

# pathos

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Dear Reader,

This is Pathos' first issue of the new year; a time where we are all getting accustomed to our new schedules, responsibilities, and social environments. We are all living in a historical period where every day seems to bring forth exciting, stressful, and prophetic headlines. It can make it feel like the walls are crumbling around us. Much if not all of the work that you will see in this issue will be created by strangers—people that we've never spoken to or seen before. But it is in these pages where we can relate with one another despite this fact, and find common ground with the emotions and stories that we've only ever experienced in our own worlds. It is the arts that define humanity and bring us closer together. It is the arts that have the power to incite vital empathy and relatability, which is what pathos is all about.

I want to say thank you to the rest of the Pathos team; Charlie Young, Jenelle De Leon, and Haley Hsu. All four of us are new to this process, and though that can be daunting, I am so glad that we are all working together to support each other and the arts at PSU as we navigate this incredible opportunity. I look forward to learning more from you three, and growing together not only as creatives, but as like-minded individuals. I also want to thank my advisor Reaz Mahmood for guidance and advice throughout this process, especially in the beginning, when I had no idea what to expect. I am eternally grateful for anyone else at SALP and the SFC who has helped me get used to this experience and who've answered all my endless questions.

And last—but (obviously) not least—I want to thank the essential artists and writers at PSU who have submitted their work to us. The community here would not be the same without you. Please keep creating. Please keep submitting. There will never not be a time where your work is important.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adriana Stanzione', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adriana Stanzione  
Executive Editor

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Some Flecks of My  
Childhood Distilled  
*Ages five-twelve*  
*(incomprehensive)*

WRITTEN BY  
CAT TERRELL

WATCHING REVENGE OF THE BRIDESMAIDS with my friend group in elementary school, maybe middle. Staying up late at Jordynn's house. Creating whatever we created back then. Odd, odder, & oddest. Bringing things to school. Going in the back corner of the school grounds during recess. Fashion shows. Who's dumber. This is our house, we have a broom to sweep dirt off the dirt. Chloe brought something nice of her mom's so we could have a good time playing our fashion game. I was a secretary of some sort, someone was a photographer, someone else a model. We were all models. We were all spies. Going back, the curbs were safe; grass was lava; sidewalks were cliffs; wood chips were dangerous, whatever they were.

I used to feel bad at sleepovers. I thought insecure was the opposite of secure and told my mom I felt that way. In danger. Absolutely terrified. I still remember the feeling. Its pervasiveness, its stickiness, the way it wouldn't go away, but would attach itself to whatever I felt. At birthday parties, sleepovers with my cousin, Emily Richard (pronounced *ri-chard*, it's French), her basement, her brother's mincraft. The way I knew I felt okay but if I stayed any longer I would not be okay. Texting my dad to pick me up on my old flip phone, worried he wouldn't see the text on time. His confusion about the way I felt. His confusion mixed with hers.

The first time I was on a playdate. Realizing my dad was no longer there. The orange of the room I was in. The light coming in through the window. The feeling of being somewhere new, with no one I knew all that well. The magic of it. A sudden, terrifying dread driving to Loveland. First, my uncle snaps at me, and in that moment I decide not to like him anymore. Then, a long drive in the dark, listening to only Michael Jackson. Some quiet, normal tears happen in complete secrecy. New Year's Eve. Everyone gets to invite one friend. I don't have anyone to invite. We watch *The Arrow*. An episode where a man kills women and girls by turning them into dolls. Being alone and weeping on the staircase. Holding myself together. *We Are Young* by fun, in the basement. Jumping on stacked pillows into blanketed lovesacs. Sliding, screaming, dancing. Choreographing, leaping, stacking. The labor of restacking pillows, the immediacy of their collapse.

A carpeted kitchen. A mildew-smelling hallway. Pooping together, making faces as we pooped. Disney princesses, Taylor Swift. Playing anything. Just playing. Spies, kidnapped, superpowers. Swimming-mermaids. Houses out of bushes, trees, forts. House, store, school. Put actual school supplies in your backpacks. Pretend to wash dishes. Pay fake money for stuff I found in my room. I'll keep track of what you buy, take it back to my room after. Leave me notes in this mailbox. When we play this game, my name will be Stephanie. No, Theresa. No, Rebecca. No, Star. No, Stella. No, Trix. No, Fawn. No, Ariella. No, Ariel.

No, no, no. We can't play. I want that name. No, no, no. We can have 3 superpowers each. I have nature, shapeshifting, and flying. Nature is a big one since I can do a lot of things with it. Shapeshifting and flying are small ones. Flying is really small. Shapeshifting is awesome. I turn into a bed, the wall, a piece of paper. You had lightning maybe. What else did you have? I don't even remember. Maybe you wanted to be called Rebel. Maybe Roxy. You weren't bossy, or we both were. We followed orders from John. His face could pop up on any surface. We didn't talk about what he looked like until we did, and he looked the same for both of us. The back seats of cars. Long drives with made up or parodied songs. Love is an ugly face. The football game, the turkey leg. The heaviness of the crowd, the vastness of the place and smallness of us. The iMovie trailers. Having to clean the toilets as a horror movie trailer. Begging you to make them when you no longer wanted to. The horoscopes, my rebuttals, your removal of them. My attempted apology, your rejection of it.

We try one more time to play and both know it's the last time. We are constrained by logic and try too hard to build a world that makes sense with the world we now live in. We never start the game, and we never again try to play.

Anything else? Everything else. It's all there, all my worlds with their worlds in it. What do I do with them? What does it mean to process? What does it do to look at them, let them stew, neglect them, share them?

I'm not wise enough to know these things.

**FOR THEM**

*Sarah Phillips*

I would leave the bar  
at nine pm  
step into rivers  
to reach the purple rock  
move

house after house  
after the movie

I would stand  
in the heatwave  
parking lot until  
the cows came home

I would  
bite my tongue  
and brake slow  
for them

I would answer the phone  
before a ring  
the door  
before a knock



WHAT I LOVE ABOUT YOU

*Ella Cortese*

already gone  
a socket in the cement

factory building  
lady bug bag  
I should've  
I should've  
I should've

are you the type to regret  
what you have  
or what you haven't?

there is a place I built  
a long time ago

sitting empty  
waiting

to be lived in

I don't think it's you anymore  
that is missing

I will drill out  
the tiny bones

you tell me there is no one there  
banging on the window

but you knew her name  
before I did

what it would be like to not want you

is hanging on the wooden shreds

carved out by empty cusps  
once claws  
littering the carpet

still dragging on my feet

Dear

silence

I began this letter with  
wouldn't for the world  
want

why

mer

snow.

10

what weather we share should  
shoulders bare

Alaska  
At  
last

le

Sure, it's been too  
single or double spaced

e

vacuous

that trip you promised

ord

Yours

P.S.

**I FOUND THE MOON WAITING FOR ME**

*Alex Felt*

Poisoned and passed,  
I took my woman and flushed her down the toilet.  
I turned my eye from the moon  
and my voice gave way to deeper sound  
and all the while my woman lived  
first, in the sewage,  
and found herself in a slow process of cleansing.

Pulled from a murky river,  
she saw the sky from clouds  
and danced back down into  
Bull Run River, clear and sparkly in the sun.  
Found herself slowed by  
canopy in the green, lush forest,  
she sat in Reservoir One, then Two.  
She let the hard bits fall to the bottom,  
and chlorine killed off the last of her poison.

She let gravity move her through the large pipes under  
Everett Street and then SW 6th Avenue,  
below gas and cable.  
She flowed thinner and slower  
into my home,  
and out of my new kitchen tap.  
She filled my favorite glass,  
became decorated with green and red.

I drank her  
whole and slowly,  
and as we became me again,  
I turned my head and found the moon  
waiting for me



← TUMULT

*Lizzie Kodpuak*  
Ink Illustration

**INTERSTELLAR CALLS**

*Elysa Zahniser*

they say that having religion  
is to worship mystery  
that faith is merely a word we use  
to see beauty, and call it  
God

as a child I pretended to believe  
that beyond the pre-sermon pastries  
past the pews, and at the altar  
lives a loving father  
though after church I was left  
with mere empty space

now I hear these interstellar calls  
pressing me to hope for more  
to catch beauty  
twisting within her perfectly mathematical spirals  
ever expanding  
exceeding chaos  
breathing existence outward  
after each holy intake

looking beyond dying stars  
and birthing nebulas  
moons of ice and fire  
past dust clouds and comets  
I finally catch a glimpse of God

## SPRING-SCENTED SCRATCH-N-SNIFF

*Lukas Quinn*

The roses, thick with liquid sinew,  
Each bud corded and taut, tracing ten fingers, interlaced—  
We bud, we burgeon.  
We blossom,  
Then bloom.  
We break apart like atoms,  
Brain cells waking in the womb.  
The greatest revelations come not in births of Somethings New  
But in the deaths of singular us:  
In death, our love goes supernova—  
Indigo, vermillion, Plutonian blue.  
I can see: Cygnus swan-spirals, orchid-hued  
Gemini bleeding out in emerald anemone.  
I see astrological botany:  
Our symbol of ascension.  
...  
These are cosmic sighs  
That breathe life into every me  
And every you:  
Our separate incarnations—  
Which we tally in the stars—  
Are constricted to our telescope  
In the fleeting month of March,  
When the skies are still cold  
And our syzygy still true.

## IN ANOTHER LIFE, I AM A MISERABLE OLD LOG

*Cat Terrell*

I rot quietly among the ferns, moss  
desperate in my crevices,       fungi laughing out of my seams in  
silent midnight trumpets,       ruffles of royal beige,  
tiptoeing yellow troops. My bark  
begins a disintegrating journey, dropping  
in sad pieces to wet loam; weedy and needy brush       hoping  
to embrace me for my nitrogen,       stores of delicacies  
they could only dream of.

When I stood,       I stretched with what gave me sweet  
hosted gliding and feathered things       laughed with a windy sound;  
the dimming cloud of any day.

Even the smallest outreach of mine       searching in the dirt, told  
all the tales of my dwelling.

Now, small knots of fur and       breath find  
solace all across me,       and the ferns  
that once encircled me act as       solemn patches  
over the anvil I am, their roots       exclaiming  
in what I once drank from. Oh       now,  
I'm teeming  
with more bodies       in my death

than I ever did  
while more rooted.

I suppose it's not so miserable to nurse the way I am.





← **MOTH LICH**

*Lizzie Kodpuak*  
Ink Illustration

**VICIOUS—A HAIKU**

*Elysa Zahniser*

Worms burrow deeper  
Embarrassed by their bodies  
Birds strike like Venus

17

# High Rise

WRITTEN BY  
MATTHEW WHITE

8: HE WAS A FLASH OF CONTRAST in the bright midday sky. He twirled his ankles to and fro, spinning like a top petering out its last rotation, his broad back arched like a trained dancer. The wind kissed his cheeks, rippling muscles of the air tearing at the sole button keeping his jacket clasped tight around his chest. And as quick as he appeared, he was gone.

7: Sarah wanted to jump across the podium, to sprint out of the church and never look back. She wanted to crawl into a hole somewhere where no one could find her. However, she knew she would regret leaving, so there she stood, in front of Thomas' family. "I met Thomas by accident, actually. It's funny in a way, meeting someone you care more about than yourself simply through coincidence. But that's how we met. I was waiting for the bus when a small hat blew through the air. It looked fake, like one of those special effects or whatever they're called on the big screen, just floating through the wind. It settled at my feet, and I picked it up. I looked toward where it came from and I saw the most ridiculous-looking man in my life. He had his suspenders on backwards, his suit pants had the legs cuffed unevenly, with one caught under his ankle and the other halfway to his knee. His shirt was untucked around his waist, the collar smudged with iron burns. To top it all off, he didn't have a hat; only a bare head of half-matted auburn hair. I remember that look on his face, of just pure unadulterated confusion. He was like a chicken with its head cut off. I recall snickering to myself, and then I called out to him, and we made eye contact." She stopped, throat spasming as she stifled a sob. "I knew then that I loved him."

6: Henry was a stickler for time-wasters, he hated people who took advantage of the very seconds he had on this earth. And right then, Thomas Quill was one of those time-wasters. Henry stood there, thumping the tip of his shoe into the carpeted concrete floor. His watch read 12:32 PM, East Coast time. All around him the office was chaos, papers being thrown into the air, workers packing up their things, calling family. His watch read 12:33 PM. "Where the hell is Thomas?" Henry said to himself. He snagged a coworker by the collar, pulling him in close. "Find Thomas for me, will ya? He's the only competent one of you sons of bitches that actually makes us any money. If anyone can sort this shit out, it's him." With this order, Henry threw

the coworker away and watched him scurry around the office, checking every desk for a sign of a motivated, intelligent, committed worker, only to return empty handed. At this, Henry picked up a nearby plant pot and threw it at the wall. He overturned his desk. He slammed his work on the floor. He screamed until his throat hurt. He breathed heavily, looking around and seeing that the chaos had stopped and everyone was staring at him. He was about to say something when he heard a shriek from outside, followed by the quick flash of shadow through the room.

5: Thomas was falling, that much was sure. Why he was still falling was a piece of logic that eluded him. Thomas loved logic. He liked his wife and kid, but he loved his numbers and charts. He found himself lucky for finding a job where numbers welcomed him, applauding his logic. The green mountains on his charts were always rising, always shifting. Rarely, a red line or valley would pose an issue for Thomas, but those were soon overcome, and another great green mountain came after. It was only logical that a mountain followed a valley. So Thomas forged ahead, climbing the mountain in order to find a proper peak to build his castle upon, a king of the numbers atop a peak of green.

4: It's cold out, thought Gregory. This is what I get for not changing my oil when the ol' ball and chain asks me to. He hurried through the hustle and bustle, hands buried in his pockets. They could've at least agreed to meet up at a closer restaurant, he thought. He finally got to the diner, wiping the sweat from his brow, when he spotted his pals Sally and Hugh across the street, standing in front of an old office building. Gregory waved at them when Sally looked up, she gave out a shriek. They all instinctively met with the object of Sally's focus, only to find something coming in close to them. It was a bird, it was a plane, it was—

3: The wind was with him from his birth, kissing his tear-stricken cheeks as he was pushed out of his dying mother and into the arms of his cruel father. From a young age, the boy was soft, puny. He stuck out like a sore thumb, gangly and narrow. He was chipped down to a point, an arrow of pain and solitude. He bent in the wind, who only saw to bring him away from the slums and towards a brighter future. It was the wind that knocked the paper in his bony hands, and it was the wind who led each new paper he threw to every

front door he passed as he huffed and peddled that rusty piece of iron he called a bike. It was the wind that lifted his laurel cap into the sky the highest, and it was the wind that knocked his hat into the lap of a young woman, more beautiful than any he had ever seen. The wind was the one who loved him the most, more than any wife or newborn son ever could. The wind was his guide, his protector. It strained then, that day, to keep gravity from getting her whorish hands on him, which he welcomed with open arms, surrendering to her devilish advances.

2: Thomas saw the universe slow to a crawl. The air flowed around him, pushing him back with all of its might. He contorted in it, twirling in the air as his tears drifted into the sky, stars visible at noon. Something in his back sputtered and spurred and soon he felt sprout wings of brilliant celadon. The wind filling the crinkling feathers of these wings, he was righted in the air, and began to soar up, up, and away! He flew up and over the measly office building, over the city and state, over the country that defied his logic. His emerald-coated wings fluttered in the breeze as Thomas began to leave the atmosphere, the Earth beneath him curving into a sphere. The wings on his back started to evaporate and evolve into two slender arms, joined together by a light frame behind him. Thomas turned around, and the Wind was there, more beautiful than anyone he had ever known. He knew who they were, what they had done. Without a word, Thomas and the Wind joined hands and flew higher and higher, away from gravity, away from his family, away from the valleys and pain and suffering, becoming a streak of brilliant green, rising as a shimmering, mountain against the night sky. Long live the King.

1: Thomas Quill was a day trader living in the nearby urban center. Every day he would kiss his wife good-bye, ruffle the hair of his son, and briskly walk to work, where he would trade stocks and commodities on the floor of the stock market. Thomas was good at his job, and for many, many years, 11 to be exact, Thomas Quill would trade for around 2.73 hours each day, making approximately 13% profit each year. On one Tuesday in 1929, due to a collective overtrading on margin, the Stock Market crashed below anything Thomas Quill had ever seen. He spent 124 minutes attempting to reconcile his losses before he succumbed to the truth: there was nothing left. Thomas Quill

took 29 steps from his tidy little desk in his office to the nearby stairwell, an area he didn't frequent due to the 3 smokers who took breaks there. He climbed up 428 steps to the rooftop, where he was at around 180 meters in elevation, or 590 feet. From there, Thomas Quill wrote a quick apology on a napkin from the diner across Bedford St, where he attended three times a week for lunch and once for dinner when he would stay late on Thursdays. Thomas Quill then climbed to the top of the ledge lining the rooftop, his knees trembling. He took one step. He then fell 8 seconds where he died instantly, his skull cracking open like a watermelon, or a grapefruit.

## THE PLUMBER

*Hawthorne*

### I

Maybe all these years spent with my mouth  
on the drain pipe  
toilet bowl Pink Eye  
menthol toothstains.  
Dirty.  
with patchy hair  
under my moth bald cap  
i'm molding  
just meat on the bones-  
rotten.  
just a maggot in a fishbowl  
white & writhing

### II

I live under the sink  
dripping in pipe dreams  
poured down the drain  
washed out to sea  
Cursed to spend eternity crouched  
next to gray water  
mop bucket Bleach  
& various white powder detergents.

I am the Drain Weasel.  
who snakes out clogs  
long hairy & wild  
hiding deep within the recesses

when you need me:  
One Time Use - Disposable .

21

## FREE WILL MEANS I CAN DESTROY

*Kerim Bueno*

Church bells signal a

New 12pm. So I put on my shoes

And approach the Mojave Desert. Joshua trees

Point

Toward the house nestled between creosote bushes. I gather  
Juniper wood

To feed the fire I keep alive. I like

To overstuff the mantle and prepare

A Mormon tea from Ephedra. I sit at the teak table,

Place my hand on

My urn, and

Allow the mirrored flames to scream in my irises.

\*

I once watched an episode of

My Strange Addiction. The featured woman: Addicted to eating

Her husband's ashes, a newfound compulsion through

Death.

It began when she opened the black box,

Remains spilled and coated

Her finger. Ashes became an illusion

Of bread.

5x / day she executed this ritual.

22

Step 1: Lift his face from the

Urn.

Step 2: Dress index

With saliva.

Step 3: Dredge

With gray-colored flour.

Step 4: Consume

Step 5: Regret

Step 6: Weep

\*

My urn contains no

Ashes. Flesh remained flesh that

Walked away without charring. When

The tea is

Diminished, I attempt to read the house

Decorated

In flames through residue

But

I only see residue. So I stand and walk back

To Douglas-fir pine and

Chanterelle mushrooms where tools

Weigh down

Unrisen wooden planks.

## MY MOTHER'S DAUGHTER

*Elysa Zahniser*

a sip of sour boxed wine  
tastes like letting go  
in hopes of briefly cumming on dirty sheets  
too loud, too soon

I feel like my mom.

as I ponder the approaching relief, waiting

all

week

long

sometimes I can't fuck without it

I feel myself slipping

slurring

becoming

my mother's daughter

23

# The Sleeping Woman

WRITTEN BY  
CAT TERRELL



WE CANNOT BEGIN TO CATCH the density, the multifariousness of it all, the superimposed and mutually influencing layers of the stream of consciousness as it flows, constantly changing, through the mind. Even the highest powers of art—whether in film, or theater, or literary narrative—can only convey the faintest intimation of what human consciousness is really like.

—*Oliver Sacks, The River of Consciousness*

You read the little clipped article you see laying there at your friend's house. It sits on the counter at risk of getting buried with countless other art show flyers, grocery coupons, wedding invitations. The friend is a marvel—they always find specific yet impactful art installations of niche origins. And this one, oh this one.

The article clipping reads, "In one way, it really isn't a performance at all. The statements she comes up with are raw from the sleep she was just having—yes, she is actually sleeping—" Your eyes skip to the title, "The Sleeping Woman: Knock-Off Abramovic or Self-Obsessed Narcoleptic?" and skim further, to the meat of the argument—the criticism that teases you in the title. "In many other ways," skip, skip, "nameless to a public that idolizes her," skim, skim, skim, "what of the performance is raw, truly anymore? How much of her practice has been entirely altered by the necessity of acting it out, day after day, month after month? This exhibit cannot last..."

You stop reading. You scramble for a way to see the exhibit as soon as possible.

### THE MYOCLONIC JERK

*The myoclonic jerk is an involuntary spasm of the muscles, experienced as one falls asleep. With the brain's powerful communication skills, a dream sequence can appear to occur before the jerk happens—often, it is what people assume caused the jerk. However, the jerk is noticed by the brain stem before the dream sequence forms. This elaborate restructuring of time," noted by praised neuroscientist Oliver Sacks—*

The first two rooms, you discover, are not about the titular woman at all. You think perhaps it is some sort of orientation for a given visitor who may not think often about the unconscious mind or dreaming. Not you.

You are a seasoned visitor: you have kept dream journals, jerked awake from afternoon naps, lucidly played with leering visuals. You read most of the placards, at least halfway, but your eyes dart from

*It is the lightest stage of sleep, wherein dreams occur. REM stands for Rapid Eye Movement because of how the eyes dart quickly behind the eyelids—*

to

### HYPNAGOGIC IMAGERY

—entryway into sleep. The loose structure of hypnagogic imagery and the ability for the viewer to still have some level of control over the images themselves is what distinguishes—

Then, frustrated with your lack of focus, back to

*—behind the eyelids. REM sleep is when dreams happen, though dreams can feel hours or sometimes days long, most dreams happen within the 1 to 10 minutes of REM sleep.*

and ultimately, you decide not to finish reading the little gray placard about hypnagogia.

Instead, you quietly move to the second room and find yourself staring at a yellow painting the size of you. This painting, you read, was not done by The Sleeping Woman, but by

*—another artist eager to join the attempted physical interpretations of solely spiritual experiences. A painter with the compulsion to create multi-layered and intricately-detailed enamel dreamworks, Essenhigh kindly donated this p—*

A certain tranquility overwhelms you as you gaze at *Yellow Fall*, an enamel-rendered meadow. A sly fox tail and hand-like branches peek out from tall, individually brushed yellow, orange, and ochre grass. Further into the piece, the brown trunks of trees, three of them before a forest, spin idly up, each one on its own winding path. The closest one contains a black smear with the character of a timid bird. In the background, a green hue appears as an evening sky. A little man traverses through the very back of the painting; a

hunter perhaps, though he is hardly seen.

Other patrons clump and bump near you, just as enamored as you are with the golden, glossy piece. You realize that the feeling you have when looking at the painting is familiar, from a dream you had years ago.

“The first room will set up the importance of dreaming; it’ll include fun facts about the brain and the rapidity of human thought, how little we really understand about our own brains, how fascinating it all is—the many marvelous associations that you can make when you really delve into the unconscious mind.

“The second room now widens the viewers to how we—as humans—have been interpreting dreams, knowing that we’ve been trying to weave the physical and spiritual realms together since we’ve had both realms—which is arguably forever—and explores contemporary interpretations of dream places. These contemporary interpretations come in the verbal, visual, poetic forms.

26 “The third room is going to communicate to the viewer why it’s so important that they don’t wake me up. Haha...yeah, just tells them...be quiet: this is what I have put myself through to get here and that’s why—that’s what’s at stake, really.

“The fifth room is gonna be open for discussion. It’s an opportunity for people to tell me, personally (well, I mean, through paper), their most vivid dreams, their most recurring ones, their scariest, sexiest, most lucid or most recent dreams. These will be scanned and projected onto the walls, so that viewers can explore the dream realms of the general populace. Or, at least, you know, the very particular people who come to exhibits like these.

“Meanwhile, I’ll be asleep in room four.”

The dream was powerful—you had never felt so warm while unconscious. So content, yet, lost. There was a meadow, just like the painting, but the ochre came from the sky, and the grasses had purple, yellow, and orange wildflowers fighting for you to look at them. Recalling this dream had always made peace ripple through your body, like sedation. You furrow your brows at the persistence of this one dream, and glue

your eyes to the many placards available to read, one of them titled *THE VIEWER’S LIMITATIONS*. It reads:

*The issue, of course, with writings such as these, is that it takes 30 or 40 seconds to read through the recreations, when it only took a fleeting second, or less, to actually perceive these images. There is depth and interpretation and color and temperature and thoughts and music and tastes. The sensations lapse over and are lost on themselves because of the narrow ability of the scrambling viewer.*

There were some people, too, in your dream—far away, where you could hardly spot them. Even now, you could hear their whispers like they spoke on your neck with their hearts in their mouths. And when they spoke you felt motionless—the wildflowers had grasped you. The placard corresponds to a poem of anonymous origin:

*There is a large orange  
hitting the bottom of my ribcage.  
It is my heart. I am nauseous.  
The peel is dense the juice inside the orange  
would not be rotten, the peel is firm.  
It is my heart, it is in my stomach.*

*My heart is only a ticking clock. The top of the  
hour is hours away.*

Reading the first part of the poem, and suddenly feeling cold air move between bodies, makes little bumps hatch on your skin from head to toe. You know people can’t see your goosebumps, but you feel yourself rubbing your arms shyly anyways.

*My right hand is covered in  
guts of raspberries. I’m reaching  
where I shouldn’t reach. I’m reaching  
where raspberries are full  
in a bin. The guts touch my wrist.  
They aren’t cold or warm; they have been sitting  
out. They would taste good, they would sell well.  
If not for the bits of them now crushed  
between long fingers, pigment making red  
my one ring clad hand.  
The rest of the bin stays fine.  
I won’t be eating these; I feel blood  
on my hands.*

You reread the lines about the heart pounding like an orange, and long for that falling asleep sensation. Perhaps, you think to yourself, this poem is supposed to feel like falling asleep. The first bit feels like even breathing, the loss of time. You realize how nice it would be if your eclectic friend was with you. Do you feel that way, when you fall asleep? Like sound becomes centralized but radio-warped, and your hands go numb? Other murmuring viewers have the pleasure of marveling together at the discoveries.

You read a placard about Salvador Dali, a practice of his you were familiar with and fascinated by even before you came to the exhibit. You read it and watch the other museum goers, wanting to look at it and say, “I knew that! I love this fact!” Instead, you paraphrase the placard in your head, still turning to look at others and pretending to address them with authority:

*In order to conjure images of the surreal landscapes he intended to create, Dali would fall asleep in a soft chair while holding a small object. The inevitable descent and crash of this object would jar him awake the very second he was slipping into the dream—*

You interrupt yourself to look at what the placard referred to the “dream place” as: “sleep membrane” were the specific words.

*—the very second he was slipping through the sleep membrane, in the threshold between physical and spiritual realms. He would then have further access into his own psyche, and was able to harness images of the interior like none else.*

You accidentally make eye contact with whispering guards, who don’t seem to notice your imaginary address to the mulling-about population. You nod at them, and decide you’ve read enough placards where they can see you.

To the third room, then.

There is a film playing, it’s one of those museum rooms that is darker than the others and has benches that people shift in and out of as the film loops. On the screen, there she is, sleeping. Shots of her talking

passionately, the drone of a woman’s voice on top: “Her first four art shows were within her niche and almost effortlessly performed because of the sheer focus she possessed, along with the simple knowledge of the show’s necessity to get out. The practice, at that point, was refined and trained: ready for presentation.

“She was still aware of what difficulty taking this work into the world meant. It took energy to weave the interior with the exterior; to cross the sleep membrane quickly, and to dump what she experienced in comprehensible terms. For the first year of her practice, long before she planned to debut the show at all, she was haunted by her own immersion in this ever-shifting world. Teetering between realms with very little in common almost took too much of a toll on her.” A close up frame of The Sleeping Woman’s face portrays a singular tear falling down her cheek. “She had stubbornly decided she needed to explore the depths of her psyche, no matter the cost. And what was the cost?” The film now switches to a stylistic, stop-motion animation, still of The Sleeping Woman, but as a little clay figure in felt clothes. “Confusion, bitterness, but a willingness to accept the unreal, the surreal.”

27

The clay girl speaks after she yawns and stretches in a twin-sized bed, “I can promise you that, as long as my sleep goes undisturbed, what I say after I wake will be what I am thinking. This exhibit forces me to accept the parts of myself that come out without my intending them to, which I hope you can, too. This piece is about radical self-acceptance, embracing of the unknown, and utter vulnerability.” The clay girl slowly morphs back into The Sleeping Woman, now in a room full of people, laughing.

“She moved through these fears, grounded in reality by conversing with loving, accepting people—”

You are terrified of claymation. When the Sleeping Woman turned into the clay version of herself, you felt your skin crawl. But what was worse was the turning back, the filmmakers let the clay girl’s face take up the whole frame, and transitioned it slowly onto The Sleeping Woman’s own. The result was effective, you felt the sensation of waking from a dream, moving through different realities where your own substance is fundamentally altered. You come back to the room, shaking the surreality off.

“—the inevitable nostalgia brought out by shifting between worlds was almost too much to handle, and, for a time, sent her spiraling. Yet, by sheer force of will, retrieving love and wisdom from trusted sources, The Sleeping Woman has since learned to cope with the perpetual hints of sadness and suffering that are remnants left of her childhood. “

The museum guard opens the door to room four.

#### ***Rm 4 of 5, Exhibit 3 of 7: TSW, SMR 2028***

A crowd of less than 20 scuttles around a sunlit, completely white room. The room is square, the windows are high up so the sun illuminates the north wall, which throws the rest of the light onto placards, paintings, and shy faces peaking at the twin bed in the center. The bed contains the Sleeping Woman under a white duvet, and pillows to the left and right on the floor. There is a small wooden nightstand with a glass of water, two books, and a plant on it. The Sleeping Woman wakes, rises, and in moments all eyes are on her, save for some still pondering placards.

28 The room is still. Each patron holds their breath as she sits up, has a sip of water. The Sleeping Woman says, clear, crisp, no drag, “I chose to lay with her. I chose to picture laying with her.” A pause, some murmurs before she resumes, “A crumpled up bottle of orange juice. A man, an older version of Luca, enters the kitchen when he isn’t normally there. Before, he laid himself on my lap—an offering of sorts.”

Several patrons go to the final room. Other patrons make amused eye contact with each other. The Sleeping Woman rustles, shifts.

#### **THE SECOND ROUND**

*The Sleeping Woman often filters through dream nonsense before anything of philosophical value is stated. In order to hear the most ethereal sentiments, patrons are asked to linger between the first bout of speech to the second, more contemplative statements made after a brief period of reflection.*

The Sleeping Woman stares out the window, nods at some patrons, then squints, “A pencil in my ear,

obstructing my senses and turning the room dark.” She inhales deeply, cupping her cheeks in her hands. Mousy bedhead obscures her face. Seconds become minutes to each body in the square room.

“The wish to know oneself is arrogant.” The Sleeping Woman stares into her own hands, looks up with a misty gaze. “Yet, the wish to know anything else is futile.”

The Sleeping Woman gets out of bed, two guards unlock a well-disguised door in the wall and she gives a princess wave before out of sight to all patrons. Patrons’ faces are flooded with relief and gratitude, a few clap.

*Please use the space below to write down any thoughts you have about dreaming, or any dreams that have stuck with you through your life.*



## ← THE BATTLELINE

*Dereck Ann*

Digital Photograph

31

## SNAPSHOT MAY 22, 2024

*Laurel Reynolds*

Spring was winter once again as we walked the distance, umbrellas dripping on our packs. Hoodies weren't enough and we remember those on the stairs, now boarded up, and it was spring already then but, honestly, I don't remember if it rained that week. But here and there when I recall—once again the colors of the tents, their stitching, logos, edges, brands and bondage, brawn on the lawn and sprawl from Columbia to our own nearby same named river in Astoria—how it was they sprang up, nearly overnight. Like mushrooms, messy and smelly, contingent, sporelike and dangerous, needing names so desperately to be consumed safely, like mentioned in the John Cage class today on *Silence*.

They're gone now. No more *Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, no more tents or cameras or protest. Only the snapshot of us walking the distance today, heads down in the rain.

## LESSONS LEARNED

*Karla Powell*

“God is the only subject”  
says the aged Palestinian who’s lost everything on earth  
a sound bite meant for ears that hear

he speaks not of the god of Intifada  
nor the god of Israel’s red heifers  
and not a god still angered that we built our Tower of Babel

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instead, this frail old man of Palestine  
knows a light that doesn’t come from media crews  
he fully knows the subject that’s at hand

I’m grateful for his lesson, he has my ear  
I want to sit there at his feet, to learn  
how to utter wisdom when only misery abounds  
how to know all sons of Abraham  
pray to a selfsame God.



## **BREAKING: GAY DEATH TOLL RISES IN GAZA**

*Gabby Mijalski-Fahim*

Last week, Austin Pride banned Palestinian flags while more gays died in Gaza. The decision was an attempt to thwart violence, terrorism not applicable to drone salesmen at rainbow kiosks.

On Saturday, a hundred gays pitched cardboard against an Austin blue. A luster of sweat stretched across their bodies, warm and fertile with queer life. Beneath a gray sky, a hundred Palestinians were killed in a school turned shelter. Their bodies, still warm, were swaddled in white cocoons and snugly filed on the rubble to make space for more.

33

Statistically, at least six gays died in Gaza on Saturday. Six unkissed queer bodies, six unsought queer lives. In war, a pride flag coated in debris is just a sheet to carry orphaned limbs. A march is the last steps before an explosion and pride is an intimate photograph with a lover, buried in a sea of rubble.

Next week, more gays will die in Gaza.

## YOU SEE

*Sarah Phillips*

my grandpa kitty is my grandma horsey is my grandma kitty is my papi is marilyn is  
not here  
is always  
here  
where I feel as if I were eight still  
when they stole my sleepover bag from my friend's dad's car  
and visions of my baby blanket in dumpsters  
in tatters  
the not knowing  
the absence paving  
obsession's way  
    remember: black tie doesn't mean bereavement doesn't mean noose  
I can only watch  
as this life of mine moves  
who I was  
the last time he kissed  
me there and there  
has never been loneliness  
for me I  
34 have never been  
private  
how great  
    black isn't bereavement  
to have such an audience  
    tie isn't noose  
as I swallow  
as I scuff  
as I stand  
as I swear  
if he left me  
I would die,  
but he did once  
and still then  
he watched  
me cook sleep open mail fake moan perceive my mirrorself diarize him drive  
from eyes my own  
I breathe the dust of elders  
me and my elephant memory,  
am never alone, have never  
known privacy  
    even the ghosts watch  
you see  
even the ghosts

## IN THE DORMANCY OF MY LIFE

*Kara Johnson*

A doctor told me  
If I just slept enough  
The right way – deeply  
I would wake up healed

It makes sense then  
Why I left the God stuff over there  
Why I sang and wept  
And dreamed and called  
And wrote and hoped  
for sleep.

I get it now, what the doctor said –  
Nothings really wrong with me  
Rather I'm a little too *here*

Richard Siken suggested  
If you want to solve something  
get out of your own way  
So I floated the whole way home  
and combined sleeping pills with Nyquil.  
He said, "the blurriness of being alive"  
He said, "I surrender my desire to be healed"  
Then I did, really, just watch:  
Here comes the part where I lay it all down,  
Where I cancel my appointments  
and disappear correctly,  
Where I escape the inescapable  
claw towards survival.

In the dormancy of my life  
Sleep was kind enough to visit me  
After every class I took  
Every mug I washed  
Every poem I read. Here we go,  
I think I'm  
taking shape  
again –

# Exile: The Homeland is a Haunting

WRITTEN BY  
AUSTIN HAIDAR

I HAVE CONSUMED YOU IN so many ways. I have embraced you in all of your forms. Your desert heat, the sand whipping against my legs and clinging to my toes, as if begging me not to leave. Your unripened green and yellow dates, best enjoyed with Ami Yousef's chai karak. I remember grabbing handfuls of the fruit and as I passed them around I would hear Baba laughing at Ami Yousef's jealousy over having a child so passionate about tamar. Hajya would squeeze my cheeks while thanking God for me and asking for His blessings until her teeth fell out. Do you remember? I think it was those moments, in the room with the blue carpet, the scattered red cushions, and all my cousins, where I came to terms with my life and its abundance. It was a decadence one could only experience in the most privileged of childhoods. I would lie awake at night, gnawing on this truth but, like Hajya's teeth, it would never fit properly in my mouth.

Perhaps that was why I started giving. I gave and I gave and I spat it all out until nothing was left but yellow vomit in the mud. I suppose you know this already, because you were the first to go. How did that feel? To be the first thing given away? To be exorcized so forcefully that it struck you to your core? I tried to take you back, you know. I tried with such fervor that my flesh turned to dust and my bones turned to oil, and maybe that's why I'm so afraid of home. But you surround me everywhere I go and it's because of this that I know ghosts are real. I cannot

fault you, no. I had loved you so intensely—so intently—in my youth that you were left with no choice but to haunt me. I suppose, then, that to love and be loved so brutally is to be plagued by what is left behind, and what is left to come.

Do you remember that night? You know the one. The night we laid under the moon and watched Ami Rashad's hunting falcons soar into the sky, and I had promised you that I would protect you from all the djinn in the dunes. I had felt it there, you know? The declaration. The carcass that made its home in my gums and proceeded to rot there. It was then, I think, that language failed me for the first time. I have spent every night since in a state of collection. I have mastered every dialect of Arabic, I've reached fluency in English, Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and I still have nightmares about the sand cementing itself around my toes and my teeth sprawled out before me. What happens, then, when I plant my feet into that God forsaken land and—

No. No, I will not have any of that. Maybe I am meant to love you from a distance, but could you stay? Just a little while longer? You're the last thing I have left to reclaim, you know. I apologize for taking so long to get back here, for spitting you out as if you were some wretched, rotten thing. I can see it clearly now, where it all went wrong. I hope I'm not too late. I hope I can earn your possession forgiveness.

## FIHANKRA (ENCLOSED HOUSEHOLD)

*Richard Afriyie*

Y3 firi ha yi ara, / (We are from here)  
y3re kc y'ankra / (we bid you no farewells)  
nanso y3 nua ne moaa. / (but we are your brothers.)  
To the world before now let us retrace,  
We were here  
before the pikes gave way  
before sons were torn away  
and before brick and iron days.

When the stories never seemed to end,  
and the laughter seemed to burn brighter than the fire.  
The days when twisted and wooly heads sit round  
in an enclosed space,  
and the red and yellow mud huts intertwined.

When spears made fence and they held hands,  
when the days of Faraday were far away  
and the imperialist yet our shore to stain.

When all we had was bark cloth on our backs,  
but our pockets heaved with love for our brother.

*May We Not Forget,  
That The Land Was, Before Power,  
What We Were, Before Color,  
And The Neighbor, Our Brother.*

**MATE M'ASIE (WHAT I HEAR, I KEEP)**

*Richard Afriyie*

*"Dare to be wise,"*

a gardenia breeds not in all hands

not everything is said.

Wisdom is as mysterious as the rose-blue

and as rare as the middle-mist red.

Careful not to boast you're wise,

the walls of a fool's trap never touch.

A fool is like a hydrangea, boastful and proud,

and he hands Wisdom an orange-lily, instead

of a red-rose.

Mate Masie... (*What I hear, I keep*)

A belladonna is like the wise,

to Wisdom he gives a rose-red,

and so he blossoms in silence,

*Just like the morning dew.*



**I BELONG**

*Viviana Martinez*  
Digital Illustration





**BLEEDING WEB**

*Adrianna Moreno-Shaffer*  
Digital Illustration

## TOUCH WITHDRAWALS

*Kerim Bueno*

A girl at the food pantry, pulling and pulling from every shelf. Quickly, three baskets over-filled in front of a sign; Take what you need, leave what you don't. Plastic covered buns slipped in peaks. She refused aid from her friend. Instead, dialed and dialed a contact with no picture. I glanced down at her baskets and she glanced down too. I looked back at her iPhone and conjectures bloomed in my head as blank contact never answered.

42 A night out, surrealism was the theme. Illogical dreams were fashioned into outfits. A man dressed as a flower surrounded by fog and darkness used flashing lights to grow his petals. A merchant dressed as a sailor with two faces growing on her chest sold curiosities. I donned a wooden dog mask with a smile carved upwards and a jacket made by a bygone forever. Serpent-traced stitches contorted me in ways I didn't think possible. I stumbled and stumbled as I danced the night away with momentary cure-alls and elixirs.

The anonymous man that walked through my door. Immediately, I paused as his dark eyes tried to bite down on my body. The layer of tar from his skin wrapped me in repulsion and his tongue left a trail of slimy impulsion on my back. Politely, I told him, "I can't. Please, get out."

The homeless man always on the streetcar. Weighed down with wool despite the weather. His decisions lack rhyme. Sometimes unboards on Lovejoy, others on Davis. All eyes follow him as he chooses his spot. With nowhere to go, he always moves onward.

A gold chain with a cross swung in my face. Its' surface reflected the yellow mood light in the corner. Two strangers played a game of origami, both forming one another into each other's past. In the morning, his Le Labo rose perfume unfolded back into Versace. The scent stained my room for days.

ONE SENTENCE POEM SO TO SPEAK AS WE RECALL

*Laurel Reynolds*

Trickling down through  
gap in  
overhang  
which so very far above,  
obliged  
our necks to crane,  
great grounded birds, us, in this landscape,  
to see all unionized  
*so to speak*  
tied together,  
as we were on a knotted rope,

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the Fall's water splintering our descent  
*as we recall*  
interrupting our hike just where the rock  
underfoot

ran slippery as...  
for gotten word.

# **pathos**

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