

the SLIGGO  
Journal  
of Arts & Letters

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## Poetry

Key in Hand  
Ziti Parrilla



# The Story Behind the Dream

Noni

First Place Winner, 2018 Sligo Journal Student Poetry Contest

I am an American DREAMER.  
I close my eyes but never sleep,  
my eyes are never fully closed.  
I'm working for a life  
to leave behind the life I never chose.  
It's a routine full of "I want" and "I will,"  
but a lot of doubt.  
If you've never faced discrimination by the system,  
You can't say I don't know what I'm talking about.  
Too un-American to be American,  
Too American to be back home,  
But what is Home?  
Going on to 19 years and 18 spent here,  
This is all I've ever known.

I live with a love that's only known through the phone.  
That exists because I am told so not because it has grown.  
A simple "hi" sometimes "hello,"  
a result of an introduction made between me and a photo.  
Loved ones on another land,  
Only pray they understand this disconnect was never really planned.

I'm holding on to what I got,  
I see it tearing at its seams.  
I learned to dream realistically all before I was fifteen.  
Sixteen and to hear your mother say,  
"This is what you'd do and where you'd go and where you'd stay,  
Just in case they ever try to take your father and I away."

But this is the life I keep separate from my name.  
I fear to open up, not because of trust  
but because of shame.  
But who am I to be ashamed  
when my parents are pullin' all the chains?  
I share my story on behalf of the two,

Who work beyond the hours and manage to pull through,  
All so that their children would not only dream,  
but be,  
more than what DREAMERS were ever labeled to achieve.

# Inside

Caroline Christoff

Second Place Winner, Sligo Journal Student Poetry Contest 2018

White paint shedding off the window frame  
Sliding and gliding down,  
and downward

Slow hushed betrayal of wet winter weeks  
Are you as weathered as your house?

To me,  
you are Oneida five, one, three  
Do you own the house of sadness, or does it own you?

Green polyester thing  
frozen amongst the urban rubble  
Inconsequential rugged path  
untraveled by any foot

Rain drop muffled by your scratchy green thing skin  
Time deepening the finality of a once domestic object,  
now a feral fabric

Water bloating you're weathered with love cushions  
like a nameless traveler pulled from a lake

She waits,  
heart pace quickens  
pavement like a drum to a symphony of rain

A lifetime of breath  
bound  
between moments of embrace

# Agrio y Dulce

Arlene Goldberg-Gist

Winner of the Ventura Valdez Spanish Poetry Award 2017

Yo estoy sirviendo enojo para la cena esta noche.  
Para esto la comida sabe amarga y agria en tu boca  
Pero no en la boca de nuestro hijo o la mia.

¿Por qué? ¿Por qué?  
Porque sabes lo que te has hecho a ti mismo  
Y así a nosotros.

¡Pero toma el dulce con el amargo!

Porque siempre te importa; haces un trabajo valioso.  
Porque eres un buen padre.  
Porque a veces bailas, tocas el piano, eres gracioso.

Porque moriste.  
Porque todo el mundo te ama.  
Y porque te amo.

In Media, Red  
Alexis Vega



# Illumination

Clif Collins

With hospital shades  
drawn and the city skyline  
completely shut out,  
four o'clock becomes  
all translucent  
wires and tubes,  
glowing dials  
and a half dozen pill bottles  
so I dream now in amber—  
the cracked lanterns  
of buried miners,  
medieval pitch torches,  
the Lighthouse at Alexandria—  
lost things spilling  
historic rumors  
from a baseboard lamp  
as if to say, 'Come, let us  
navigate together  
the universe in these  
first moments of creation.'



# After Fishing

Stanley Niamatali  
(for Clif)

The lock. Wall of water  
rising at our backs.  
Opened sluice. You pilot  
our leased skiff, release  
me on the faded timeworn dock  
  
and sail to that exclusive shore.

# On Defiance and Resisting

Kateema Lee

My father was an imposing man;  
most times he used his size to intimidate.  
Like Goliath to David, he forced men

and women to stand in his shadow,  
to feel the cold shade of his presence.  
But I never cowered. My seemingly

fragile frame hid the strength of Amazons.  
From my father I learned to never fear  
men or fear the loss of light some may bring,

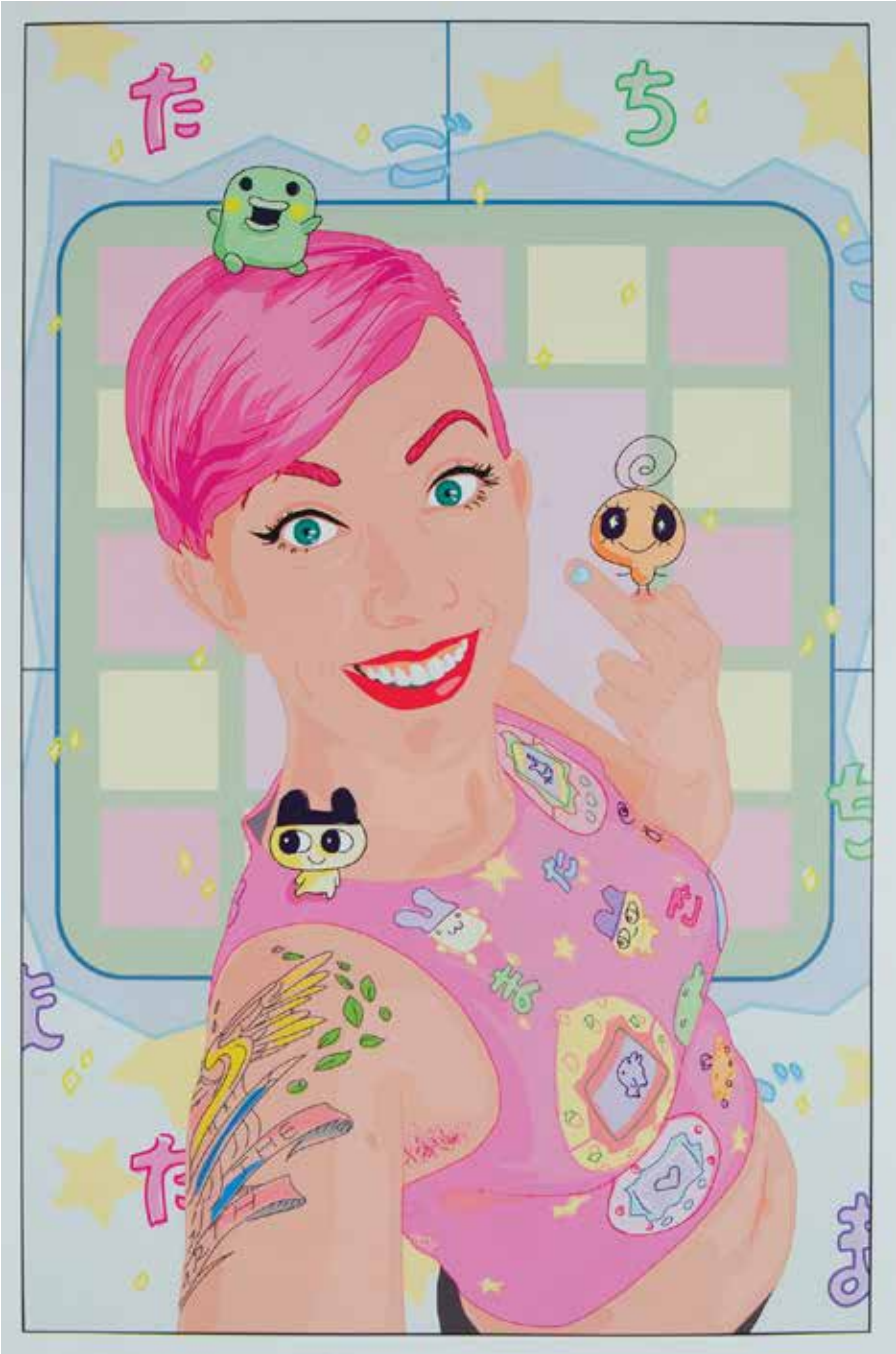
or the dark that comes when a man stands,  
like my father, to force uneasiness.  
Defiance is meeting every giant eye to eye,

without focusing on arms or hands threatening  
to limit. Defiance is not letting the death of a woman  
who blew smoke in the face of a smaller

giant break you or to lose your courage  
to the truth that even young or aging  
bodies will never be safe in a world

where confiscating rocks and slings trumps  
everything. Resisting is living between  
the pendulum of elegance and a shotgun in the face.

Self-Portrait  
Audrey Quesnel



Lost in Limbo  
Tiya Kefale Adugna



# Every madness has its miles

Albert Kapikian

Mine was the walking on the rails,  
the head down walking on the rails  
in the rain was mine.

If I was sad, I wasn't broken,  
when I went walking on the railroad tracks

where I went looking for the spokens,  
the ancient spokens

inside the depots and the dead ends  
where I found my family

and made my friends.

Every madness is its miles.

Mine was the walking on the rails,  
the head down walking on the rails

in the rain was mine.

# Marcas de nacimiento

Alejandra S. Franks

## I

Mi hermano llamó el otro día  
Preguntó si yo tenía un lunar  
Debajo de mi brazo  
Como él creía recordarlo;  
Recién notaba uno en el de su hija  
Que podría ser igual al mío.

## II

El otro día  
Vi una foto de mi tío  
A quien se le ve mucho más delgado  
de lo que yo lo recordaba...  
“Se parece mucho a su padre”,  
Dijo mamá, mientras yo pensaba en voz alta.

## III

Una prima de mamá falleció ayer;  
Probablemente la entierren.  
Todos ellos eran católicos practicantes;  
Seguirá viviendo en nuestros recuerdos  
Pues todos los recuerdos sobreviven  
Incluso los más sombríos  
Sin importar cuánto intentemos  
Enterrarlos, también,  
Tres metros bajo tierra, o más.

## IV

Pronto espero recibir los resultados de mi ADN  
Probablemente revelen  
Mis ancestros judíos,  
Aunque mi abuelo biológico  
Nunca estuviera allí para decirme  
Que él lo era.

V

Mi papá y mi hermano  
Ya no se hablan;  
Probablemente lamenten,  
Algún día,  
Todo lo que se han callado.

# Birth Marks

Alejandra S. Franks

## I

My brother called the other day  
Asked if I had a birth mark  
Under my arm  
As he thinks he remembers it;  
He noticed one on his daughter's  
That might be just like mine.

## II

I saw a picture of my uncle  
The other day  
He looks much skinnier  
Than I remember...  
“He looks just like his father,”  
Mom said, as I voiced my thought.

## III

My mom's cousin died yesterday;  
She'll probably be buried.  
They were all practicing Catholics.  
Her memory will survive  
As all memories do  
Even the dark ones  
No matter how hard we try  
To bury those, too,  
Six feet under, or more.

## IV

I expect my DNA results soon  
They will probably  
Reveal my Jewish ancestry,  
Although my biological grandpa  
Was never there to let me know  
He was one.



V

My father and brother  
Do not speak to each other anymore;  
They'll probably regret,  
One day,  
Everything that's gone unsaid.

# So Easy to Make a Ghost

Jona Colson

So easy to make a ghost  
and imagine the rooms filled  
with lost light and laughter.

So easy to fall into earth  
instead of air, that nothingness  
with its tuft of damp roots.

Can't you see the hallowed trees  
waiting, like warm caves, for  
goldenrod and blue satin?

So easy, at evening, to witness  
the green field vanishing into blue  
shadows, the deer running from

the fox, the fox running from  
the shift of firewood blazing  
like a sun in the clearing of stone.

So easy to move, moth-wise,  
in sudden jerks and gusts to  
stop the jagged silence the world felt

as the ghost laughed and stepped out.

Droplet  
Julia Martinez-Rivas



# Listen to the Martyrs

Joanna Howard

Before we choose violence, bring to mind Nanking:  
Photographs of heads arranged in haunting conversations,  
A lone baby on a train yard's splintered track,  
A newsreel of one old man's story—  
his mother, nursing  
while blood pours from her wounds—  
his tears  
recall his brother, too young to grasp  
anything but a slack breast.  
Today, we would like to see ourselves saints—  
wrapped in soothing robes of righteousness,  
padding peaceably toward enlightenment  
in the raked sandbox of our spiritual retreat.  
Yet a pebble in our sandal troubles us:  
Are we the Nazi who saved thousands of Chinese,  
or the ones who slaughtered millions of Jews?  
Are we the American Japanese interned in camps  
or the Japanese soldier decapitating children?  
Let us sit with this heart's confusion—  
Inhaling the names of thousands  
forgotten in their graves,  
Exhaling this vow:  
Before we choose violence, bring to mind Nanking.

# Tight Rope

Salgado Maranhão

Translated from the Portuguese by Alexis Levitin

I)

the poet is a salesman  
a trafficker in roads  
selling beams of light,  
symphonies  
and horizons.

frugal salesman of eternities  
—door to door—  
to the four corners of moonlight  
to the sea  
the air  
beneath time  
and its tempests.

II)

the poet runs the risk  
between free love  
and the word.  
he is always behind the scenes  
balanced on a tight rope  
                          of mystery.  
and, submerged, he crosses cities  
of gazing eyes  
like a solitary madman  
                                  eating fire.

# Citadelle Laferriere

Fritz Mirand



# The Sea

Joseph Baldi Acosta

Inspired by the first line of the poem “The Lighthouse Keeper” by Meghan O’Rourke

My ear, a shell on the pillow;  
the down, the sea from  
which her mouth arrived

Her eyes, jade turning to meet  
mine, those of a siren  
and I, Odysseus, submerged

My lips, bivalves, moist flesh,  
she, the waves that  
consume me

Her silhouette, a sacred eel  
on sheets of foam, I, mesmerized,  
immobilized before the light

# Blue Holiday

Stephen Bess

Don't matter how bright the day  
or how new the moon,  
trouble is always in sight  
and my mood is always blue.

Even if I pray  
before I start the day  
and give the Father His due,  
weary is just down the street,  
and my mood is bound to be blue.

Lord, take me now  
'cause I'm just 'bout through.  
Ain't no use in carryin' on,  
'cause my mood is always blue.



# L'Étranger Oublié (The Forgotten Foreigner)

Marie-Andrea M. Djeli Yahot

I was born from a foreigner  
Who always seemed to grow old  
Yet life lessons seem to always repeat.

I was pulled into a foreign country  
That couldn't understand me  
Yet listens to my singing tunes.

I was called a foreigner  
But rejected it  
And instead pointed to the foreigner I came from.

I was told I stayed in the shadows  
But I could still feel them at night.

I was told I was a princess of a village  
Yet I've never seen it  
And was told the lost memories  
Of the village  
That I had rejected.

Daido

Alissa Williams



# Blow Mind Blow

Roman Kostovski

Blow mind blow  
Blow beyond my ignorant shame  
Beyond the bareness of my birth  
Know mind know  
Know her like the rain  
Soaking deep, deep  
Into the leathers of her earth  
Blow beyond our battles  
Beyond our brothers  
Beyond the cigarette we shared with other  
In the trenches of our fathers' hands  
Know her like the rain  
Soaking deep, deep  
Into the leathers of her lands.  
Make me a wise man  
Let me walk welcomed  
And embraced by her night  
And in the subtle candlelight  
Let me scrawl on the parchments of her skin  
So that she would know  
So that she, too, would know  
That I've breathed her in.

# What I Want

Anna Sohn

My mind is preoccupied these days  
Because I'm not content (what?)  
I don't have any friends  
At least not in those ways.

This summer I've been studying  
It was, in truth, by choice  
But all my girls and boys  
Are always partying

Or so it seems  
On social things  
Always in pairs  
Or groups or shares  
At the beach  
Out of reach  
In the air  
Everywhere

Without me, I'm at home  
Without me, all alone  
By myself, with work to do  
By myself, dreaming of who

Will lift me from my longing, lift me from my misery  
Embrace me in a tight love hug or go do something fun with me  
See a movie, eat some lunch, laugh out in the summer's sun  
Run with me, board with me, swim with me, fun with me  
Just walk around and talk a while  
Meet up nowhere and go ten miles  
Climb on roofs, take pictures  
Set up some nargle lures  
Root around in the forest  
In the dark of night

Throw some knives, cause why not  
Fire the only light  
Listen to music, drive a car  
Love under the morning stars  
Eat and talk incessantly  
Pick up more friends, one, two, three...

Anything, Somebody call me.  
Stop excluding me. Stop not calling me.  
Do I have to ask? I don't know how.  
I want, want, need fun, I need it now or I'll burst

Maybe nobody's having as much fun as I think they are  
Maybe they totally are and I'm missing out

What do I believe?  
I'm fain to be jealous

Come, come, I want fun  
Come, come, I want fun  
Help Me help me Help Me help me  
Come, come, I want fun

Love me, be my friend. Friend, be my love.

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## Fiction

Caged  
Ayathma Wickramasinghe





# Burden

Theodore Jonas

Arthur Simmons was a healthy man. He stood about five-foot eight and was about one hundred and sixty pounds. He had a round face and his cheeks were full. He had a little nose, often rubbed red. His eyes were small and beady, but always with a sparkle. His mouth was petite and pursed, and it sat atop a somewhat recessed chin. His unkempt hair was greasy black and tightly curled. His ears were large and stuck out a great distance from his head.

Mr. Simmons was a mechanic and electrician. From vacuum cleaners to sewing machines to dishwashers, if it was a fixture of a household, Simmons could fix it. In his spare time, he was a hobbyist and amateur inventor. He was a man who liked to work with his hands. And so, they were strong and calloused, and often dirty with soot and grease. Often, they would be found wielding a pair of hefty pliers, or a soldering iron.

Today, however, they were empty, scrubbed thoroughly clean. On this late afternoon, Simmons was going to the hospital, not as a patient, but as an assistant. Society had called upon him to aid in the healing of a fellow citizen. As he walked up the steps to the hospital entrance, all he thought about was how soon he would be forty-seven, and would have a new life—without threat of injury or disease.

Simmons pushed through the large glass revolving door into the hospital lobby. The entrance stretched away into a large circular room, with rings of chairs orbiting around its center. Walkways were cut across each ring at every quarter to form a path, and each path led to a separate exit. Many of the seats were occupied by men and women who had gotten their number and were patiently waiting to be taken care of. In the center of the room was a large circular counter. The receptionists seemed to be using it as a fortified wall between them and the mass of people outside.

In his left hand, Mr. Simmons held his letter of selection. He walked up to the receptionist's citadel. Behind its walls, the receptionist was deep in conversation on the phone. Simmons tapped on the desk and raised his letter, making sure the large "Health Ministry" seal that was stamped on the envelope was visible to the receptionist. Without interrupting her own conversation, the receptionist slid a sign-in clipboard toward Mr. Simmons and, with a vague hand gesture, directed him away from the counter. Simmons smirked disapprovingly but resigned to find a seat.

Simmons opted for one of the few empty chairs in the outermost ring, up against the lobby wall. He took his seat, fidgeting expectantly. In the seat beside him lay the remnants of the morning's newspaper. He took it up and perused through the front page. At the top of the page in bold black were the words "Average Life Expectancy on the Rise." Simmons scanned the article. "On average men are living to 118 years, and women are up to an average of 120." As he continued, the words of a critic caught his eye. "The youth are already straining to support the sicknesses generated by the elderly. How will they be able to cope with life expectancies rising even further?"

Before he could finish reading, he heard his name called. "Is there an Arthur Simmons?" The call came from a tall man in a bright white lab coat standing on the far side of the room reading from a clipboard. He had thick black hair neatly combed back, thin square glasses resting upon a strong Caesarean nose, and was clean-shaven, exposing a strong jaw. His eyes were rapidly sweeping the room, looking for any reply to his calls. Mr. Simmons got to his feet and made his way toward the doctor. From halfway across the room he called out, "Yes that's me. I'm Arthur. Simmons." The doctor turned to face him and held out his hand. Simmons took it in greeting.

"Thank you for coming down today, Mr. Simmons. I'm Dr. Peters. If you would please come with me." Dr. Peters gestured, gently piloting Simmons out of the lobby.

"I was reviewing your medical file, Mr. Simmons. Do you know how many times you've been selected?"

"I reckon maybe a dozen times over my life."

"That's not far off. You've actually been selected sixteen times. That is quite the contribution you've made Mr. Simmons."

"Well, not all of those were life-threatening. Many were just a response to the common cold. Some were maybe just a sprained ankle, one or two broken bones, pneumonia once."

"All the same, that is a commendable contribution on your part, Mr. Simmons."

"I'm forty-six years old, so now I'm just holding out until I'm on the other side of the fence."

"Aren't we all, Mr. Simmons. With any luck, this will be the last time you are called upon."

The doctor had led them to a pair of heavy swinging doors. Stenciled on them in bold white on green text were the words Transfer Ward. Beyond the double doors, the walls of the ward were lined with beds arranged always into pairings of two. Out of all the pairings, most only had one occupant, but Mr. Simmons could pick out one or two where the beds were dually occupied.

Mr. Simmons followed Dr. Peters down the bed rows until he came to a stop at the foot of the bed of one of the patients. The occupant of the bed

Jupiter  
Yujie Xu



was an old man, perhaps in his late seventies or early eighties. Slender tubes inserted into the man's nose draped messily across his chest and flowed down to a pair of steel oxygen tanks. His body was thin and frail under his spotted hospital gown. He had hollow cheeks, a long, pointed nose, and a heavy brow. His hair was grey and thinning, revealing a spotted dome underneath. His eyes sat deeply recessed in his skull but shone quite brightly at the sight of the two men pulling up to the foot of his bed.

"Ah, Dr. Peters," the man wheezed. "I hope it is good news that you bring with you today."

"Indeed I do, Mr. Anderson," replied the doctor. "This is Mr. Simmons. He's been selected to aid in your recovery."

"Wonderful. Ah, Mr. Simmons, I do hope you'll forgive me for not getting up to shake your hand."

"Not at all, Mr. Anderson."

"Thank you kindly, sir. And I do hope you'll forgive me for imposing upon your good health."

"Well, it is my duty to carry your burden," Mr. Simmons replied somewhat dryly.

"All the same... I've struggled with breathing for a while now. I did my best to keep it to myself, but I guess that simply isn't an option anymore."

"I should explain," Dr. Peters interjected. "Mr. Anderson here suffers from obstructive pulmonary disease, specifically, a combination of bronchitis and emphysema. Until recently, in the case of Mr. Anderson, it's been severe but manageable. Now I'm afraid his condition is ultimately terminal. That is, without your intervention, Mr. Simmons. So you see, the situation is really quite dire. I just want to thank you for your assistance in this matter."

Simmons nodded in acknowledgment but didn't say a word.

"Well, we had better get Mr. Simmons ready," Dr. Peters said in an effort to fill the silence. He promptly flagged down a nurse.

"Mr. Simmons, I'm afraid I must part ways with you for now as I have other patients to attend to. However, I will make sure to check in on you and Mr. Anderson first thing tomorrow. Please go and get changed. And when you are ready, return here and get some rest. I'll see you tomorrow."

Simmons followed the nurse and changed into his hospital gown. When he returned to Transfer Ward, Mr. Anderson was sound asleep. His breathing was short and uneven below the oxygen mask. Simmons took his place in the companion bed. He knew from experience that there was nothing to be done other than try to get rest and wait for the next morning. He made himself comfortable in his bed and closed his eyes.

\*\*\*\*\*

Simmons awoke the next day blurry-eyed in a fit of coughing. Between fits, his lungs grasped for air, swelling greater, and greater, and greater, but never finding enough. A forceful hand descended upon him, firmly pressing a mask to his face. As Simmons inhaled deeply, a flow of oxygen satiated his starving lungs, and a calm slowly trickled back over him. Simmons' gaze followed the arm up to the face of the figure at his side. It belonged to a nurse, but Simmons couldn't make out her face.

Simmons' attention shifted down to the two figures standing at the foot of his bed. The man on the left spoke, "The extra oxygen will help you adjust. Your lungs can only process roughly half the oxygen that they could yesterday." Simmons recognized the voice as that of Dr. Peters. "We intend to slowly wean you off of it over the next day or two. But at least for now, it will help with this undoubtedly difficult transition."

The second man came forward as Mr. Anderson, although today he stood healthy and tall, much taller than Simmons had expected from seeing him the day before. He had changed out of his hospital gown and was back in his street clothes: a well-fitted brown suit, and a complimenting fedora. He was however, unmistakably, Mr. Anderson. In his left hand he held a lit cigarette. He held it to his lips and took a long drag, filling his lungs to the greatest extent, and steadily and smoothly exhaling so as to extract every ounce of enjoyment in the sensation before leaning in over Simmons. He took up Simmons' right hand into his own. Simmons didn't object to this, but not having the strength at all to resist if he had wanted to disturbed him a little. Mr. Anderson's hands, by contrast, were quite firm, and easily handled the weight of Simmons' limp arm.

"It's been months since anyone has let me enjoy a good cigarette. The hospital has discharged me; however, I didn't want to leave without thanking you one last time. Have an expedient recovery, Mr. Simmons."

Mr. Anderson turned to Dr. Peters to exchange a few words before departing the ward, after which, Dr. Peters redirected his attention back to Simmons.

"Now Mr. Simmons, I want you to take it easy for a while. Rest here, we'll have you home within a day." With those final words, Dr. Peters departed as well.

The day slowly dripped away as Simmons got reacclimated to breathing. Much of the time he spent pestering the nurses, asking for his belongings and when he would be well enough to leave.

He got his wish. Late that evening he was discharged. As he left the building, Simmons found that everything from pushing open a door to walking down a flight of stairs exhausted him. Even throughout the short walk to the bus station two blocks away, he had to stop frequently and catch his breath. On the ride home, he had time to rest. He tilted his head back, closed

Wayne's Century-Old Stone House in  
Middleburg, Virginia  
Shirley Washington



his eyes, and focused on trying to breathe steadily.

Stepping off the bus, Mr. Simmons was thankful that the entrance to his apartment building was only as far as the other side of the street. He crossed, pushing through the heavy glass doors of the foyer entrance. Out of habit, he started up the stairwell to his fifth-floor apartment. After one flight, he was so winded he had to brace himself against the railing. Picking himself up, he exited on the first floor and took the elevator the rest of the way.

His breathing was now, at the best of times, only adequate, and he suffered most of the time from terrible exhaustion. He decided to heed Dr. Peters' advice for an extended leave from work. Simmons spent his days lying in bed, propped up by a mountain of pillows, so that he could watch the television on the far side of the room. Occasionally, when he had the energy, he would have a brief excursion to the kitchen for a meal. He only left the apartment when his fridge was empty.

Days turned into weeks, and the extent of Simmons' exhaustion began to show itself fully. Dishes went unwashed, piling up in the sink. Weeks turned to months. Dirty laundry had grown up around the floor like weeds. A mountain of trash had accumulated in the area around the bedside trashcan. All the while, Simmons was finding it ever harder to breathe. From his bed, he called Dr. Peter at the hospital, and secured for himself a house call.

When Dr. Peters did stop by, he had to mind his step as he navigated the minefield that Simmons' apartment had become. Together they had to clear a space in the bedroom for the doctor to work. Dr. Peters examined Simmons for nearly an hour, poking and prodding him, asking him to slowly inhale and exhale. When the doctor finished, he explained to Simmons how his body was not healing as expected. In fact, his condition was deteriorating steadily. He would have to be put on oxygen support. The one small silver lining was that in a couple months, Simmons would turn forty-seven, and would qualify for a transference of his own. In the meantime, a nurse from the hospital would stay with him to provide care and assistance.

Simmons' life became a stopwatch, counting down the weeks and days until his forty-seventh birthday. Six weeks, five weeks, one month, three weeks. It was two weeks before Simmons forty-seventh birthday, on New Year's Day. The governor would be making his annual address to the people, outlining policy improvements to be implemented for the new year. He had the nurse turn on the television and tune it to listen to the address.

The governor stood at his podium erected atop the steps of the court house. In front of him, thousands of people had gathered to view the address in person. The governor took some cards from his coat and set them down on the podium and cleared his throat to address the people.

"Our society continues to break new ground," declared the governor. "Our people are living longer and healthier lives. This would never be pos-

sible without the sacrifices made by our youth. In this past year, the women in our community reached the milestone of one hundred and twenty years' average life expectancy. Not only that, but original co-founder Zachariah Smith reached his one hundred and fortieth birthday. However, with these new milestones come new social problems to overcome. Chief among them, the growing number of elderly has placed a strain on the youth of our society. Our response to this has been to bolster the ranks of our youth. And so, as of this New Year's Day, the age of Lawful Youth has been increased from forty-seven years of age, to forty-nine. We realize the situation this creates for members of our community that are forty-seven and forty-eight. So, in the interest of fairness to those who have already dutifully fulfilled their obligation to society, those who would be lawfully returned to the body of the youth will be exempted of their responsibility."

Simmons' skin chilled, going numb. His body fell back into the full embrace of his bed, and his eyes drifted up, unfocused, to the ceiling. The governor continued through his prepared speech, moving from social reform to social reform, but Simmons had stopped listening. His mind was racing. His lungs clawed for air to supply his overworking heart. Without hesitation, the nurse grabbed the oxygen mask hanging loosely on Simmons' chin, and pushed it up to cover his nose and mouth. Simmons didn't give any notice.

The next day Simmons made desperate calls to Dr. Peters. The nurse had to hold the phone up to Simmons' mouth. Simmons pleaded for a transference, and when the doctor rejected the idea, Simmons got angry. He recited the many times he was called upon, and how he had fulfilled his obligation to society. Dr. Peters responded, "Even if we could legally offer you a transference, I couldn't permit it. Your condition is so advanced that even if we transferred it to the healthiest man alive, we couldn't guarantee that he would recover. It would be a death sentence."

Simmons' chest swelled in anticipation of a barrage to be unleashed against the good doctor. But he was betrayed, and in his fit of anger, Simmons' pent-up arsenal of air rushed forward, tripping over itself in a violent outburst of coughing. The nurse was forced to set the phone down so that she could hold the oxygen mask to his mouth. As Simmons' coughing subsided, the sharp clunk of the receiver cut through the air, and a silence fell over the room. Simmons called back the next day, and the day after that, but time and time again he was turned away.

The days marched forward again. Simmons' birthday came and went almost unnoticed, except for a small cake from his nurse. As January came to a close, Simmons was completely bedridden. He took all his meals with the help of the nurse, who had to alternate between feeding him, and holding the oxygen mask to his face. His cheeks were pale and hollowed. His eyes stared hazily at a blank ceiling. His mouth hung open to allow adequate air to his



lungs. February came and went in the blink of an eye, as Mr. Simmons spent most of his days sleeping, waking only at the request of the nurse so he could eat. In March he breathed his last breath and did not wake again.

Mi Madre la India que Lllaman Negra  
Melissa Rojas



# sMOTHERed

Amanda Livingston

The day I began working at Al's Diner on Highway 221, its shiny silver exterior beckoning potential customers in search of greasy meals, I was warned about Two-Dollar Man. He was legendary in our little restaurant. Famous for coming in with his mother (whom he addressed as just that: "Mother"), providing an oddly specific and somewhat complicated order, and no matter the service he received or the cost of his meal, only tipping two dollars. No more, no less. Every server before me had encountered him at some point or another, frustrated at the prospect of having to serve him and only being rewarded with less than 10% of the meal in tips.

Until I met him for the first time, I had imagined an aging, cantankerous man with silver hair, but the day he walked in and someone pointed him out to me, I was stunned that he was nothing like I had anticipated. Two-Dollar Man walked with his mother to his usual booth by the window overlooking the highway, which he insisted to be sat at every time. I suspect it was because it was close to the entrance and was less distance for his mother to walk. His tall, slender frame dwarfed that of his petite mother's. He looked to be in his early-to-mid thirties even though he had to be older given the age of his mother. He had chestnut brown hair, thin silver-rimmed glasses perched on top of his pointy nose, and serious light brown eyes hidden behind them. He had no facial hair and looked somewhat boyish. The term "nerdy" comes to mind. His right arm was hooked through his mother's and his left hand was atop her anterior forearm in a comforting manner, his Omega watch catching the diner's fluorescent lighting. I noticed he did not wear a wedding band.

Mother appeared to be in her late 90s, if not older, had snowy short hair styled as if she had just left the salon, was no taller than five feet, and used a purple flowered cane to support her slow, shaky steps towards the table. She looked at the black and white checkered diner floor as she made the journey to their usual spot, as someone who'd once had a nasty fall might do to prevent it from happening again. When they arrived at their table, they sat across from each other, both of them dressed in their expensive Sunday best even though they never came in on a Sunday.

Two-Dollar Man's orders varied each time. Sometimes it was chicken tenders for himself and the meatloaf meal for Mother. Other times he would order the turkey dinner and Mother would take the pot pie. Some days, they would order appetizer salads and other days it might be soup to start. How-

ever, several things always remained the same. Two-Dollar man always drank lemonade, with extra lemons. Mother always had Earl Grey tea, with honey and 2% milk on the side. They always ordered a slice of pie on one plate, pumpkin or apple depending on the season, with two spoons for sharing, and “smothered” in whipped cream.

Most of the servers had given up trying to go above and beyond to please them. They never seemed outwardly upset with the service or the meal according to June, who had their table that day, but still the only reward for working one’s butt off was a measly two dollars. They never smiled, except occasionally at each other. The same incentive was given no matter the quality of service. Every time, they ate slowly, almost deliberately, and usually spent several hours occupying the booth in which they sat, meaning that other better-tipping customers would be sat elsewhere. A detrimental situation for us servers who lived off of our tips. We couldn’t even rely on the hope that perhaps Mother was a more generous tipper because Two-Dollar Man was always the one to pay.

“I can’t handle them today. I’m behind on my rent and Two-Dollar Man in my section is going to mean I’ll spend two hours of my time for two dollars,” June lamented to nobody in particular. I looked at my almost full section and June’s, which was empty except for Two-Dollar Man and Mother. “Take my tables and keep the tips. I’ll handle Two-Dollar Man,” I said. She looked at me with shock in her eyes. “You sure?” I nodded and with that she took off towards my section, more than grateful to leave me with my poor financial decisions. Although I wanted June to be able to make her rent this month, I must admit, my decision to take over Two-Dollar Man and Mother’s table was also a selfish one. I wanted to see first-hand if he really was impossible to please. He couldn’t be as bad as everyone made him out to be. I knew I could earn a real tip out of him. I straightened my apron, patted my blonde hair, and marched confidently towards Two-Dollar Man with a smile on my face.

“Hello! Welcome to Al’s Diner. My name is Cassie. What can I get for you today?” I asked, perhaps a little too cheerfully.

Two-Dollar Man looked up at me, his face all business as he spoke his and Mother’s order. “Mother will take the Earl Grey tea, with honey and 2% milk. I’ll have a lemonade, with five extra lemons. To start, Mother will have a cup of the cream of crab soup. I’ll take a side salad, no tomatoes, with honey mustard dressing on top and extra on the side. For our entrees, Mother will have the meatloaf with extra gravy and I will enjoy your fish and chips without horseradish. For dessert, we will have the pumpkin pie, on one plate to share with two spoons, smothered in whipped cream.” He really emphasized the “smothered” part. I diligently wrote this down on my note pad and repeated the order back to him word-for-word, also stressing the word smothered. He

noded his approval and I took that as my cue to submit the order and prepare their drinks.

When making the drinks, I took special care to arrange Mother's tea in a manner most aesthetic. I found the nicest of the diner's chipped tea mugs and placed a doily we usually saved for desserts beneath it rather than the napkins we typically placed on the plate to keep the mugs from sliding. For Two-Dollar Man's lemonade, I found the best-looking lemon wedges we had in the jar and dropped five in the wide-mouthed cups we used to serve sodas. I delivered the drinks to their table with the speed of a cheetah and rapidly went back to retrieve their appetizers.

For the salad, I made it myself, not leaving any chance that the salad girl could mess it up. I delicately placed the vegetables in a pleasing manner, sans tomatoes and with extra dressing of course. I even took the time to cut a radish into a flower to make the boring salad look a little more beautiful. For the crab soup, I sprinkled a pinch of Old Bay on top, not too much, but just enough. I painstakingly wiped the edges of the bowl to remove any wayward soup and seasoning before presenting it to Two-Dollar-Man and Mother.

They did not acknowledge me as I set it down. No matter. The real star of the show was the entrees anyhow. Time stood still as I waited by the shelf where the cooks put the meals ready for delivery to their tables. Could they not move faster? Time is money! I was determined to earn my two-dollar tip. Actually, I was hoping to be the first to earn more from Two-Dollar Man and the cooks were moving slower than dripping honey in the winter. Sweat began to bead on my brow. From the lamps that kept the food warm or from the agonizing wait for the dinners to come out, I am not sure, but I could feel my heartbeat drumming in my chest from the suspense.

At last, their entrees appeared in the window, an unnecessary ding of the bell from the cook alerting to me to their completion. I hastily grabbed them, my palms burning from the heat of the plates, but I did not care. I was on a mission to deliver them quickly and accurately to Two-Dollar Man and Mother, anxious for the approval they would surely award me with. I gently placed them, along with extra napkins for good measure, upon their table in exchange for their empty salad bowl and soup cup. I waited a beat for their gratitude, but none came. Not even a glance in my direction as they dug in. This wasn't looking good. I retreated behind the counter, within beckoning distance, but not too close as to be intrusive, and impatiently waited. Precisely three bites later, I checked back to make sure everything came out okay per Al's procedures, and took the opportunity to top off Two-Dollar Man's lemonade.

His response? "It's fine, as always." With that, he went back to eating. Mother said nothing.

I was losing this battle and I could feel it. I had to do something

drastic, but I wasn't sure what. After half an hour, I was still waiting for them to finish and had three new tables to tend to. I kept my eye on them from a distance, impatiently waiting for them to consume their meals, which they did at the pace of a snail. Bite by bite. Nibble by nibble. I've never seen anyone eat so slowly and savor each bite so deliberately. The whole time, they never said a word to each other, never even glanced up.

As I could see the meal drawing to a close, I distractedly refilled another customer's glass of water and wound up spilling it all over the table. I apologized and hastily cleaned up the mess I made, eager to have dessert on the table. How I would wow Two-Dollar Man and Mother with this final course, I did not yet know. I had to buy myself some time to think. I approached their table and gathered the now empty dishes. I took a clean, damp cloth and slowly wiped circles around their table, a friendly smile on my face.

"Let me make it nice for you," I said. My grandmother used to say that when she would serve us dinner and I always found it sweet. I thought Mother would appreciate my attempt at making her feel as if she were visiting an old friend's home for a meal. The only response she had was to place her wrinkled, manicured hands upon the table when I was done.

"We are ready for our pie now," Two-Dollar Man said matter-of-factly. It was then that I realized I was defeated. There would be no more than two dollars from Two-Dollar Man. I was no better than any other server in this diner. I was not capable of taming the beast.

"Yes, of course," I said. With that, I scurried to the desserts counter and found June plating the pumpkin pie for me.

"They always order pie," she explained, "And since we are out of apple, I knew it had to be pumpkin this time." I nodded and she squirted a small dollop of whipped cream from the can directly in the center of the pie. As she set the can down, she spoke again, "Oh yes, I almost forgot. They want it smothered in whipped cream." She said "smothered" with annoyance and shook her head in disapproval. With that, she added another two large dollops of the canned whipped cream, more than any normal person would like to have on a slice of pie, handed me the pie, and retreated.

I stood and stared at the pie, the smell of cinnamon making its way to my nose. It looked like I would be another two-dollar tip and Two-Dollar Man would yet again earn his moniker. Then it dawned on me. More than any normal person would like to have on a pie, I thought. Two-Dollar Man was not normal. He was not your average guy. He referred to his mother as "Mother." He was very specific in his demands. Perhaps he literally meant he wanted his pie smothered. They wanted smothered, so smothered I would give them.

I grabbed the can of cream and sugar, shook it with determination, and began by outlining the pumpkin pie in whipped cream. I worked quickly,

covering the entire slice. Soon, not a single orange-brown speck of pie was left. I continued upward after it was covered, a mountain of cream disguising a pie, stopping only because the aerosol can ran empty and light in my hand. I stepped back and admired my work before picking up the plate and digging two spoons into the top of my whipped cream summit.

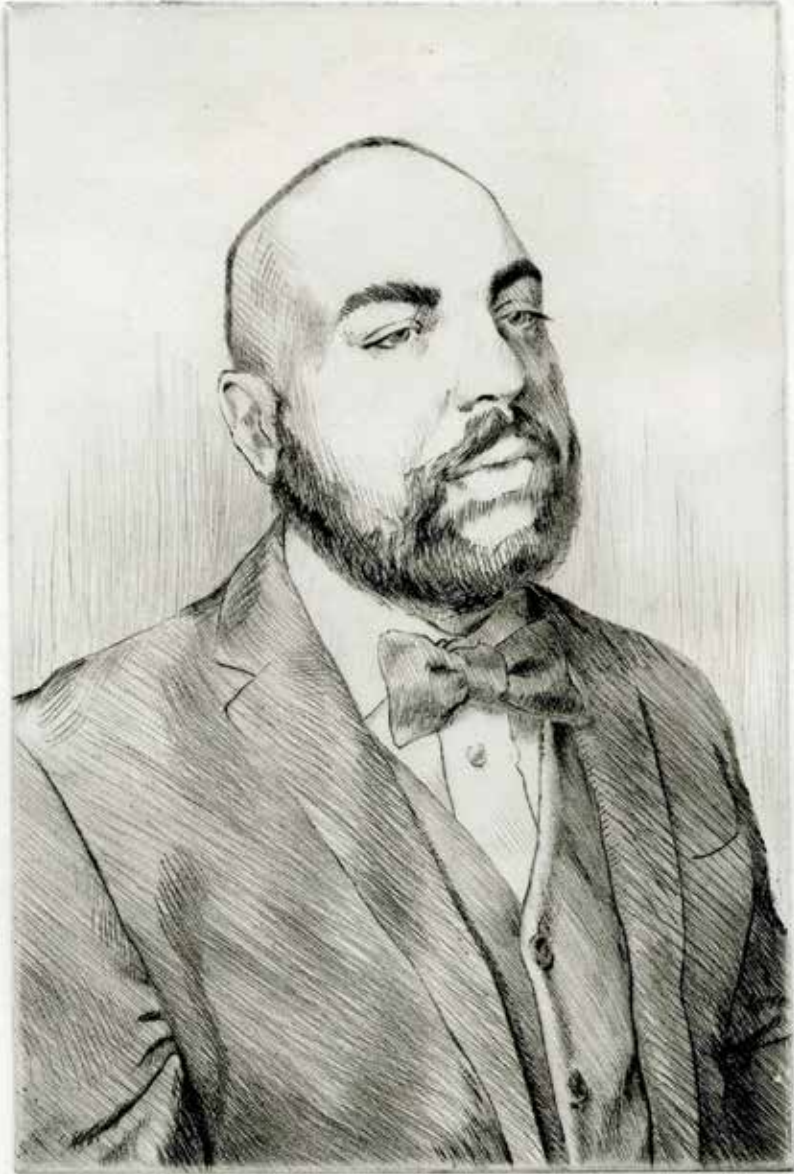
I walked carefully back to Two-Dollar Man and Mother's booth, fearful of tripping and spilling my work of sugary art. When I arrived at their table, I set the pie between them and waited. I was not leaving. I wanted to see how this played out. I needed to see it. Would Two-Dollar Man approve? Would Mother? A pregnant silence lingered between us as they each took in the monstrosity that was no longer a pie. Would I get fired for being facetious? I didn't care. It was worth it.

And then, it happened. The response I had least expected. A smile spread across Two-Dollar Man's face and a deep belly-laugh I hadn't predicted him to be capable of escaped him. His head was thrown back and I could see the fillings in the back of his mouth, an inky contrast against pearly white. I looked to Mother and a smile had slowly crept along her wizened cheeks. She too began to giggle and soon, I couldn't help but join in.

"You really are quite literal. Do you know that?" he chuckled, handing me his American Express Black credit card even though I hadn't provided their check. I couldn't even respond. I was laughing too hard. I set extra napkins on their table, ran the card on the table-top card reader, and handed it back to him before retreating to my other tables.

When I looked back at the table ten minutes later, the whipped cream and pie were gone and so were they. Every last bite had been eaten. If I hadn't known better, I would have thought they had licked the plate clean. I approached the table with caution, not even expecting his usual two dollars due to my sassiness. Instead, there sat three crisp one-dollar bills, fanned out in a display of approval. I glanced out the window to see them approaching their black Mercedes, Two-Dollar Man gazing lovingly down at Mother, the smile still on his face.

Dapper Dude  
Melissa Rojas



A DAPPER DUDE

1/7

*[Signature]* 2017



# The Cadillac

Callie Sullivan

“Ernestine!” he hollered as he blew through the doorway, tossing his coat on the rack. He did not notice the boxes that sat in the hall; he did not notice his golf clubs sitting next to the door; he did not notice the pictures now missing from the walls.

“Ernestine! What happened to the Cadillac??”

“Goddammit Albert,” replied a voice from down the hall, “I’m in the middle of my soaps. Can’t it wait until the end of *As the World Turns*? I need to see what happens with Barbara and James...”

He rounded the corner into the living room, where Ernestine sat in his recliner, her face lit only by the glow of the television. On the end table beside her, an ashtray and cigarette.

“Do you think I give a damn ’bout what happens to Barbara and James? Now, Imma ask you again: where is my—”

“Oh hush, you! It’s just starting to get good!”

With that, he grabbed the remote and pressed POWER, and the world stopped turning, and the voices of Barbara and James clicked out of existence. For a long moment, they stood there in silence, her staring at an empty screen, him seething there beside her. Silence crept into the room, resting its heavy body across their backs and shoulders; stretching itself, it pulsed and pushed until there was no room for anything else.

“I sold it,” she said, her eyes still fixed on the pitch-black screen.

Catching himself, he rested his hand on the chair. When Albert replied, his voice was barely a whisper.

“You— you did what?”

“Sold it, Albert. It’s gone.”

“Christ Almighty, woman! What you gone and done that for? Why... why would you sell my baby?”

“You already have a baby, Albert. Two, in fact. Reagan sent Randy’s platoon off to the desert... little Mikey’s already got scholarship offers and he’s only a junior. You’ve got babies, Albert. You’ve got a family!”

“Why, Ernestine... Could you at least tell me why?”

“I don’t know, Albert,” she said, voice quivering, as she finally took her gaze from the screen. Her eyes were red and glassy, and the lower lids were puffy from hours of tears. “Maybe Wilma Prescott from down the block could answer that for you?”

Albert's eyes widened. He gripped the sides of his salt and pepper hair, dragging his hands down so they covered his face. Slowly, he turned himself away from his wife.

"You think I don't know what you was doing, Albert? When you was 'going to the bar', coming back at all hours smelling like perfume? Now I tried to ignore the fact that I never see you anymore. And I accepted the fact that you're never around except to eat a meal or to work on that god-forsaken Cadillac. But I will NOT stand idly by while you fool around with another woman!"

The silence returned, heavy and thick. The distance between them was three feet and three thousand miles. They stood there for what seemed like a lifetime.

"You can go now, Albert," she said, "I. Am. Done."

Slowly, Ernestine reached for the remote. She had said her piece, and if she did not turn the television on, she would miss the end of her show. Maybe Barbara would finally leave that no good, two-timing James.

The snap-fizz of the television broke the silence, and Albert was awakened from his trance. His eyes darted from the TV to his wife, who stared at the screen with rapt intensity. He spun on his heel, and marched back out into the hallway.

He had grabbed his coat from the rack and was just about to leave when he noticed the golf clubs propped against the doorframe. Turning, he saw the boxes, four cardboard boxes, all labelled "ALBERT'S SHIT." As he looked back down the hallway, every picture that had him in it was gone; it was as if he had never existed at all.

Albert grabbed the nine iron from his golf bag and walked back toward the living room.

She didn't see him walk in. She didn't see him standing, teeth bared, knuckles blanched, choking the club by the handle. She didn't see him winding up, preparing to swing. But the impact... she saw that, clear as crystal.

The TV screen shattered into a million pieces. Shards of Barbara and James crumbled to the floor, their world destroyed in one swift strike. But Albert didn't stop at one. Two. Three. Four. Over and over, Albert hammered at the television like a man possessed. When he was finished, the nine iron twisted like a coat-hanger, and the TV was nothing but a smoldering pile of glass and plastic and metal.

He turned to his wife, who had retreated into the hallway. Her reddened eyes, now wide with fear, peeked out at him from the side of the doorway.

"Guess we're even now," he said, "I should get going."

And he left.

Walking down Wall Street  
Jowain Thompson  
Inspired by Fortunato Depero



Witch's Light  
Audrey Quesnel



# Paper Hats

Carolyn Jew

In my restless youth, I found myself stowing away on merchant ships and caravels to travel to new lands. I have dined on fried jellyfish and turtle stew, watched death dances for the mourning, slept in houses perched on chicken-footed stilts, had medicinal frog skin pressed upon my eyes, and lived months in the twilight where nights have no end. I have chewed on leaves that would let me speak with God. But the one place I will never forget is the Village of Paper Hats.

We had been at sea for months with storms and unexpected delays that set us back. Our supplies ran dangerously low, and we lost half the crew to raids while moored on unfriendly islands. We remember finally coming upon the surprising warmth of hospitable shores. Spotted from far away, our ship was greeted by a crowd of children and fishermen who shared their bounty with us right on those beaches, building roaring fires to roast trout.

It was only after we were full and drowsy with the sights and sounds of laughter and happiness that we took in our surroundings. Small, comfortable wood-and-turf homes lined the southern shores. Sheep, chicken, rabbits and goats were kept in various enclosures. Our men hiked inland and found heather, crowberry and willow plentiful. We decided at that moment, to spend the summer resting here.

Life seemed simple enough, with one curious ritual. There were birds of prey, which would come swooping unannounced over the hills, all curved beaks and razor talons, strong enough to carry off toddlers and small livestock. They had no fear of men. Their flight was so swift and unexpected, their attack so vicious, it often left a number injured or dead. In defense of these occurrences, the people of the village had fashioned for themselves hats from paper brought by traders, which they tucked into the belts of their garments at all times. It seemed they were convinced that, should such an attack commence, they were to quickly sit very still and place the hats upon their heads. It was widely taught that any movement would give away one's location and doom one to harm. People warily eyed those whose heads were marked with scars, certain that clumsy fools would likewise draw attention to others nearby.

Our crew had never encountered such vicious raptors in any of our travels. Nor had we heard of the paper hats. Yet the villagers seemed little bothered by their ritual, or the birds. They went about their lives in peace.

Other than the hats, they took no precaution whatsoever for their well-being.

The first attack was the most unnerving. Though the villagers had on our first day generously pressed into our crew's hands fresh paper hats to be used, we were carefree and set them aside. They seemed flimsy and comical. Not long after our arrival, the chickens had unexpectedly stopped laying eggs. One of our crew, fond of gannet and herring gull eggs, had scaled small cliffs to gather them. That day we swiveled toward his screams only to see several of these unknown raptors sinking their talons into his shoulders and face, and tugging him mightily away from the cliff. As he fell, the raptors followed his arc to the bottom, and carried away what pieces they recovered.

There was nothing recognizable left to bury. Our crew was silent for the following days. None had inclination to participate in dances for the dead.

The villagers, however, did not change demeanor. They only shook their heads and glanced at the paper hats that remained in our quarters. The children continued to laugh and play, the fishermen continued to trawl with nets, as they always had.

The next attack we tried to run for cover, but this only seemed to draw the attention of the raptors with greater fervor. Yet another of our men was slashed, and lost sight in one of his eyes. His face was so disfigured we were forced to look away as he approached. One of the baby goats was also carried off.

From that moment, our crew sheepishly began to carry their hats with them, in a slit in their trousers or tucked into their shirts. By the third attack, most of the crew had scrambled to place the hats on their heads. Only a rambunctious child had been taken, protesting loudly and in shock as he reached for his family and found no arms reaching back. After his cries had faded, his family behaved as if he had never walked their shores. They clucked once about his unruliness, found some blemish on the hat that had been presumed to render it ineffective, burned the bloodied hat, and continued with their lives.

After this third occurrence, the crew spent most of their days indoors. They eyed the skies fearfully, marked their steps so as not to be far from cover, and had stopped joking and smiling. With the loss of one more crew member, we would have been unable to man our caravel. We began to plan our departure, even without sufficient supplies. The village looked at our meager food and water with subdued pity, staring out with troubled confusion as our vessel pulled out into the vast oceans. As the shore retreated, we could hear the children's laughter fade in the distance. What roared in my ears over this laughter, were the echoing cries of that taken child.

I have thought back many times to that village, and those hats.

Hope  
Robert Chanin





# The Strength of Colors

Iman Asfari





## Contributors

Joseph Baldi Acosta's debut collection of poetry, *My Life in Metaphor*, was published by AuthorHouse in 2013, and received a very favorable four-star review from Clarion. Originally from the Mar Vista-Venice area of Los Angeles, Baldi Acosta's diverse cultural heritage, his federal government career, most of it with U.S. Public Health Service agencies, his assignments in Brazil, Ecuador, and Jordan, and his love of travel and of nature (shared by his wife, Maria), have all greatly influenced his world view and poetry. He was awarded the 2010 Ventura Valdez English Poetry Award for "Curandero of Juarez" ("A Childhood Memory"), and the 2013 Ventura Valdez English Poetry Award for "The Limited." In addition, he was a finalist in the 2011 ArLiJo Poetry Competition for the poem, "The End and the Beginning." His poems have been published in literary magazines like *The Sligo Journal* and *Poetica*.

Tiya Kefale Adugna is an art student at Montgomery College.

Iman Asfari is a 21-year-old full-time student at Montgomery College. She is just an ordinary Syrian girl who came to the United States five years ago to continue pursuing her dreams. Art helped her build her own imaginary world where the impossible became possible. Also, she is so grateful for her family who are always supporting her and staying by her when she needs them.

Stephen Bess lives in Gaithersburg, Maryland and teaches English at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland. Stephen's work has been featured on the web journals *Poéfrika*, *Words on Paper Literary Journal*, and *79th Street Seniors*. His first book of poetry, *Liquid Lunch: Blues-Inspired Poetry*, was published in 2010 and is available on Amazon.

Robert Chanin attended the High School of Music and Art in New York City and received a BA from Brooklyn College with a major in art. Following college, he pursued a different career path, receiving a JD from Yale University law school and an MA in psychology from Columbia University. After practicing law for 50-plus years he retired in 2010, and returned to art by taking classes at Montgomery College.

Caroline Christoff is a poet from Rockville, Maryland who has resided in DC since 2016. She has a small scattering of publications in local journals and

poetry symposiums. Christoff interned for *The Potomac Review* for a semester while attending Montgomery College studying English literature. In high school she was recruited by her English teacher to transcribe interviews with local bands for an online music magazine called *The Cutting Edge Culture*. She continued working for the magazine after high school traveling to Chicago to cover music festivals. Christoff is also a black and white film photographer whose work has been used in local Zines.

Clif Collins grew up in Byron, Georgia, and attended Clemson University, where he taught full-time from 1988-1990. After part-time teaching stints at the Maryland House of Corrections and the Maryland Correctional Institute, he was hired as a member of the English faculty at Montgomery College (Rockville, MD) in 1993. His writing was heavily influenced by the stories he heard as a child from his paternal grandmother and his uncles. Collins published his first book, *Lives of the Apostles*, in January of 2018. Clif Collins was a resident of Laurel, Maryland where he lived with his wife and son when he passed away in August of 2018 from complications of two autoimmune diseases, Diffuse Scleroderma and Myositis.

Jona Colson's first poetry collection, *Said Through Glass*, won the Jean Feldman Poetry Prize from the Washington Writers' Publishing House. His poems have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *The Southern Review*, *The Massachusetts Review* and elsewhere. His translations and interviews can be found in *Prairie Schooner*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and *The Writer's Chronicle*. He is an associate professor at Montgomery College.

Alejandra Franks is a Spanish translator and editor in the Washington, D.C. area. Mrs. Franks writes poetry in English and Spanish, most of it a translation of her own work from one language to the other.

Arlene Goldberg-Gist was an "older" MC student trying to refresh her Spanish-language skills when she wrote this poem as a Valentine's Day homage to her late husband, whom she met initially when they were both Peace Corps volunteers in Honduras in the 1970s. She has written poetry over the years when inspiration has sparked the words.

Joanna Howard is a local poet and college professor who coordinates A Splendid Wake, a volunteer-based group working with George Washington University to archive the history of poetry in the DC area. She has been published in a variety of literary magazines and was a 2016 finalist in Arlington's Moving Words Program.

Carolyn Jew has always been interested in the confluence of emotion and reason, intuition and lived experience, native wisdom and the scientific method. They are all ways to cope with risk and uncertainty. She is an MC student who comes from a long line of storytellers involving folklore, fables, puppets, and children who did not want to go to bed.

Writing is still relatively new to Theo Jonas. He has flirted with many of the visual and performing arts but had never given any real consideration to writing. His first semester in college, in the spring of 2018 was his first committed attempt at fictional writing. He was quite taken with it immediately, and it has been a hobby since. He typically likes to write science fiction/fantasy, or speculative fiction— any form really where he can pose a “what if” question and stretch his imagination.

Albert Kapikian writes “A Middle Sensibility: Writers of the Mid-Atlantic” and “Commonspire” for *Potomac Review*, where he is the nonfiction editor. He is cited for his poetry in the *Encyclopedia of Genocide*.

Roman Kostovski is a singer/songwriter, poet and literary translator. He translates poetry and prose from Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Macedonian, Russian, Serbian, and Slovak into English. His translations have appeared in numerous journals, including *Absinthe-New European Writings* and *Watchword Press*. His translation of Arnost Lustig’s *Porgess* was published by Northwestern University Press in 2006, and his translation of Viktor Dyk’s Czech classic *The Ratcatcher* was published by Plamen Press in 2014. He founded Plamen Press in 2013, a print-on-demand publishing house for the promotion of literature from Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe throughout the English-speaking world. He works and resides in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Kateema Lee is a Washington, D.C. native and the author of two chapbooks: *Almost Invisible* and *Musings of a Netflix Binge Viewer*. Her work has been published online and in print journals such as *African American Review*, *Baltimore Review*, and *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*.

Alexis Levitin translates mostly poetry from Brazil, Portugal, and Ecuador. Translations from Brazil include Clarice Lispector’s *Soulstorm*, Astrid Cabral’s *Cage*, and three books by Salgado Maranhão: *Blood of the Sun*, *Tiger Fur*, and *Palavora*, published by Diálogos Books. His translation of “Tight Rope,” published in this volume, was first released in the *Palavora* collection. Translations from Portugal include *Guernica* by Carlos de Oliveira, *News from the Blockade* by Egito Goncalves, *Exemplary Tales* by Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, elev-

Ankese Birhan  
Edom Weldegeorgis



en volumes of poetry by Eugenio de Andrade, and *Cattle of the Lord* by Rosa Alice Branco.

Amanda Livingston is a former Montgomery College student now attending Stevenson University. She has presented papers at conferences and won an essay award, but this is her first published work of fiction. Amanda enjoys reading, writing, traveling (especially to Iceland), and spending time with her two-year-old son, Corey.

Salgado Maranhão has published fourteen volumes of poetry and has written lyrics to hundreds of popular Brazilian songs. He has won all the major poetry awards available in Brazil, including the prestigious Jabuti Prize (twice). He has toured all over the USA with his translator Alexis Levitin, reading at almost one hundred institutions. This April they will be reading at various venues, including the New Orleans Poetry Festival, Tulane, LSU, Louisiana State at Monroe, and Univ. of Texas at Dallas. His poem "Tight Rope," reprinted in this volume, was first released in the collection *Palavora*, published by Diálogos Books

Julia Martinez-Rivas has just finished her two years at Montgomery College and will be attending Maryland Institute College of Art in the fall, where she plans to earn her degree in Graphic Design.

Iris McTaggart loves to draw and listen to music while she works. She has been photographing the world in black and white for the last six years. Her untitled photograph is on the cover of this volume.

Fritz Mirand was a student of the Art School at Montgomery College. However, properly speaking, he did not learn how to draw and paint at the school. He rather learned techniques to complete and improve his knowledge. Since his childhood, he has had a great passion for drawing and painting.

Stanley Niamatali, born in the Republic of Guyana, is professor of English at Montgomery College, Rockville, MD. *Oberon*, *Full Circle*, *The Caribbean Writer* and *Anthology of Appalachian Writers* have published his poetry. His book *The Hinterlands* won the 2015 Guyana Prize for Best First Book of Poetry and is available with his second book *Mira and Other Poems of Guyana* from Book Logix and Amazon.

Noni is a poet and Montgomery College student.

Ziti Parrilla is currently majoring in Fine Arts with a concentration in Graphic

Design at Montgomery College. You can find her digital work at [zitigallery.wordpress.com](http://zitigallery.wordpress.com).

Phounam Pin's piece is inspired by Mr. Kem Ley (1970-2016), a Cambodian activist, physician, and political commentator. Ley was known for his political commentary, including trenchant criticisms of the current government led by the Cambodian People's Party.

Audrey Quesnel was born in Paris, France, and she moved to the United States with her family in 2004. After obtaining a Bachelor's in International Law and studying in Tokyo for one year, she applied to the Montgomery College School of Art and Design. She is currently double majoring in Graphic Design and Studio Arts, and she hopes to graduate in Summer 2018.

Melissa Rojas is the third child of Colombian immigrant parents. Born in Miami and raised during one of its transformations in the 90s, she is heavily influenced by strong design and concepts of assimilation and preservation.

Anna Sohn is a second year Communications major. In her spare time, she can be found running, knitting, or watching esports.

Callie Sullivan is a General Studies major from Silver Spring. Callie has been writing since age 4, when he wrote the word "cat" on a piece of construction paper. His story "The Cadillac" is much longer than the word "cat," and although it will be Callie's first published work, he doesn't think his parents should post this one on the fridge. @thatguycallie on Twitter and Instagram.

Jowaine Thompson's art work, "Walking down Wall Street," was inspired by a futurist artist named Fortunato Depero. It represents three men walking together towards a building. It also represents the capital and the stock market.

Alexis Vega will be working on her final year at Montgomery College this Fall 2018 as a degree-seeking student. She plans to transfer to a 4-year university after graduating from Montgomery College.

Shirley N. Washington, Ed.D., a native of Harrisonburg, Virginia, is a photographer and painter residing in Silver Spring, Maryland. She received her AAS degree in Photography and AFA degree in Studio Art from Montgomery College in 2015 and 2018, respectively.

Edom Weldegeorgis is originally from Ethiopia and currently a student at Montgomery College majoring in nursing. This drawing is one of his favorite

# Wipe Your Tears and Carry on Your Journey

Phounam Pin



and best drawings from his Introduction to Drawing class.

Ayathma Wickramasinghe is a sophomore at Montgomery College and an aspiring film photographer. She shoots with her trusty Nikon FM10. She hopes to one day become a professional film photographer and make a serious career out of it. However, taking photos with film is something she enjoys doing for free. “Caged” was taken when she was beginning to find her style in film photography and she has grown as a photographer. Check out her other work at instagram: @atwfoto.

Alissa Williams is a student artist who works in several mediums including film photography and illustration. Her love for textured works in black and white shines here as she incorporates pen, loose ink, and ink wash to create dynamic make marks to show off the personality of her subjects.

Marie-Andréa Djelhi Yahot has always had a passion for poetry/short stories and spent most of her childhood reading. A daughter of an African writer, she is very passionate about the arts.

Yujie (Denny) Xu hails from the desert of Inner Mongolia, China. He moved to Washington DC in 2013, is now studying at Montgomery College to become a nurse, and discovered ceramics for the first time in his life in the US in the Spring Semester of 2018.





