8 and as the young maiden looked at the measureless sea,

the foam that leaped up, so eager to kiss her face,
and the fragrance of her new beloved,
sea salt and exotic in its undeterminable nature,
the young maiden wrenched her hand from the sailor,
a stranger she thought she loved,
and flung herself over the ship's edge,
to meet her undying sweetheart.

And the sea was passionate in its love, devouring the maiden,
encasing her in its cold embrace,
and, drifting to the bottom of the sea,
the young maiden settled beneath the sands of time.
The sailor, a millenium late, stretched his arms out,
tugging at the slipping nothingness,
and opened his mouth,
and poured his heart into the frothy depths.
Screaming in agony, lungs burning,
as if each breath that the maiden lost, the sailor gave up as well,
the sailor cursed at the sea, his most evil enemy.
His bitter tears did nothing to pierce the sea's suddenly firm exterior,
did not persuade the churning tides to return his ambrosial maiden,
and so the sailor returned to the shore, dragging his broken heart with him,
drowning his sorrows in isolation and miseries' company.

As time passed by, as it inevitably does,
the sailor's vessel became hardened by love lost and love unrequited,
but his eyes remained forever youthful,
still shining with shed and unshed tears, mourning his maiden.
The sailor still journeys out to the horizon,
playing the fateful scene again and again,
still searching for his hidden maiden.

His heart belongs to the sea,
not the selfish blue green abundance itself,
but what lies beneath it-
his maiden, sleeping the eternal slumber.
His heart belongs to the sea,
because he has no one else to love.




Ally Zhao

Filling in a Missing Scene

Daisy had never felt so lost as she felt on that fateful afternoon leaving New York City. All the pieces of her life that had previously quite peacefully coexisted suddenly had become conscious of each other and exploded. It no longer was acceptable to be married to Tom and in love with Gatsby. It wasn't enough for either of them any more. Daisy did want to leave Tom, but she couldn't. She never would and Gatsby could never understand that. It seemed strange that a truth that existed for so long could suddenly become so painful. As she left the hotel room with Gatsby, Daisy found herself contemplating why life had to be so unpleasant.

By the time she arrived at the car Daisy was sobbing so dramatically that her hands were nothing but blurry bursts of bloodless tan. She asked Jay if she could drive, thinking that the challenge would prove to be an absorbing distraction. Unfortunately, being born rich and being born a woman had given Daisy so few occasions to drive that she found herself to be rather clueless behind the wheel. Being so obviously and so uncharacteristically in control of her own situation made Daisy feel reckless.

The silvery tears clotting in her eyes blurred the sights in front of Daisy into impressively confusing waves of color and depth. Green lights backed by a grey sky, red lights passed by a yellow car. She had a hard time making distinctions. Where did her tires meet the road? Where did reality stop and where did her mind begin? Was there any overlap? Could there ever be?

Daisy had never seen Tom's girl before, but I like to believe she recognized Myrtle from the moment her red hair flashed in front of the car's headlights. It is speculation of course, but I feel like there is something about

Myrtle that Daisy knew would attract her husband. Even in those few frantic seconds Daisy recognized in Tom's mistress the insecurity and discontent that had drawn him to her, to both of them. Perhaps the reason that Tom found those qualities to be so attractive was that they both masked and complemented his own shortcomings.

Daisy was surprised to notice that Myrtle seemed to be looking directly at her. Maybe not at her exactly, but most definitely at the car. She seemed to have something to say.

Daisy wasn't sure if Myrtle had actually stood in front of the car or not until she felt the impact of her body against it. It was an explosion of red and yellow. Waves of red hair in the yellow light.

Waves of red blood on the yellow car.

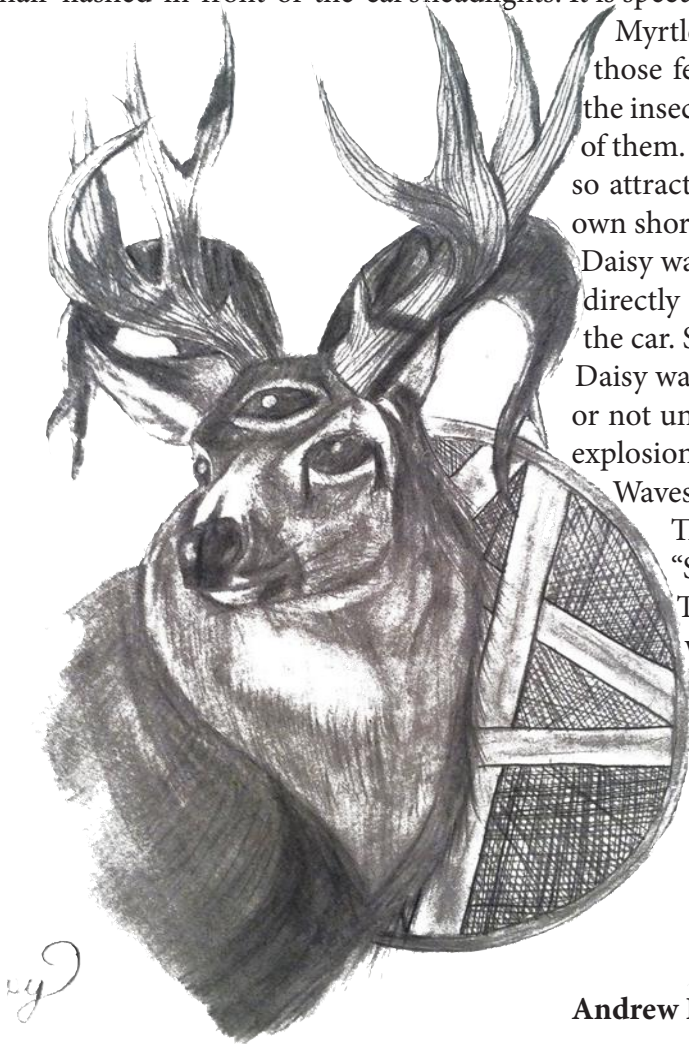
The next explosion came in a more audible type of wave.

"Stop Daisy! Stop the car! You've killed her!"

The conscious ability to distinguish reality from fiction was too much for Daisy's overwhelmed subconscious.

She fainted into Gatsby's lap.

-Lindsay Saligman



Andrew Feldman

The Evolution of a Disaster

Kirkuk, 1979

“The 17th century was the century of mathematics, the 18th that of the physical sciences, and the 19th that of biology. Our 20th century is the century of fear.”

–Albert Camus, *Neither Victims nor Executioners*



Becca Epstein

It's best to begin discretely, with the help of a metaphor. Every breakthrough in evolution is a response to necessity, every advanced organ a function of desperate survival- and just as fish developed gills, humans developed ambivalence - not the embrace of violence in the president's speeches, insisting, in a sort of code, that hatred was vindicated by history, but a quiet personal acceptance of facts and orders. In the streets near the university, shaded but still boiling, the sight of policemen started to make me nervous, doubtful. But it wasn't just the state that had changed, or the way its defenders looked at you. It was something about the men's demeanor, their grim intensity. And there were the tall, silent youths who'd founded the new student union, and said, only half joking, that if we didn't join they'd know we were traitors- the new atmosphere had filled them with power, and validated anger.

That anger, veiled by the new slogans, might've been almost amusing, flowing, like a dammed river, to certain obvious targets, and leaving the substance of life intact and protected from danger; but the Americans, the Zionists, the Iranians, were just codes. The bulk of their vague anger was aimed at people like myself. And there in the subdued city, they found that people were waiting, resigned. For the daily grimness there was little mental endorsement, acquiescence was rigidly separate from acceptance; but the situation, history, couldn't be defied. In a way they'd submitted to the coup before it was even conceived, and had determined, when it actually happened, that nothing could stop it. And they defended their new passivity as if it were unavoidable, as if the new litany of threats had left them no option. With a tone of moderate dejection, like a degraded glance at the ground, people renowned for audacity were opting for silence. When the war started a year later, no one disputed it.

We took the ordinary human risk
Of believing in definite limits,
A permanent line between
The familiar and the unthinkable.

-Sydney Goggins

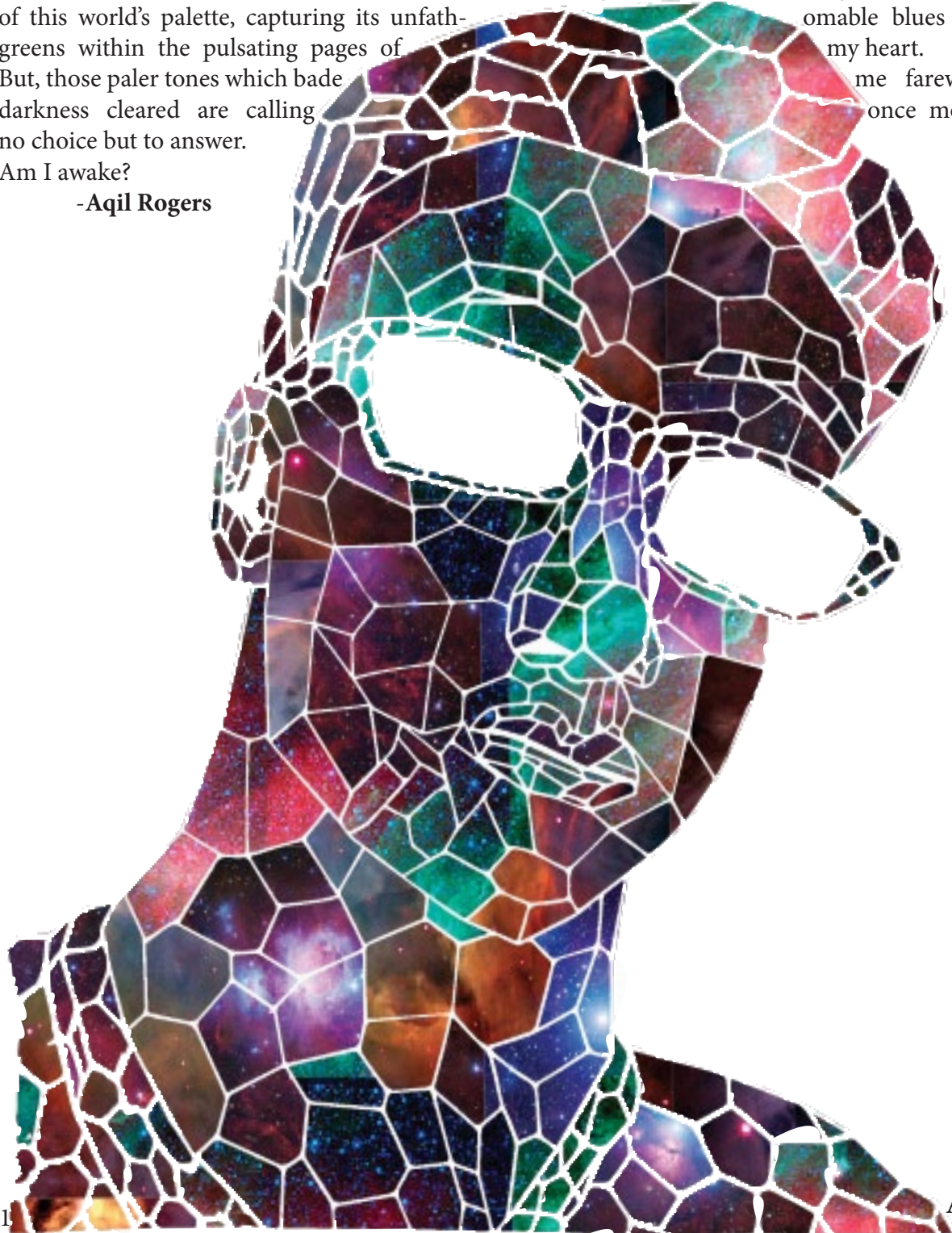
Heavens Lie in Wait

I am standing on the edge of Gaia's lips, where the ocean slips into the sky, and the sky into the earth.
Below, sweeping pastures ebb and flow with the rise and fall of the sun, while flowers bow their petals in reverence of the moon's light.

Excited by the sight of things that time and space have lovingly coaxed from dust into dirt,
I dive headfirst into the waters spread before me, swimming across the land, tasting with each breath the scent of this world's palette, capturing its unfathomable blues and impossible greens within the pulsating pages of my heart.
But, those paler tones which bade me farewell before the darkness cleared are calling me once more, and I have no choice but to answer.

Am I awake?

-Aqil Rogers



Andrew Vickery

SOBRE LA FELICIDAD

Un sillón cómodo
un ruido de tren lejano
una conversación de vecinos allá afuera
ininteligible y entrecortada
que se convierte en una tonalidad gris
el sonido de la televisión que se hace intermitente
como las olas
y que deviene un parque con brisa tibia y patos
sin yo darme cuenta
una frase que se hace tortuga
un amigo que camina y me dice cosas
en una dimensión que no es ni tiempo ni espacio
una masa voluminosa medio transparente
suave y placentera como una avalancha lentísima
sin ángulos sin colores sin perfumes
avanza poco a poco envolviéndolo todo
hasta llegar a mi cuerpo que no lo siento
me he quedado sin peso
sin músculos sin uñas sin hambre sin dolor
sin necesidad de nada
sin pasado sin futuro
sólo ahora
y allí
allí sucedió
habrán sido las tres de la tarde.

ABOUT HAPPINESS

A comfortable armchair
the distant sound of a train
a conversation of neighbors out there
unintelligible and intermittent
that becomes a gray tone
the sound of the TV becoming choppy
like the waves
becoming a park with a warm breeze and ducks
without me noticing
a phrase that becomes a turtle
a friend who walks and tells me things
in a dimension that is neither time nor space
a large semi-transparent mass
smooth and pleasant as a very slow avalanche
with no angles no color no scent
advancing slowly enveloping everything
up to my body which I don't feel
I'm left without weight
without muscles nails hunger pain
with no need
no past no future
only now
and there
there it happened
it must have been three in the afternoon.

-Diego Luzuriaga



coat salty my bare back of
cloyless ice, my skin cut cold saccharine it
is not easy to be
the snow. And

the air sings missing of sisters my
 raindrops collected and
 down mountains I sensuous hiss
 [hands unmurky feathered] ways of melting

“and be naked with
the world”

so pale breasted and flushed pearl glacial I



slew flume the nights
and I lick fingertips, dogbone quick hungry
and their honeyed broiling flesh I am too and I
frost break inhale--

it is not enough

to be the snow

and so be languid melt and peel
and so be
naked
with the world.





Julia Levitan

Black Coffee

In the fall they clattered downstairs in their pajamas as soon as they heard his voice,
asking for bagels and orange juice without pulp, like he didn't already know what to make.
And they were loud, too loud for the morning,
but he didn't care,
he just sat and watched their show and smiled, sipping his coffee,
gathering all the things they'd never remember themselves.
Before they ran to get dressed in the clothes he'd picked out for them,
they always thanked him.

In the winter he had to throw their covers off;
otherwise they'd never get out of bed.
And once he found his daughter wearing lace and silk, curled underneath the blankets his mother had made,
but he made her breakfast anyway,
and he turned away so he wouldn't have to see her throw it out.
He watched her drink her coffee, though, because she drank it black,
like he did.

In the spring he woke up first, but it didn't matter, because there were no more breakfasts,
no bagels in the toaster, no orange juice without pulp, no oatmeal, no black coffee.
He still stood at the bottom of the stairs, though,
looking at the doors on the landing.
But he didn't remember the slams,
he remembered the sound of feet on the floor and the smell of just-brushed teeth and the stories he'd heard
on the way to school.
And things were quiet, but it was nice,
because he did remember.

In the summer he went to sleep early and still woke up late,
and it took him time to get out of bed.
And it was getting harder to remember what color their doors were painted, because he hadn't seen them in
a while;
even worse, it was getting harder to remember the stories,
and he worried that one day he wouldn't.

But once, as he lay there, looking at his closed door, it sprang open.
And there, on a tray, was a bagel for him, and orange juice,
and even though his daughter was probably wearing lace and silk under her suit, he didn't care,
because she'd remembered to bring black coffee.
So he thanked her.

-Julia Weiss

Pigtails

I watched the world end today.

The sun rose red in the morning, his light spilling over the land and making us all blush. He rose late and brought little warmth. The frosty air bit my cheeks and fingers when I opened the door to pick up the paper, so I was wrapped securely in coat, hat, and scarf when I went out. The little girl wasn't though: she put on the coat, but refused the hat, because of her blond pigtails. Her mother didn't often put her hair in pigtails, and the little girl loved them so. She refused to muss them with the hat.

I watched the little girl as I walked through the streets. She skipped and hopped, bubbles of energy rising up and over, seemingly endlessly. The pigtails bounced up and down, up and down. People smiled as they saw her go by – her cheerfulness was impossibly infectious. She would bounce ahead of her mother, running, bored of the slow pace and dullness, and then would stop, abruptly, staring. She would bend over a small piece of sky blue glass, perhaps some fragment of a shattered treasure, and study it with all the attention of a scientist. What wild fantasies might she conjure in her mind about it? When her mother caught up, she would be forced to leave the glass behind, but she would cast longing glances back at it, and explain to her mother that it was the last missing piece of Fairy Princess Sasha's crown, and without it she could never defeat the evil Rick Robin and win back her kingdom.

I smiled, chuckling under my breath, thinking how much I loved the little girl as she chattered on, describing the whole history of poor Sasha's struggle for her kingdom. How sweet she was! How perfect, with her little pigtails bouncing up and down, up and down! Her cheeks were cherry red with cold now, and she huffed and puffed with the effort of keeping up with her mother. They had been walking for a while. Nevertheless, her cheerfulness was unquenchable and she fell to skipping along silently by her mother's side.

They reached their destination eventually: a little corner bookstore with a café. I stepped in to get my coffee, appreciating the warm mug between my fingers. The little girl darted here and there around the children's section, the little pigtails bouncing up and down, up and down. When I finished my coffee, the little girl had found a doll, a little doll with little blond pigtails! She ran to her mother, she begged her to buy it, unable to keep still for excitement. A little doll! A little doll with little blond pigtails, just like her!

Her mother refused. The doll was too expensive. The girl's birthday was in a month. She would not buy this doll for her, not today.

But the pigtails! They were just like her pigtails!

The little girl insisted, she pleaded and she begged, she screamed and she cried. She tried everything she knew, but her mother said no. I was sorry for the little girl. I knew how badly she wanted that doll. I wanted to buy it for her.

Finally, the mother got her to put the doll back, and they left in sour spirits. The little girl's arms were crossed and she stamped beside her mother, refusing to talk or look up. The world had ended if she could not have that doll with the pigtails. The cheerfulness was quenched, the pigtails hung limp. I watched her and was sorry for them both.

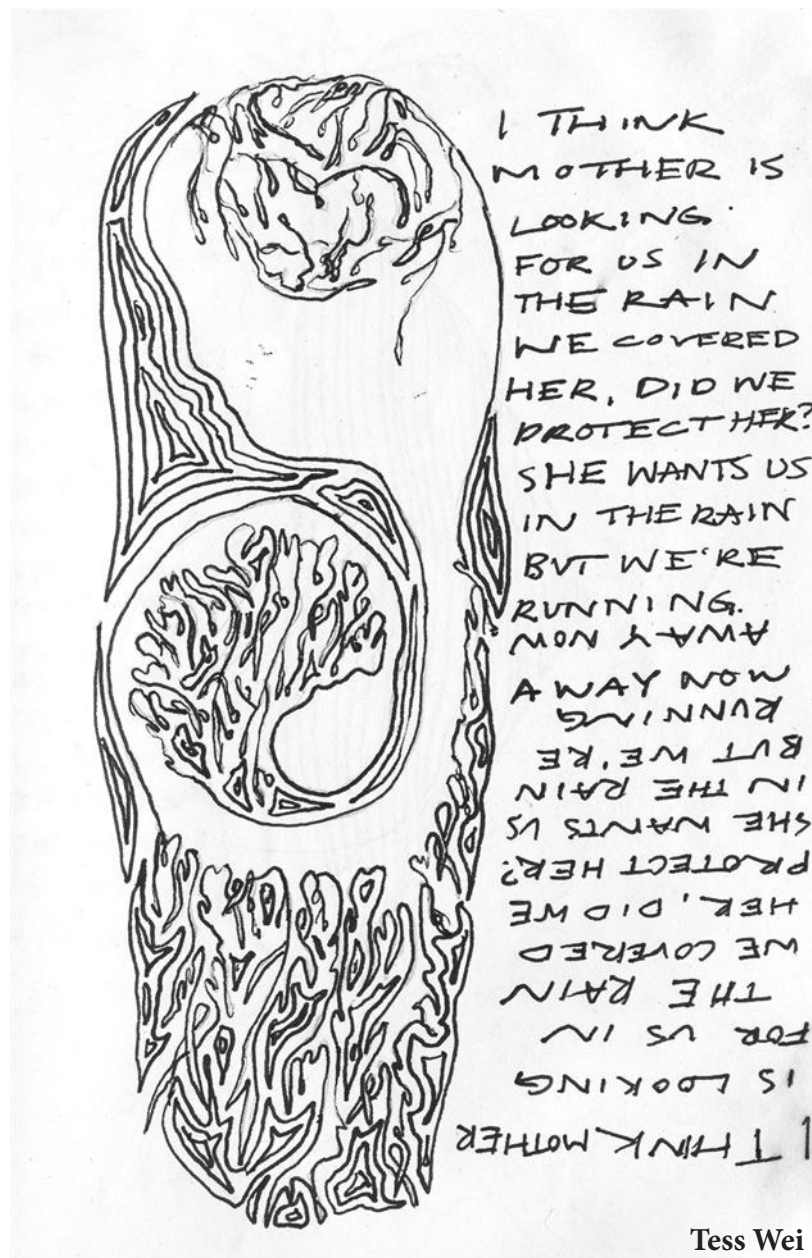
The wind was blowing now, a sharp winter wind that reaches its fingers into even the thickest coats, freezing with its touch. The little girl shivered as they stood at the crosswalk, waiting for the light to change. The mother pulled out the little girl's hat, but she refused again. No matter how cold, even if she could not have the doll, she would not muss those pigtails. No. The mother insisted. The girl shivered, but shook her head violently. The mother started to force the hat onto her head.

"No!" the little girl screamed, and she ran.

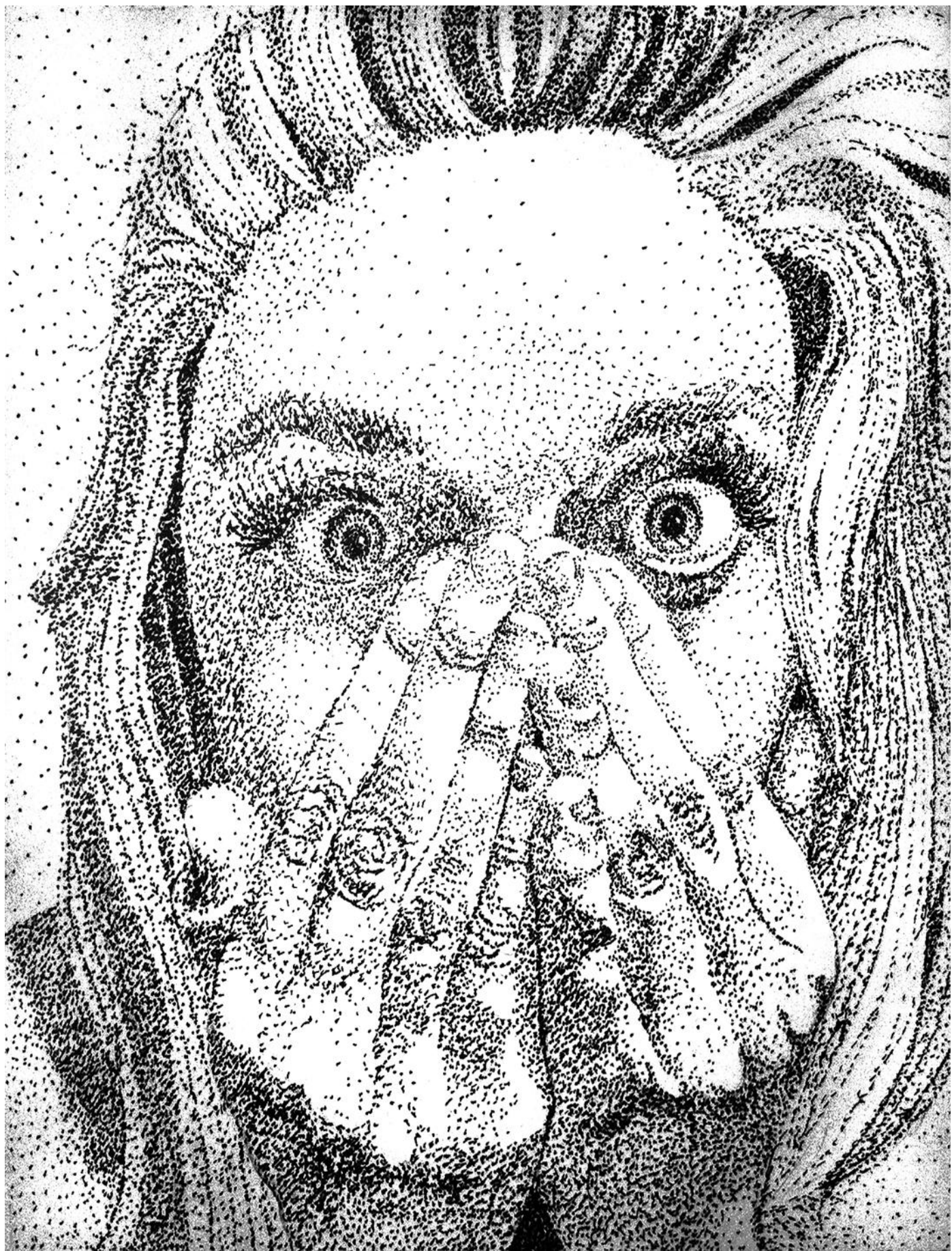
She ran blindly, and angrily, and quickly. She darted out, away from the mother's desperate hands, and I could only watch in horror as it happened. I could only watch as the girl ran, and the car came, and the brakes squealed, and the car kept coming, and the girl kept going. I could only watch as those pigtails flew up one last time as the girl and the car met, and the girl went down, and the car went on. I watched, and then I screamed, and screamed, and screamed, because she was gone, my baby was gone.

I watched the world end today.

-Gabrielle Owens



Tess Wei



“The unending valley of faces deprived of hope Forbids rejoicing to those who are alive”

-Czeslaw Milosz

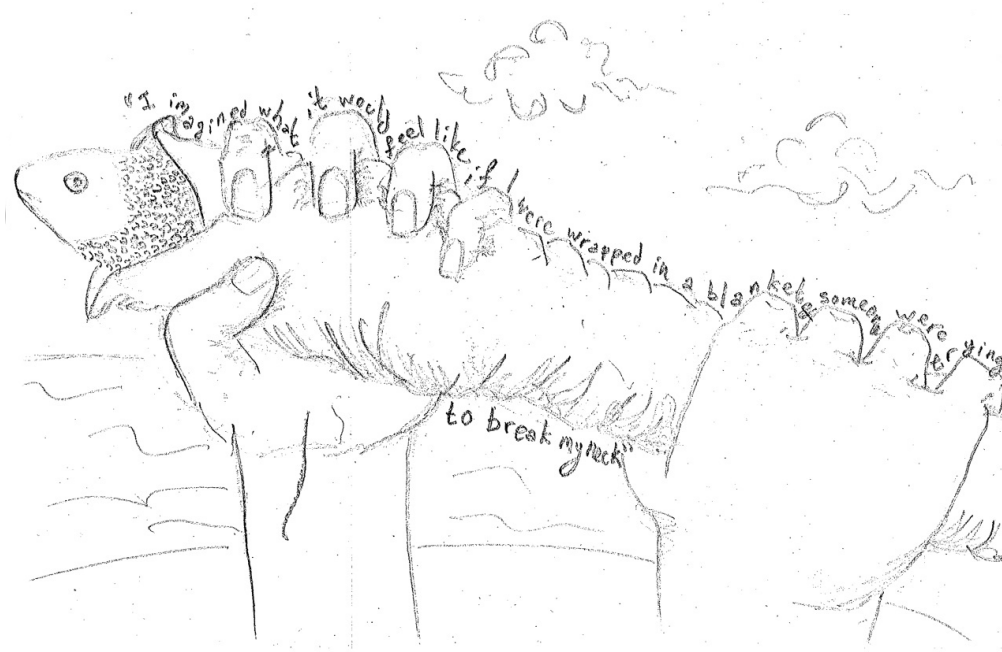
The night they announced the fall of Baghdad
I wrote an impossible letter addressed to the past
(which made its daily appearance
In thoughts I attributed to grief but which were just the ordinary residue
of abolished memory)
while the patient onslaught of words continued in the papers
and speculation mixed with silence (neither prevailing),
I walked for two ambivalent hours past the generous storefronts.
the motion of cars and the stillness of the streets
deceived or assured me that the scenes persisting as recollections
would scatter like snow in the gap between sky and earth.
but I continued, since it can't be avoided, to act on the urge to remember
To pass without confusion among alleys, avenues, parks
But with every step to sense a distance that can't be named
in unfamiliar London gloomy Diyarbakir
I'd noticed in other faces the one i remembered from the mirror
in the moments, dissolved in time, before the earth was eclipsed-
on the night they announced the fall of Baghdad
I thought of a different evening, with identical mute clouds
Reflected in windows and gardens that would vanish on the next afternoon
And the stern frown of the president staring from posters along the road.
It was difficult, from then on, to trust in words like resilience and life
To say “in spite of” and “still” with the same certainty.
I might've affected the vague courage learned like a simple equation
in the mountains, the primal residues of fear
in an instant of valor: I'd have tried, regretful but stern
to think of the graves and emptiness
without the despair and anger that now alternate
in a dream, as face after face
converge like the words of defiant poetry.
But the definition of death is indisputable.
On the night they announced the fall of Baghdad, I thought of writing a letter
Addressed to some giant imaginary shadow composed of hands and eyes
I'd insist, in sentence after sentence, that they each existed
And ask in parenthesis whether the custom of mourning is sufficient,
What it should mean and what it requires
To acknowledge something destroyed,
After 15 years I discovered that time, or quiet endurance
Had helped me perfect in your absence the habit of resignation
And watch the retreating sun with a portent of hope.

-Sydney Goggins

I Wanna Be a fish

The aquarium drops

Everywhere the fish cease to exist
probably facing their own oblivion
which, as I'm sure, we all know
is what fish fear most



or at least fish that have my feelings projected on them
cause just because a fish's memory only lasts two seconds
doesn't mean they can't figure out the meaning of life
in the time they've got
and repeat the search and discovery
again
in the next two seconds
ultimately making fish the wisest animal to ever
swim this plant

so maybe we've spent far too long searching
in the wrong places
for the wrong answers
and we simply need to look at fish

cause that just makes sense

somehow

a little bit

or not at all

-Amelia Orzech-Boscov

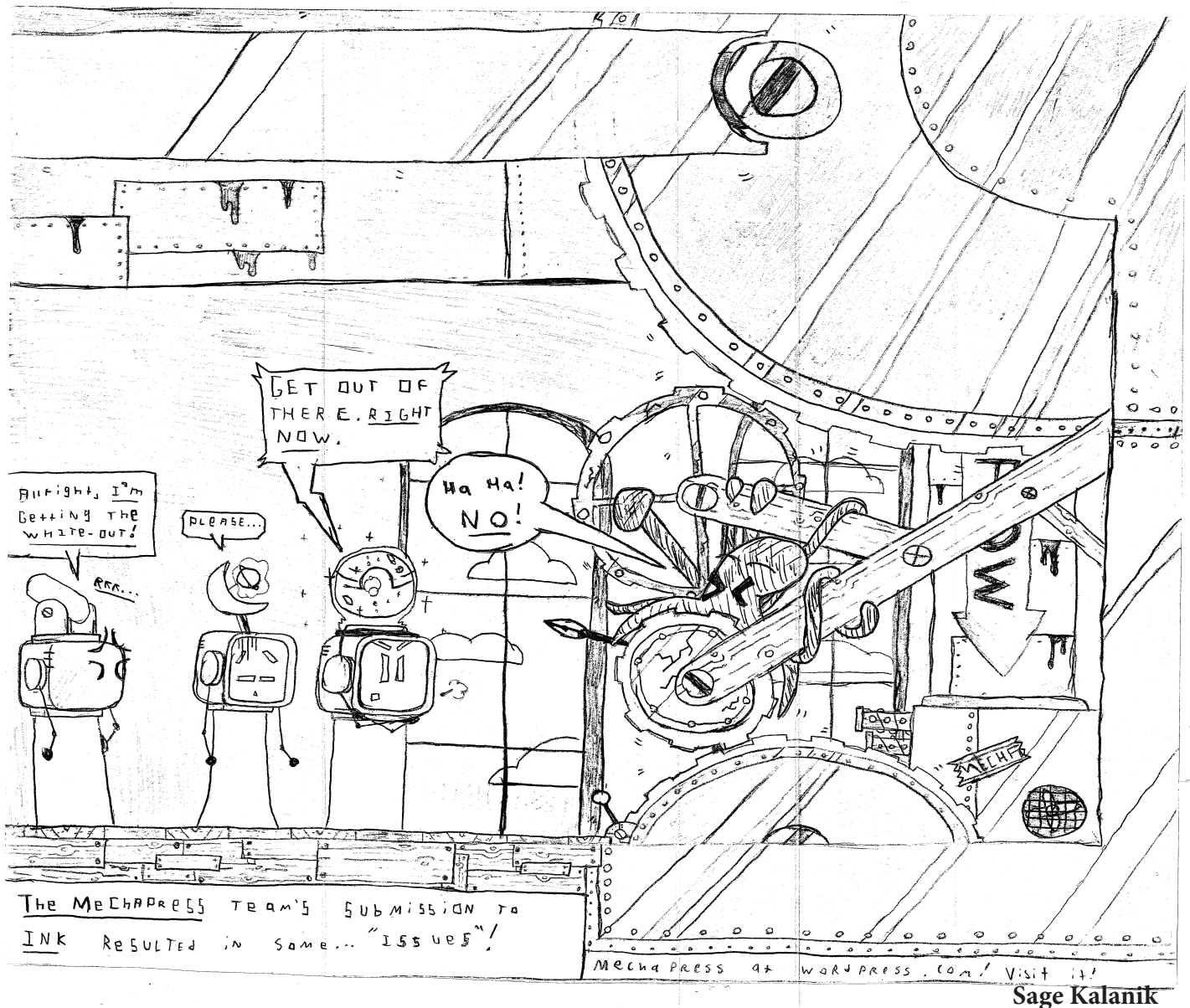


Andrew Feldman

Autumns Ago

Something I remember: that morning, early, on a Saturday, after cooking breakfast you'd walked uphill into the fall, swept leaves into heaps, built colonies over and over while I leapt into them. how could I ever know you? setting your work alight, the smell of your clean deodorant burnt on the wind and wreck of cold, the silt pillars of your arms cracked towers gathering me up against the stir of smoke and naming me "son".

-Carlos Price-Sanchez



How puppies love

Tess Wei

When I was in kindergarten
I caught my first dove
Or so I thought;
I was young,
I kinda figured her wings would carry me above
Those
Clouds
Even though I was
So down to earth...
If only that was the way it
Actually worked...

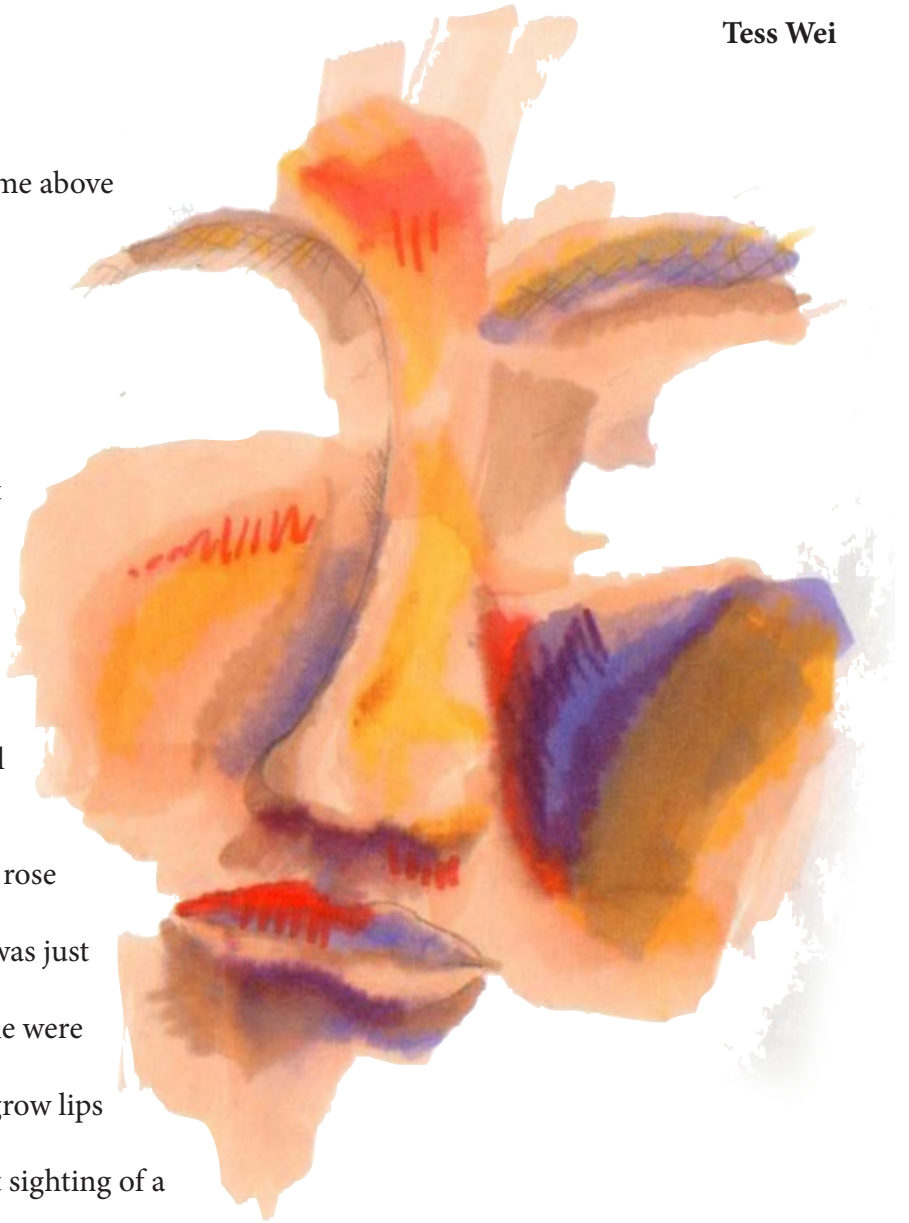
It started out with sharing juicy juice at
recess,
Discussing which Tubby was
The best,
Not thinking about our defects,
Because what defects? I mean we were
only like 6
And all we needed to see was on school
trips..

Then middle school came upon us, the rose
grew hips
Or maybe she always had them, and I was just
noticing this
In any case I wasn't alone, all around me were
blips
On that radar we get when hormones grow lips

High school, things changed at the first sighting of a
pimple
How could something so complex spring from nothing more simple
Than an emotional song played by our hearts' own minstrel?
All we have are
Lovely letters
Conjured up with
Broken pencils

And on one hand, I'm thinking that she's really instrumental
On the other, I can't be me, I'm fitting right in a stencil
And I can't tell if she's still interested or if I am going mental
All I wanted
Was a love
So simple..

-Aqil Rogers



"A man, a woman and the vast shadow of a dictator are the story's three protagonists."
–Jorge Luis Borges, *Pedro Salvadores*

I
you insisted on taking the old maps, the weighty dictionaries
the new suit you bought on the night of your 20th birthday
but everything else would be useless, and you wanted to seem practical,
earnest. So did I, in fact- it offered a fragile buffer
against the world, to think that with logic, history, thoughts of the future
would keep us safe.
and now sitting speechless next to the telephone
i wait for mute encouragement
and watch the vague sunset over indestructible mountains
i think, firstly, of what it meant-
your choice, to acknowledge this new darkness,
your stern decision to be indifferent
to the problem of death. But I think also
of the scenery, undiluted. The mountains, you said,
were timeless and sturdy- and that, somehow, has been enough
resisting the sun and the silence, preserving what we know.

II
I'm not interested in remembering, just in persisting.
but there's nothing as permanent as an image
in which you keep seeing yourself, keep observing
from afar the presence of someone nameless.
on maps, the mountains are dots, the dirt invisible
made quiet and meek by questions
that won't be repeated: can we, existing as we do
announce the predictions of dawn?
can we, staring at the rubble, think instead of the mountains?
Freedom, a cluttered room, with photographs in frames
of others, friends we met in class, neighbors conscripted and buried
who muttered that same word
but wondered if it really existed-
Freedom, noun, the dull sunlight of 5 or 6 in the evening
Expanding beneath insidious clouds
forming faint ovals on the face of someone you still love.
The grey lines becoming brown, conflated at sunset
with the short abundance of unreliable light
disguise, like a tattered shirt, the remnants of something trusted
but lost: Yet more and more now I'm sensing it,
the knowledge called Hope, in my eyes and face
responding to the breeze at daybreak.

-Sydney Goggins

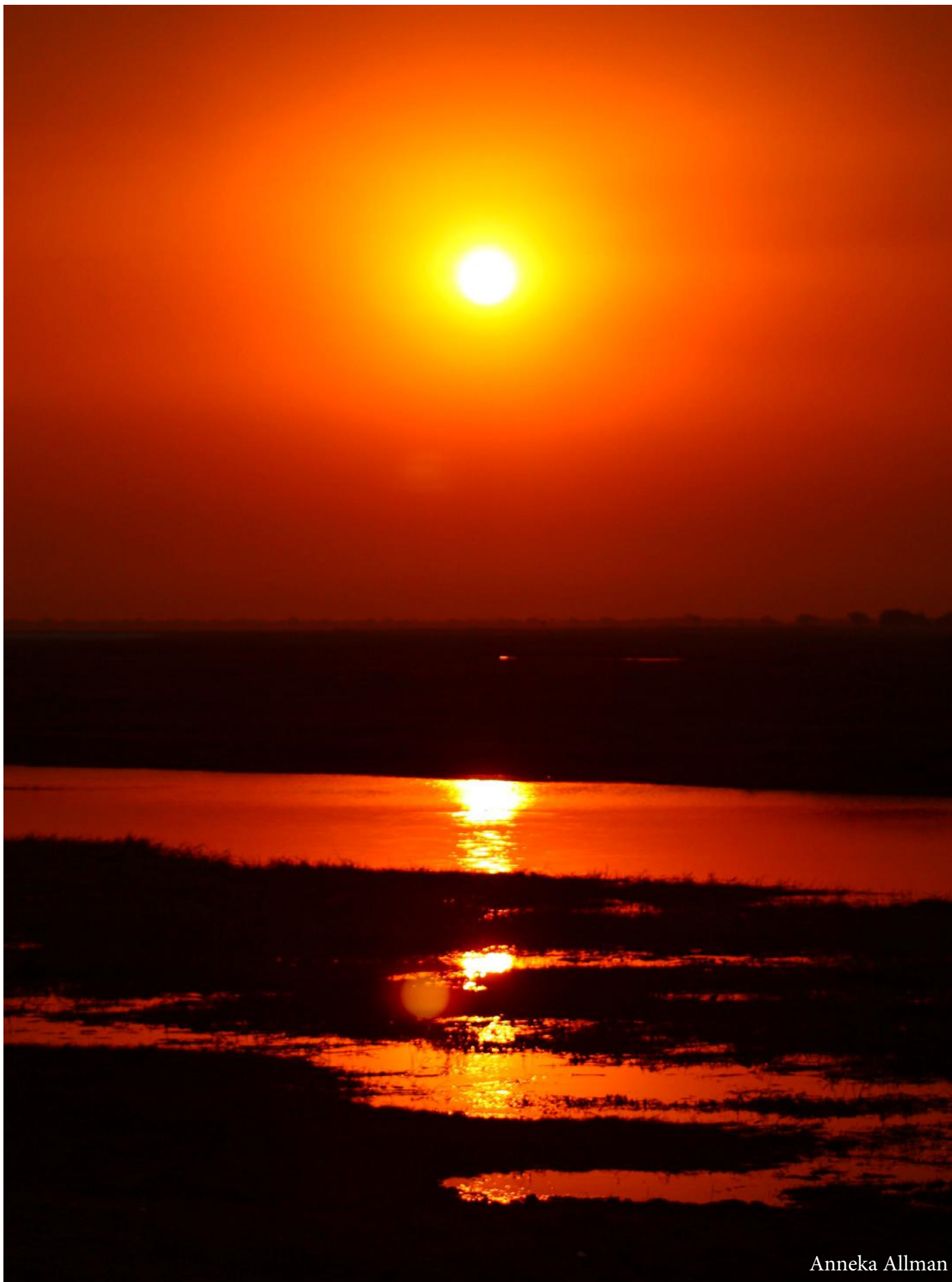


Drew Leventhal

Wings Without Hope

Hope fled,
And fears flew out of my own holster,
As tears grew out of lies I told her
Through doubt I had sought to maybe console her,
But instead I turned her heart into a boulder.
It was then that she became my worst enemy,
Setting fire to the words she shot into me
Hope had always been my inner source of energy,
But now, she roams chillingly
Screaming let me out, or let me in,
A mind without hope is one that cannot win
I say I cannot lose, I must survive,
If there's no you then how can I be alive?
When I've lost it all, once the skylines fall, as the high tides crawl, while the ides devolve, how can I seize all?
If the only one I'm reaching for is you,
And you're gone, fading to a listless blue..

-Aqil Rogers



Anneka Allman

Red Lipstick

She wore red lipstick. It was the color of rubies in shadows, and made her lips pop out of a pale face and complimented her icy blue eyes. Her hair smelled like peonies, dark waves bundled up into a high bun. She held a cigarette in her hand, smoke trailing from her lips as she surveyed the crowded room. It was dark in the bar, but she could clearly see the silhouette of the man, sitting at the end on a barstool, sipping his regular gin and tonic. Predictable. Stable. She waited for him to get up, and watched him blindly walk across the room. He bumped into her. She had been waiting for him. He peered into her face, and swallowed. He remembered her. She smiled, slowly.

“Remember me?” She asked.

“How could I forget you?” He responded. She laughed, shaking her head, half pity, half amusement, and maybe an underlying trace of happiness that he did not move on, could not move on, could not forget her. The night went slowly, both savoring each minute like it was the last night on earth. And perhaps it was, for she was constantly moving, liquid in motion, and he was forever tied down to one place, stable and predictable and cursed to wait for her return, every time she slipped away. The hours went by with the trill of the trumpet and the hum of the piano, and the stars and the moon came out to put the sinking sun to sleep. As the bar became more crowded, and the music turned into nighttime jazz, vibrant and rumbling with the power of thunder, she pulled him towards the middle of the room, and he followed.

They danced together beautifully. He held on to her too tightly, too scared and stubborn to loosen his hold, because he knew she would leave again in the morning. She was lax in his arms, head tilted upwards and eyes closed in bliss, because this was the only time she enjoyed staying put. As the song ended, She whispered in his ear, “I know your deepest secret fear.” and he believed her, because she wore red lipstick, the color of confidence and persuasion. Watching his face, she knew that his fear was herself, the embodiment of the unpredictable, the unstable. And that’s precisely what he loved about her, what he was so addicted to. Following the curve of her neck, and inhaling the smoke of her cigarette as she gently exhaled towards him, he followed her without hesitation out of the bar and into the night.

The next morning, she was gone. His head was filled with foggy memories of the previous night, of cigarettes and gin and tonics and jazz and soft laughter. He looked to the spot across from him on his bed, only to find the space empty. He didn’t want to lose her, but knew he would every time. He knew that over time the sheets would lose her scent, the memories and laughter would fade to a ghostly presence in the back of his mind. He got up, and looked into the mirror, tracing the fresh lipstick stain on his cheek. A farewell, a goodbye, and a promise of a next time. Glancing at the clock, his eyes froze on his dresser. There, prim and silent and innocent, sat a tube of lipstick. With shaking hands, he picked it up and opened it, and looked at the color he would always associate with the woman he always wanted to hold on to, but would slip through his hands like smoke.

Red.

-Jen Thal

