



the
**NASSAU
LITERARY
REVIEW**



SPRING 2021
"Into the Clearing"

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Cover art "Genesis" by Emma Mohrmann

DEAR READERS

As our world begins to make its way back to a sort of normalcy after the catastrophe wreaked by the COVID-19 pandemic, we find ourselves moving "From the Crucible" and at last "Into the Clearing." Perhaps it is the sense of relief, of contemplation, and of new beginnings brought by this transition that brought us to recognize the same sort of movement recur in the pieces we received as we put together this issue.

A clearing offers respite—the opportunity to ruminate on events of the past and come to a better understanding of them and of ourselves. This reflective spirit comes forth in the symbolic, self-revealing imagery in Sandra Yang's "Bioluminescent" and "self-entanglement" as well as in pieces such as Batya Stein's "On Cleaning Out My Grandparents' Apartment," in which the narrator sorts through memories of past relationships along with the physical articles in their grandparents' apartment and reflects on what it means to be understood, thought to be understood, and reshaped in others' memories; in Jeremy Pulmano's "it is one thing to keep a garden," in which the love and generosity of a grandmother is remembered, in the wake of her loss, through the flowers she cared for; and in Grady Trexler's "Weltschmerz," a poem aching in the aftermath of loss and mourning—spoken through a plaintive young voice forced to confront the irrevocability of death.

Such a clearing, and such reflections, also brings to light violence and injustice, both personal and collective in scope, and commissions us to confront them. The pandemic, and the differing ways in which it has affected people of different socioeconomic statuses, has made the inequities in our society starkly visible; some of the roots and consequences of these inequalities—as well as the resilience of the people living through such oppression—are explored in Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*, reviewed by Meera Sastry. This moment of clarity and accountability can drive us to action, and, perhaps, to redemption, of the sort which the old man in Cassandra James' "The Road" finds after reaching a clearing of his own, with an unexpected glimpse into the consequences of his past actions.

Yet because and in spite of the responsibilities which confront us in this clearing, this moment has also allowed for great joy. From the visceral, tangible sweetness represented in Emma Mohrmann's "sugar on my tongue" to the frame-captured, unbridled happiness in Julia Walton's "Dog's First Snow," we are introduced and re-introduced to all the loveliness that has found us after the storm. Perhaps the most important one of these is that we now have the strength and ability to build a new future: the "Genesis" of the cover art of this issue, also created by Emma Mohrmann, as we reach through the haze.

Thank you for joining us in this clearing. We hope that this moment in our history, and the pieces contained in this issue, bring you the best of what a movement into the clearing can offer—rest, reflection, confrontation, and hope.

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bioluminescent



Sandra Yang

first lunar new year away from home, i wear a red sweater just to feel something

Sal Kang

& contemplate binge-buying packets of frozen dumplings. this colorless neighborhood stays quiet, & for the first time in forever, i believe the legend

—every silent town will be wolfed down by a monster at night. the year is starting like a white lie, the porcelain-pale color of a funeral, & the day sort of

feels like a birthday all your friends forgot about. the people back at home taught me that when you love someone, you need to be close to them

by baking the moon into a cake & eating it. by that logic, i don't love this city—i struggle to ascribe homeliness to its drivers & how they mean it when

they tell you to look both ways before crossing the road. meanwhile, on the other side of this country, the elders of chinatown learn how to report a hate

crime & wish each other good health with a little less breath. this colorless neighborhood only sees color in their wrinkled cheeks. every hand i know how to

hold is too far away. i get my hongbaos via bank transfer & watch half a dragon dance on youtube & mistake the creak of an upstairs bed for a distant

firecracker. at night i dream of beijing & in my dream there are no streetlights, tinting the moon's hue piss-blue. there are no shadows slicing my heart into halves.

On Cleaning Out My Grandparents' Apartment

The apartment looks like it's been ransacked by a band of thieves who forgot to take anything with them when they left, an ocean of yellowing newspapers and unopened cable bills threatening to obliterate the distinction between kitchen and bedroom. "Nixon Indicted!" reads the *Times* article perched atop what appears to be every lab report my grandfather ever graded. My childhood drawings are still scotch-taped to the walls, confident crayon lines depicting realities I can no longer quite inhabit. (Why is the fish wearing a crown?)

My mother clears the answering machine in short, anxious jabs, the same spam message repeatedly

puncturing the silence before it can be consigned to oblivion. Across from her, my father tries to make order from chaos. A pile of papers grows beside him, waiting to be ferried back to New Jersey where in all likelihood they will remain unread for another twenty years until my sister initiates a clean-out of the family room closet.

"It was a mistake to come here, we should hire someone to get rid of everything. Most of it's junk anyway, and it's not like you have the spare time to come back and sort through all of it," my mother says suddenly. From where I am waiting in the kitchen, I can predict my father's response more than hear it, something containing the

phrases "sentimental value" and "only child" and "the importance of preserving family memories."

Did my grandparents ever look up and realize they were being slowly buried by memories?

Part of me resents how this image of the apartment in shambles is subsuming the version of it stored in my head from childhood, when it was still a place where people lived and read picture books in armchairs and public radio played constantly in the background. Part of me wants to leave and never return. A louder part wants to open every book on the shelf and know exactly what my grandmother thought the first time that she read them.

The orange bandana that everyone signed after my freshman orientation trip tells me that I am "thoughtful", "relatable", and "surprisingly chill". I keep it in the folder where I store all of my mementos, which mostly consist of playbills and things that other people have said about me, writing me into being. Sitting on my bedroom floor rifling through memories, I wonder if, arranged a

certain way, the objects somehow sum to whatever it is that makes me myself. I wonder if I keep them because they are tangible fragments of the past, or because I have always been comforted by the idea that I am knowable, that my presence has left an impression substantial enough to be transcribed.

Nathan pulls me away from the crowd and into a stairwell. It's the first time I've seen him in person since we broke up over a year ago, and I have no idea what he could want to tell me. He explains, earnestly, that his teacher (who's never met me) has helped him see that he had dominated our relationship, projecting his likes and dislikes and expectations onto me. I think he tells me this by way of apology, but he's gone before I can articulate to either of us how deeply this rewriting shakes me. I remain on the staircase, staring at nothing, confused by the lack of power I have to align his version of me, circa junior year, with the one that I know so well.

Sure, he had been the one to ask me out, always the more

or, the subjectivity of memory |

forcefully opinionated of the two of us, but I had reciprocated, bantered endlessly and shared my insecurities and aspirations, convinced him to watch *Gilmore Girls* and *Parks and Recreation*, listened to him name things about his relationship with his parents that I don't think he'd ever told anyone else.

He was the one who knew that on my seventeenth birthday I would want a party filled with friends but he also knew exactly where I'd be when I disappeared from said party, mildly overwhelmed by people, because the knowledge that everyone would show up was all I'd really needed in the first place.

I want to call Nathan back in and ask him when, in his mind, had quiet turned into submissive, and go-with-the-flow into the idea that he had been molding me in his image. I trace a finger back along my memories but can't pinpoint the place where our stories diverge. Shaping myself from the assurance that others can see me feels abruptly inadequate, like looking down in the middle of building a house and realizing that instead of bricks, I am holding only the idea of what a house should be.

**"I TRACE A
FINGER BACK
ALONG MY
MEMORIES
BUT CAN'T
PINPOINT THE
PLACE WHERE
OUR STORIES
DIVERGE."**

The summer we worked in sleepaway camp and knew no one but each other, Sasha, Maya and I spent long Saturday afternoons rolling in the grass, taking turns reading from the book of short stories Maya had brought. I've forgotten all but one of them, a testament to the fact that it remains more unsettling than most pieces of media I have consumed that were explicitly marketed as disquieting.

The story I remember revolves around a guy newly arrived in heaven. After reuniting with his wife, he tries to arrange a visit with his beloved grandmother, long deceased. Her social calendar is bursting, and she brushes him off week after week. Wandering after a concert, the grandson accidentally discovers that his grandmother has cancelled that night's dinner to hook up backstage with Frank Sinatra. She explains, in a pitying yet matter-of-fact sort of way, that her grandson had, of course, been the most important part of her old age but he must understand that there had not been many other people left in her life at that point to love.

Most of the time, I am able to ignore the part of my brain where this story is lodged, whispering insidiously that maybe the love in my life that has seemed most unconditional has been given by people who had no one better to give it to. This is irrelevant, I answer—the love was nonetheless real and reciprocated, manifest in so many everyday gestures the way the best sorts of caring are.

Sometimes, though, I am tempted to hunt down the author and write

a letter, telling him in no uncertain terms that his story has no right to cast doubt onto my memories of the past. Anyway, I will tell him, I know your story is false because the happiness in my grandmother's voice when I called her every Friday before Shabbat was too deep to be at all situational.

I imagine that he would shrug and say something like—I don't know why you're getting so defensive about this, or—I'm a famous writer and I'm not sure why you think I care.

Or perhaps I'll catch him on a particularly sympathetic day, and he'll sit down and dash off a response—maybe, he'll tell me, your memories always were your own.



untitled

it is one thing to keep a garden

for Lola Tita

and another to water the three potted plants
on the shoe rack, stalk of baby bamboo
pricked by cactus and shaded by heartleaf,
all of it garden enough.

it is one thing to eat and another to feast,
my grandmother always our savior,
erasing the thin of our wrists with
pizza on paper plates and purple
ice cream in coffee mugs it is

one thing to write an elegy

and another to see through a screen
the thin blanket outlining her body

and another to feel the stick of gloss
from the photos at my thumbs

and another to let the tears run freely
into the black mask I am wearing it is

one thing to touch the bursting crown
of orchids and lilies by her side

and another to carry a garden back home

Jeremy Pulmano

When Breath Becomes Air

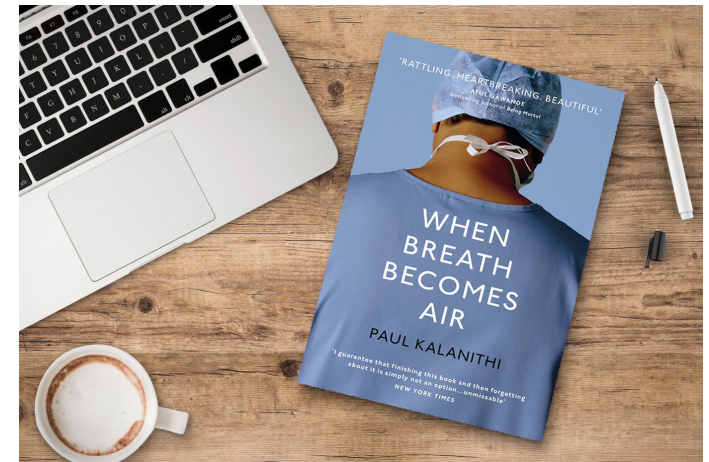
I initially picked *When Breath Becomes Air* up because it was a memoir written by a medical doctor who studied literature as an undergraduate student—what an interesting combination! Though an expert in the natural sciences, Dr. Kalanithi brought with him a natural ability to weave philosophical thoughts into his elegant and intentional prose. A young Indian-American writer, husband, and father finishing up his last year of neurosurgery residency, Dr. Kalanithi mirrored many of the values—resilience, faith, and courage—that I have been raised with and continue to project into my life. He pursued both English Literature and Medicine, completing graduate degrees in each respective field. Though he initially studied literature to investigate the larger questions surrounding human mortality and biological life—what it means to keep living in the face of death—he quickly realized that the best way to formulate answers for such questions was by practicing medicine.

Although many expect this memoir to dissect Dr. Kalanithi's decades-long journey of balancing a multitude of passions, he instead beautifully—and painfully—chronicles his last year of life after being diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. With this rather unexpected diagnosis, Dr. Kalanithi was suddenly forced to confront the very questions he had once investigated in literature. As cancer further invaded his life as a neurosurgeon, he chose to turn towards words and books for comfort. And, though science and biology once prominently informed his understanding of the world, Dr. Kalanithi realizes that this understanding will evolve as he is intimately confronted with death. He realizes that it is the humanities—writing, reading, and literature—which give him space to unpack his uncertainties and grapple with his identity as a doctor and patient. With this realization, he traces his ongoing battle with cancer and his understanding of human life, pushing readers to ask themselves “what they would do

when the future, no longer a ladder toward your goals in life, flattens out into a perpetual present?”

When Breath Becomes Air has challenged me to reflect on what it means to turn to literature to make sense of uncertainty—to seek meaning in words when the world you once knew is rendered meaningless. Readers are led through Dr. Kalanithi's many battles—whether they be physical or emotional. We see fear weaved

WHAT WE'RE LOVING:
WINTER BREAK 2020 EDITION



Courtesy of Dr. Paul Kalanithi

into his movements as he performs his last surgery in the operating room, afraid that he will never return. We recognize his bravery in choosing to have a child with his wife as a means to nurture a new life as his own begins to weaken. We're put face-to-face with the rawness, pain, and beauty of it all—of how Dr. Kalanithi investigates mortality, first as a young student eager to understand the possibilities of human life and then as a patient battling a terminal illness.



Audience New

Drew Pugliese

Weltschmerz

E, we filled the pews,
suits all borrowed from our fathers,
ill-fitting and scratchy,
singing the hymns together.

The words we borrowed from our mothers.
I don't remember anything I said
except the hymns we sang together.
In that second floor classroom

I don't remember what was said,
just the feeling of something missing
from that second floor classroom,
and how Frau was even quieter than usual,

as if she was missing something.
I stayed quiet for a week.
Frau was even quieter.
We had learned all that we could learn,

so I stayed quiet for a week,
egg yolk heavy in the air –
we had learned the greatest lesson of our lives.
We hadn't known before that we could cry.

It hung heavy in the air
And wouldn't leave us alone.
We hadn't known before that we could die.
We did the best we could with what we had.

It wouldn't leave us alone,
ill-fitting and scratchy in our skin.
We did the best we could,
E. We filled the pews.

Grady Trexler



untitled

Sierra Stern

Vanity Plate

The highway was backed up far into the horizon, and David's childhood car, touch-starved from his four years on the east coast, gracelessly swallowed each intermittent stretch of concrete afforded him by the Honda at his front.

David liked motion. At his university (which he still avoided, with modest vehemence, mentioning by name to everyone except potential employers), he'd run club track, relishing in the way running posture bent his body, muddling his geometrically lean silhouette. It was unfortunate enough that he was stuck in traffic—wrapped in a soft grey sweater bought for him as a parting gift from his nanny his senior year of high school—but to be stuck in traffic in the understated luxury car of his adolescence... the whole scene likely projected to every poor schmuck on the highway a golden hologram of the handwoven, silk-embroidered *tallit* from his

wedding of a Bar Mitzvah ten years prior, a hologram that hovered over the sunroof like a taxi light.

More miserably, had any sittersby (there was certainly no passing to be done at the moment) glanced at David's cupholder while attempting to chance a better look at this curious hologram—which was not yet technologically possible, but the universe made its merry exceptions for David—they might have noticed the eight dollar coffee lodged there, padded by the wax paper bag of artisan pastry crumbs. Eight dollars, he'd reasoned at the time, was not so much to pay for the dark ichor of creativity, especially if he was going to finish his screenplay, an irreverent detective comedy. At present it was forty pages long, and it needed to be a hundred before eight o'clock.

(He had a pitch meeting. It was an extremely big deal.)

David presumed every restless Nissan driver or frazzled Ford owner was thinking the same thing. Blessed was this gangly brunet to be wrapped in flattering, expensive wool, to have all this time to guzzle espresso and use its energizing powers for absolutely nothing at all, his unwon exorbitance likely reminding all those surrounding him of a spoiled and sickly juvenile king—might his crooked nose be the result of some haughty inbreeding? (A rather antisemitic thought to have, but traffic makes monsters out of us all, David sympathized to himself.)

The espresso was good, though. It was from a place across town with a condensed menu and not enough seating, which was why David had been on his way to a completely different coffee shop famous for its fat, cushioned arm chairs when he found himself locked in rush hour congestion. It all seemed kind of silly now. As much as David liked the idea of writing in a cozy café, etching his best ideas into recycled brown napkins and empty coffee cups (nevermind his silver Macbook), he dreaded visibility. Paralyzed by his fellow coffee shop patrons, he hardly ever returned to his car with more than half a page of new material. Worse yet, his childhood home failed to inspire him, and so he was locked in a screenwriter's purgatory where his only real progress took place in a lengthy notes app filled with punchy one-liners.

He contrived, with his head against the steering wheel, of an idea for a play.

EXT. - FREEWAY (HIGHWAY? New Haven had ruined him, evidently.)
- DAY

A man sits in standstill traffic. His audience is comprised of the cars flanking his bumpers and sides; each viewer has paid to sit in traffic, has paid to be traffic while the singular actor sits in his car and simply goes fucking ballistic: a one man shit-show, on wheels, in-the-round.

ACTOR
(meltdown)

BLACKOUT.

To be clear, David had no degree in Creative Writing, or even English. He'd had the good sense to suffer through four years of Economics while slyly filling the rest of his time with Fiction classes and meetings for campus literary journals whose submission deadlines he'd miss with the light of his computer clock blue against his face. History was repeating itself, it seemed, as David couldn't possibly churn out half a screenplay in the middle of traffic.

Up until the day of his graduation, David's life compass had been steered by the poles of stability and substance. He read the words on his diploma, and felt a sensation like a gust of wind slicing through

his skull. They'd written his major where his last name ought to have been—*Economics* in place of *Ecker*. *David Economics*—what you'd fill in for the text contact of a class acquaintance, the perfect pseudonym for somebody as anonymous and predictable as the shell-corpse of a worker bee. He even lacked the sense of humor to keep the botched diploma.

When his accounting internship in D.C. offered David a permanent position at the end of the summer, he turned it down and sought refuge in his parents' house in southern California, where he crashed on the couch in spite of the queen-sized bed and Tarantino posters still inhabiting his room.

The yellow days were rejuvenating, and with each wash of flaming sun, David's east coast melancholy burned away. He wasn't suited for seasons. The humidity fluffed his hair into a column of brown, and his complexion was perpetually condemned to the wintry shade of white that suited him least. He watched his classmates file out of High Holiday services with piously sparkling eyes and floral pinks breaking beneath their skin and felt like he'd been domesticated by iceless seventy-degree winters. At least he was fast. A mutated lap dog couldn't run like he ran, not without keeling over dead with four stubby legs in the air and both pink eyes crusted shut.

David brought cardboard to his mouth and came away with his lips painted in whatever dregs coated the rim of his coffee cup. He was left with nothing to entertain himself with except tissues and a packet of gum (which wasn't very appealing now that David had washed his tongue in coffee). He had the option of listening to the radio, plus access to all the playlists floated from his phone to his car via bluetooth.

He put on his classic rock mix. It was carefully curated to incite a chorus of "Yes, David" or "Oh fuck yes" whenever he was selected by his inner circle of other pale, wiry Econ majors to score their kickbacks and study breaks.

————— "Up until the
————— days of his
————— graduation,
————— David's life had
————— been steered
————— by the poles of
————— stability and
————— substance."

On first was a dazy Beatles love song—typically a powerful melancholic force among David’s (mostly single) friends. David crooned. His voice was nice when it didn’t break.

Unlike most of his friends, David had escaped perennial singlitude. His brunet curls were typically in high demand, at least for a couple weeks at a time (or until his next haircut). This element of impermanence was lucky for David because he suspected himself to be a terrible person. He had ambitions, strong ones, of being a family man one day, but the steps to get there seemed harrowing. Love would be his *Catcher in the Rye*, except instead of developing a taste for celebrity assassination, he’d go crazy in other ways—become stalking, snooping restraining order bait or launch a revenge plot against womankind following an atomic heartbreak.

David kept on singing while he lowered his mirror, just in case he looked handsome doing it.

He was also searching for a glimmer of malevolence—sanguine specks swimming in the blacks of his eyes or an arched brow just steep enough to connote wickedness. Save for a colony of stray eyebrow hairs that had begun to migrate towards his ears (giving his face a downturned, sad-clownish look), he found nothing incriminating, but the song was ruined at that point, and he turned off the radio.

Immediately, David discovered that the subtle synth from his oldie’s ballad was actually sustained honking from the white Acura at his rear; the driver in front of him had traveled all of ten feet forward.

“The illusion of progress,” David mumbled to himself as he lifted his foot off the brake, and thought it sounded so good that he sent it to himself in a text message. It might’ve been a good foundation for a monologue in his screenplay, though he wasn’t sure who should say it.

"This element of impermanence was lucky for David because he suspected himself to be a terrible person."

The main character didn’t have a name yet—everything David thought of seemed way too kitschy. He’d thought about AJ or Sid, but those *sounded* like character names, way too gimmicky. Whenever he tried to think of something long and rhythmic—he

always ended up brainstorming names of either characters that already existed or famous actors: “Peter Parker”, “Owen Wilson”...one time he’d managed to grow heavily attached to the name “Chris Columbus” for an entire hour before it hit him. David was at the point where he was considering just calling him Guy or Man for minimalism’s sake.

He tapped through his phone, and thought about calling somebody to pass the time. His Econ friends probably weren’t busy, but he hadn’t spoken to them much since graduation. He could call Harry to tell him he wasn’t going to be able to make his deadline, but David was still holding out hope on that one. His parents would be a little too happy to speak with him—they could hardly trap him into a conversation in their own home—and the dating app girl he was talking to didn’t seem like the type for impromptu phone calls.

Maybe David was making assumptions because she was pretty—not just fashionably attractive like the overgrown street urchin thing David had going on—but the timeless rendition of hot that Botticelli and Mick Jagger could both agree on. To be honest, David was unenthusiastic about the date they’d scheduled for that Saturday. On the phone he was fairly uninspiring, but he found that, when he actually met girls like this, they became oddly endeared

to him. He felt like he reminded them of somebody, maybe Michael Cera, or a kid they used to babysit. Pure suburbia, or something like it. Being desired in this way was bad for David’s ego, so he typically tried to avoid it as best he could, but he was getting tired of sleeping at his parents’ place, and waking up next to a girl would be a refreshing change of scenery. Her name was Carli, with an “i”.

Carlos, thought David, testing out a new name for his protagonist. Up until that point David had always imagined him to be a white guy, not completely dissimilar-looking to himself (except not Jewish and with a physique that didn’t resemble a flesh-colored candy cane). But Guy could be Carlos. He’d break barriers, monologuing in two languages and have the audience in stitches by taking cracks at white guys like David.

He tried to translate some of Guy’s one-liners into Spanglish, but only got so far as, “I’d say the killer saw *rojo*, but his file says he’s colorblind.”

David pinched himself hard on the cheek, and decided he should stick to what he knew—the folly of insufferable white-guydom and all-around idiotship.

The Acura had moved into the lane on his right, and David could see now that the person behind the wheel was about his age,

knocking his forehead against wrists that hung off the top of the steering wheel. David hadn't even thought to be exasperated about the slogging mob of cars he'd been swept into. Exasperation, he supposed, was a right afforded to those hard working Americans in possession of jobs, who paid rent and drove leased white Acuras instead of Audis.

EXT. - FREEWAY, SECOND LANE FROM THE LEFT - DAY, GETTING TO BE NIGHT

A man in a white Acura sits with his head against the steering wheel in bumper-to-bumper traffic. He's just managed to escape from his disadvantaged position behind the worst driver in the world, some schmuck in an Audi. Finally liberated from Audi-bumper hell, he fumes about the day he's had.

ACURA GUY

It's bullshit. The day is twenty-four hours, and I spend three of them each day in traffic while mine and every car in Los Angeles sit nose to tail, barking and sniffing each other's asses like a pack of wild fucking dogs. It's madness. In three hours, the radio laps itself six times. I'll hear a song in the morning, and by that afternoon I'll know every word. Sometimes, I think my real profession is filling in gaps on the freeway. Without me there'd be an empty square of tar, like the blank piece on those sliding puzzles they

have in dentists' waiting rooms, and then traffic might actually move. Luckily, we all do our parts to make sure that never happens. It's the most perfect system in the world. It's real Fordism—none of that assembly line shit.

(sighs) Each day I become more convinced that I went to college just to learn how to sit in traffic, absorbing the virtues of patience and time management from two hour lectures and last minute papers.

For us more devout traffic participants, there is a certain level of release involved. With my car as my confessional, I shout, groan, weep, and honk the day's grievances into the air, allowing them to absolve themselves in a cloud of smog. When I return to my humble apartment, for which I pay the rent in its entirety, I'm positively washed clean. It helps that the heat controls in my car don't work, so the whole experience comes off like a little slice of hell.

(looks to DAVID)

I pity the driver on my right. Aside from being the most inconsiderate bastard on the freeway, it's clear that traffic will never mean for him what it's come to mean for me. He seems more bewildered than anything else, scrambling for ways to pass the time when us veterans know that the fun of it is to embrace limbo. Then again, limbo's only fun when you're trapped between two

things—work and home, right and wrong... what are *your* parameters, O' Audi Driver?

He's opening compartments now, whatever compartments he can find. I can tell right now by the way he's reaching across the cupholder that he's digging around the glove compartment, probably flipping through insurance papers and registration he's never laid eyes on before. This is a period of great discovery for him. He's learning that the official color of his car is Daytona Grey Pearl. He's learning that closing the glove compartment is a lot harder than opening it. He's learning that he isn't very good at being alone.

David had begun to play games with the license plate numbers, messing around with the digits for fun and converting the letters into numbers for an added layer of complexity. He was good with numbers, good enough for that D.C. job, good enough to study Econ at one of the best schools in the country. It only took him a minute to convert 7AHP459 into fifty, or zero, which he liked even better. Numbers were safe and known. He never had to find numbers like he did words. On the east coast, screenwriting had seemed exotic and exciting and stimulating. Here in Los Angeles, he was the least productive wannabe at any given coffee shop, another milquetoast writer with nothing to bring to the table but milquetoast protagonists that were

basically just idealized caricatures of himself. What did he really have to offer, except a background in mathematics? Maybe all his films would somehow follow the Fibonacci sequence. (He'd only cast actors with golden ratio faces, and then he'd catch serious Hollywood flack for kickstarting a movement of mathematics-based eugenics in film.) What if he named his detective $f(x)$, except he spelled it phonetically like *Effovex*.

And poor Harry, who'd heard about David's screenwriting aspirations and offered him a pitch meeting with his father's production company. Harry knew David from high school, where he was known as smart, reliable, and a little bit funny. Little did Harry know that, sometime in the last four years, David had molted all those shining qualities. Now he was content to let another deadline creep past and abandon his ambitions of working in entertainment, which had proven themselves too uncertain to be rewarding.

**"He's learning
that he isn't
very good at
being alone."**

The car in front of him rolled forward, and just when it had traveled ten feet, just when David expected it to stop, it didn't, and doubled that distance before halting behind a stagnant red bumper. Traffic was letting up. David put up his mirrors. He wasn't too far from home now.

A little ways below the raised coil of the freeway, a billboard for a show he'd been meaning to watch hung over the sparse treeline. It was Emmy-nominated, the billboard said, for David's consideration, created by some guy named Michael Math. No, Michael *Mathis*. The surname had been partially obscured by a black reef of trees.

David glanced at the clock. It was only six. Eight was beginning to seem manageably far off.

It was necessary to turn his attention back to the road, because the little Acura was now attempting to nose its way into the vacant cushion David had let form in front of him. He sat back patiently. Movement after such a long period of stagnation had imbued him with magnanimity enough to forgive the honking incident.

He stared at the Acura's license plate number, contentedly running through equations in an attempt to reach zero. The cars to his right slid slightly forward, and the plate was illuminated.

It was bordered in red. White, uppercase letters spelled *Harvard University*.

David stared, watched the letters slide closer. He couldn't believe it. The Acura was reversing in the middle of the freeway, reversing right into him. "Hey!" he shouted, throwing his body against the horn. "Hey!" In spite of his fear, it was perversely pleasurable to know that, in taking down his assailant's insurance he'd get the opportunity to flash his wallet—blue and velcro, patterned with school-spirited Bulldogs. Otherwise, though, he was afraid.

So afraid that he flinched, flattening himself against his seat and bringing his feet to his chest. His feet that had been floating uselessly above the breaks the entire time.

His ears filled with hot static and a balloon of white attacked his face, and David hastily shimmied his insurance card from his wallet and presented it, loose, to the shellshocked Harvard graduate.

Harry was more than understanding, and moved David's meeting to the following week.

"We Are the Bridge": History as Prologue in Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*

Meera Sastry

Daughters of the Dust is a film to watch slowly. Director Julie Dash makes sure you do so: the shots linger, and much of the plot is delivered so subtly that to turn away for even a second would be to misunderstand the stories portrayed therein. And to misunderstand would be a grave mistake: for many, *Daughters*,

which was the first feature film directed by a Black woman to get a wide theatrical release in 1991, surely has and will serve as an introduction to the Gullah culture it portrays in such complex and immersive detail that it would be a shame—both educationally and artistically—to get anything less than the most out of it.

It is 1902, on an island near the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia—in the midst of what Daina Ramey Berry and Kali Nicole Gross call the “dawning of the Black woman’s era” in their book *A Black Women’s History of the United States*. Two women whose activities—for one, devout participation in the church; for the other, working in the sex trade—fall resolutely within the boundaries of this era, being adults born in the first full post-slavery generation of Black people, return here. They are coming to take the rest of their family away from their home of Ibo Landing. The following two days are a reckoning for the Peazant family as several of its members, each with their own stories and circumstances, decide whether to stay in Ibo Landing or to follow “the dream of the North”. This premise seems to narrow down the setting of the film quite precisely: all of it takes place on a single, relatively small island, and the main string of events fits neatly between when these two women—Viola and “Yellow” Mary—first approach the island to when their boat leaves it again. But the real thematic heart of *Daughters of the Dust* is not nearly so constrained: because it describes a turning point in its characters’ lives, it is as much about the past and the future of the family as it is about the 1902 present.

Thus, though Viola and Mary represent the efforts and trials that Black women experienced around

**"For this family,
time does not
progress linearly
but rather
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upon itself, so that
the future affects
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as the past affects
the future, and they
must reckon with all
of time to deal with
any of it."**

the turn of the century, a reading of *Daughters of the Dust* may be informed by both earlier chapters in the story of Black women and by their lives and culture in the present-day. What allows the timeline of the story to remain limitless is also the sentiment at its heart—that the past lives on to the present, and does so specifically through an “inheritance of memory” that takes both metaphorical and literal forms. There are symbolic manifestations of the past on the island: a bottle tree that one character attempts to destroy and another character encourages her family to study—sculpted forms of the family’s enslaved ancestors that rise from the surrounding waters. But a more literal manifestation occupies much of the plot: one

of the younger women, Eula, is pregnant. Her unborn child (credited as exactly that) narrates the film, with statements prescient beyond her years, and it is this child—as well as Nana, the matriarch of the Peazants—who are the most spiritually in tune. Nana’s connections with ancestral history and the Unborn Child’s visions of her and her family’s future demonstrate the non-linear temporality central to the Peazants’ Gullah culture, which has developed from its African roots in relative isolation and remains unique from mainland African-American culture. For this family, time does not progress linearly but rather inexorably doubles upon itself, so that the future affects the past as much as the past affects the future, and they must reckon with all of time to deal with any of it.

Despite the Peazant family and their Gullah culture’s singularity, their intergenerational memories of enslavement are shared with the greater history of African Americans. Moments from the film are resonant with the history of Black women as mothers and resisters to slavery, as depicted in *A Black Women’s History of the United States* and Dorothy Roberts’ *Killing the Black Body*. In the chapter entitled “Angela’s Exodus out of Africa”, Berry and Gross describe the Middle Passage of the transatlantic slave trade and the forms of resistance that Black women undertook both aboard the ships and on American shores. Though *Daughters of the Dust* is set nearly a hundred years afterwards, the weight of one such uprising—that of Ibo Landing (also

Courtesy of Cohen Film Collection



known as Igbo Landing)—is felt heavily throughout the film. The story as understood by historians today is as follows: a group of Ibo people in captivity aboard the slave ship *The Wanderer* stage a mutiny. They drown their captors, but once the *Wanderer* comes ashore, they walk into the marshes to drown themselves as well (Momodu). Eula, the pregnant member of the Peazant family, tells it slightly differently: in her version, upon landing, the Ibo see all that is to come—and with that knowledge, they choose not to walk into the water, but on it, in order to return home to Africa. Her narration floats over shots of her husband, Eli, as he too walks upon the water and cradles the figures, who appear to be the sculpted forms of the Ibo, that rise from beneath it.

Another member of the family tells the story differently: the character of Bilal, who claims to have himself been a captive on the *Wanderer*, revises Eula's version of events to be something aligning more with historians' views, saying "Ain't nobody can walk on water". Though certainly more somber than Eula's tale, Bilal's story is nonetheless resonant with not only the "truest" story of Ibo Landing, but the similar defiance portrayed in "Angela's Exodus out of Africa". The chapter describes revolts such as the mutiny aboard the ship *Little George*, when African women, men, and children alike would use whatever means

they had at their disposal—even resorting to suicide—in order to regain their freedom. Bilal's depiction of a rebellion like this not only demonstrates the viscerality of its characters' connection to ancestral trauma, but also reminds the viewer, as Berry and Gross do, of the agency Black people maintained throughout their captivity, and the dignity with which they confronted their dehumanizing conditions.

Though the events of Ibo Landing are the most distinct historical event portrayed in the film, *Daughters of the Dust* is also concerned with Black women's relationship to reproduction. The chapter "Reproduction in Bondage" from *Killing the Black Body* details the struggles of Black women during slavery to gain their reproductive freedom; though *Daughters of the Dust* takes place decades afterwards, the foundations of the Peazant family's treatment of sex, reproduction, and motherhood can be seen in the way these concerns of Black women were handled under slavery. Most explicitly, the film describes the practice of forced reproduction. Roberts calls this aspect of reproductive control as "slave-breeding", in which enslavers would "[compel] slaves they considered 'prime stock' to mate in the hopes of producing children especially suited for labor or sale" (27). It appears in *Daughters of the Dust* as part of Nana Peazant's narration;

she describes the rupturing of families under slavery and the possibility that a male child might be separated from his mother at birth and, years later, be forced to mate with her or with his sister. To avoid this, Nana Peazant says, the "old souls in each family would keep mental records of births, deaths, marriages, and sales", reinforcing what Roberts describes as the "remarkable success" of Black women in "maintaining the integrity of their family live despite slavery's traumas" (51).

Despite their resilience, however, the women of the Peazant family are not without internal conflict. One of the women who returns, Yellow Mary, has been somewhat shunned by her family—to them, having worked both as a prostitute and as a wet nurse, she is a "ruined woman" and a "hussy". It is revealed through Mary's empathizing with Eula that both women have been raped, likely by white men, and became pregnant as a result. These experiences of sexual violence not only traumatize Eula and Mary but are compounded by rejection from their families: Yellow Mary herself is seen as less of a Peazant, and Eli, Eula's husband, worries that the baby will not truly be his because it is the product of rape. Though Eula and Eli are more than a generation removed from slavery, this fear is informed by the heritability of enslavement legally established as early as 1662 in Virginia. As Jennifer L. Morgan

describes in her article "*Partus sequitur ventrum: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery*", any child born to an enslaved woman, even a child born after she was raped by her white enslaver, would also be enslaved. This legal practice was used to break up Black families and Black kinship structures in favor of supporting the economic interests of the white enslaver. Though this is no longer the material reality of Eula and Eli, who live as a free Black couple on the island, they still face the threat of physical violence: Eula fears, for example, that if Eli learns who raped her, he may confront the man and subsequently be lynched. This legal construct, then, not only immediately disrupted the Black family, as Roberts and Morgan write, but traumatized generations of Black women and affected the very connection of motherhood that the Peazants see as so central to their Gullah identity.

Daughters of the Dust is thus certainly concerned with the pain and trauma involved in its characters' personal and ancestral histories—but though it takes time to discuss the past, it also shows its characters breaking their pasts' holds on their futures. The main conflict of the film is the decision that each Peazant must make—that is, to stay on the island or to pursue further opportunity in the North—and, by the end of the film, the family becomes divided. Nana Peazant, Yellow Mary, Eula, Eli, and

one other Peazant choose to stay, while the rest of the family departs for the mainland. As a result, the Peazants' future is not simple, nor can it be easily reduced: while they may not abandon their past lives or ancestral knowledge, they also do not disregard the possibility that they might change. This tension reveals the true strength of *Daughters*, and the gift that it gives the cinematic canon to which it belongs—that is, the way that *Daughters* evaluates each of its characters as her own person with her own motive, reasoning, history, and vision of the future. This depiction of Black women's agency is so rich and compelling that it leaves the audience of *Daughters* worried not whether the decision to leave or stay was right or wrong in each case, but rather reassured that though the trauma of the slavery era may persist, so does the capacity of Black women to resist it and to create love in spite of it.

And what of the future of the film itself? Despite *Daughters of the Dust's* Sundance premiere and wide theatrical release, it faded somewhat from prominence in popular culture until it was re-released into theaters in 2016. Though not the sole impetus for this re-release, its popularity with a new generation was certainly encouraged by Beyoncé's film *Lemonade*, which accompanied her sixth studio album earlier that year and references *Daughters* (Desta). *Lemonade* is in large part autobiographical, but Beyoncé deals with much of the same history as *Daughters*, such as the resistance at Ibo Landing, and imitates its visual language in several scenes. By tying this history and imagery together to again tell the story of a Black woman and her family, Beyoncé and the audiences she brought to *Daughters of the Dust* give new life to the film and demonstrate once more its core message—that the present will always inherit the strength of the past.

Zayed



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Cordelia Lowry

Postcard.

Rodrigo Pichardo

Is there a right for you to be here in a barn on a piece of freshly mowed dirt field where your land certificates are used to clean up shit left behind by cows where the tree your father a “bandit” was hung from dirty feet dangled tied to a horse and dragged where they stabbed your wife and your brother for a goat where they titled you *dead* and you squeezed a drop of blood from the Anglo for every acre of planted Mexicans, they left behind for you to water on your way home. The garbage trucks skip your barrio, they roll by like a spontaneous drive-by or cops on their lunch break, hungry for bullets, it’s easy to talk about violence, to see violence and to bring it up in written words, especially when I dedicate my poetry to the land that I grew up on or to any *chavala* – this one’s for you – that walks by on the street with a strap to their waist or slangin’ dimes for their mamas, on Avenues of al pines bumping Chicano rappers, and the streets don’t grow silent at night, they stay bright and smell of gunpowder.



Al Mare

Cordelia Lowry

Coloring Outside the Lines: The Secrets Maps Hide



We question everything. News. Data. Suspicious statistics. We argue about the world's biggest problems and the littlest details of our own lives. Some of our arguments are clean cut—easily settled by a Google search or a fact checker. Others grow more dangerous as our most-trusted sources erode their journalistic standards. It's becoming harder to know where to look for answers.

There are some things, however, that it never occurs to us to question. They're not quite polarizing or engaging enough to hold our attention. They're the implicit lies that are too well-hidden to make us think twice.

They're ordinary.

Take a look at this map of the Mughal Empire, which controlled the Indian peninsula for two centuries thanks to the invention of gunpowder.



This map is one of the first results from a Google search for "Mughal Empire Map". It doesn't raise any

immediate red flags, but allow me to ask a probing question: what does being a part of the Mughal Empire mean? In other words, to what degree does the Mughal Empire actually control all of the highlighted regions? And is that control cultural, political, or economic? The control is certainly not the same everywhere. Port cities were largely independent and the Empire was not able to tax the whole of the Indian Peninsula. The area added in orange area 1707 also needs some complicating. Its coastal territories shown had heavy European political and economic influences that are not shown.

The map-maker wasn't wrong to put things together this way, and one does get a general idea of the Mughal Empire's growth, as the title would suggest. It is not the cartographer's job to define the concept of empire. But this is simplification, a necessary whittling down to the most important details. A more precise map would have been much more confusing. Cartographer Mark Monmonier addresses issues like this in *How To Lie With Maps*, a book that covers everything from distortion and scale to satellite mapping and commercial interests. However, he doesn't deal enough with the oversimplification issue. To understand that more fully, we'll need to take a step back.

A long time ago I went to a talk by Professor Anne-Marie Grisogono of Flinders University in Australia. Grisogono is a complex systems scientist, which loosely means that she is an expert in solving complex problems. She posed a very interesting question: What is the biggest cause of conflict in the world? Many answers come to mind, but it seems difficult to answer definitively. There was an extensive UN study done to find an answer, and the result was definitive: borders are the number one cause of conflict. Can maps, I wondered, help us predict conflict then?

In his landmark book *When Maps Become the World*, Rasmus Grønfeldt Winther demonstrates the privilege and power held by the map creator and the extent to which the choices of what to include and leave out can "remake the world". Maps show us only one definition of a border, and it is not the most important one. We need to look at social and ethnic borders, borders on the smallest scales and the largest, borders within communities and borders between religious groups, and ideological and political borders, too. Maps divide the world into countries:



But what does this tell us? For so long, I looked at modern world maps and thought, wow, the world today has conflict, but nowhere near as much as it used to. Maps change rarely, borders seem fixed, and countries are contained. All world maps should have this footnote: *only shows internationally recognized countries.

Yemen has been divided by a civil war since 2014. Somalia contains two autonomous states. Myanmar has been torn apart by internal conflict that has not abated since 1948. The list goes on. Maps hide these divisions when they should be the objective, unbiased sources for us to learn more about them. Yes, borders are always in flux, but here the world has long been passively oversimplified.

Look at the fine print on this map:



This one, made in the midst of Somalia's civil war, knows its place. It distinguishes between regions controlled by the UIC (Islamic Courts Union) and those allied with it, it uses soft

hues to suggest the flexibility of these areas of control, and most importantly, it is not afraid to leave a region blank: the coastal area between Somaliland and Puntland. All images need context. We would never make conclusions from just any random photograph, yet it's easy to think that maps are different because they are made to look official and careful. Maps should come with captions and context too.

Let's return to the Mughals. If you want to learn more about the Mughal Empire, you'll turn to a large number of sources, hear from some experts, and certainly consult your maps. Few people look at that

map we analyzed earlier as the final ruling on all things Mughal. But that is exactly how we look at world maps. We take brief glances at them and subliminally begin to think we know the world—a dangerously implicit way to think.

Everything is simplified and streamlined, engineered to be easily digestible. Keep wondering—keep questioning what's beneath the surface of all the things we take for granted.

1. Header image, *courtesy of vividmaps.com*
2. Image 2, *courtesy of Khan Academy*
3. Image 3, *courtesy of mapshop.com*
4. Image 4, *courtesy of Ethan Zuckerman*

To Find a Home

Some say no matter how much
you might try,
you can never plant an old line
in another poem.

In much the same way
you would never come across
an English sheep grazing
under a palm tree,
a thorny line will never lie still
slipped under the rug
of some other stanza
with last month's metre
and yesterday's refrain.

So I could never find a home
for the children's footprints
remembered in wet cement,
the bouquets forgotten on car roofs
slipping away with the wind,
and the muted backup singers, side
-stepping on the hospital monitor.

No place for the hoofbeats
rolling into the valley,
the cowhides hung to
dry over the fence,

and the headlights flickering
between the pines.
And nowhere to lay rest
to the tap left running,
the girl disappearing
into the cornfield,
and the squirrel who
sent the timeless oaks shivering.

Yet, above all these,
I struggled most
with the stars,
a career-ending prospect
for any poet.
Staring up emptily
at those dark constellations,
I couldn't help but remember
everything I had still to place
in the world before me;
my mother and sister
dancing alone in the kitchen,
a boy stumbling home drunk
down a dark country lane,
and the simple fact,
that sometimes
to find a home,
you have to build it first.

Henry Wright



Cary Moore

My Mother

Cassandra James

The Road

The old man's feet are tired. Above him, the desert sun burns tangerine; his nose blisters and peels. He has walked for hours—ten, maybe twelve, since sunrise—and his heels drag in the dirt, leaving long and crooked lines behind him. Cars rumble past; dust floats over the highway, over the mountains; the old man wipes his eyes with the edge of his jacket.

On his left, a blue convertible slows and pulls to the side of the road. A young woman leans out, waving and smiling.

“Need any help?”

The old man shakes his head. This is his task; it is set before him, and he must finish it alone.

“You sure?”

He nods. Curious, but not curious enough to waste any more time, the girl shrugs her brown shoulders.

“Best of luck,” she says, and then she is gone, leaving the old man in a cloud of yellow dust.

He grimaces at the pain in the balls of his feet, at the ache that climbs from his ankles to his hips and up into his stiffened neck. He should pause—rest—eat—before he continues on. At this exit, he will make his turn. So he hobbles the last few miles, head bowed beneath the heat, licking his cracked lips. The sand tastes like ashes.

Exit 33 offers two options: fast food (which the old man abhors on principle) and a diner. As might be expected, he chooses the latter. He shuffles down the exit ramp

and across the diner parking lot; it takes all his strength to pull open the front door. He asks a buck-toothed girl at the hostess stand for a counter seat, trails behind her as she chatters about their most-recent specials, and sits for the first time that day. Then he sighs, ribs folding bone over bone, until all the breath has left his body. Tired, he thinks, and orders a coffee (black, no sugar).

It's early, still, for dinner, and the restaurant is empty. Plastic chairs are stacked on tables, paper menus piled on the counter. A pop ballad crackles from a built-in speaker—the man loathes pop music like he loathes fast food. There is nothing *real* in either of them, nothing *good*. He rubs his dry and wrinkled knuckles; his old feet throb; he reads the menu, or pretends to, because his eyesight is worse than his neck, though he will never admit it.

"Above him, the desert burns tangerine; his nose blisters and peels."

"Are you ready to order?"

An aproned woman stands behind the counter, smiling through rose-colored lipstick. She is short, squat, with tear-drop eyes and uneven teeth, like a Barbie doll that has been dropped and stepped on. The squeaking pitch of her voice tells him that she is younger than she looks—too young to smell so strongly of mouthwash and liquor.

"Take as long as you'd like," she tells him.

He nods, thanks her. She doesn't move.

"Did you walk here?"

He blinks.

"There aren't any cars in the parking lot."

Ah.

"Hitchhiking? Just passing through?" She puts her palms to the counter and leans into them. "Not running from the *law*."

A bend in her lips lets him know that she's joking, but the old man doesn't laugh. He isn't running *from* anything.

"Running to something, then? Well," she says, "it has to be a woman."

He is already married.

"She waiting for you at home?"

The old man stares into his coffee cup. He'll have the All-American Breakfast with extra bacon, please, and a side of hash browns.

The woman's lips twitch. "Coming right up."

The old man is left alone to decide which is worse: the coffee or the music. He sighs. If he were not so tired, he would ask the hostess to play something classical. He prefers Mozart, but can stomach Tchaikovsky, and will never refuse a Rachmaninoff concerto. That is what his wife must be doing now, he imagines: she must be settling into a chair on the porch, sipping from a mug of hot green tea, leaning back into the waves of a sonata. For a moment, the old man closes his eyes. He hears the low whine of wind over desert rock; he touches a small, wrinkled hand; he feels music flutter up into his chest and settle under his ribcage like a bird. Then the sulfurous reek of eggs is in his nose, and his eyes are open, and the waitress is in front of him again, smiling. Her lipstick is smudged.

"You didn't bring anything else?"

She points to his jacket, where a small brown Bible pokes out of the pocket. No, he tells her. He doesn't need anything else.

"Can I see it?"

Reluctantly, he gives it to her. She pages through it for a moment.

"It's only half."

He nods. He tore out the New Testament long ago.

She's about to reply when the front door opens, and a bearded man steps inside. The old man doesn't fail to notice the way the woman's fingers grip the counter.

"One sec," she says, and follows the man out to the parking lot.

The old man eats. He has just finished his coffee when the woman returns; her wrists have already begun to bruise.

"Should I bring the check?" she asks.

Yes, he tells her. Then: it was a mistake.

She doesn't have to ask what he's referring to. "Cash or credit?"

Cash. She shouldn't have followed the bearded man.

She clears his plate, returns his Bible, and shrugs. "When you love somebody," is all she says, and then she's gone into the kitchen, returning only to drop the check on the counter before disappearing completely. He is grateful that he is not in love.

It is only when he has left the diner, when he is back on the road, when the moon hangs high and full in the twilight sky, that the old man prays. He doesn't ask for anything;

he doesn't even speak. He wipes his eyes with his jacket once more—the fabric comes away damp—and counts the day's sins: one incident of laziness for stopping at the diner; two incidents of gluttony for the bacon and hash browns; three incidents of melancholy...

He counts until he can't count anymore. After all, this is the old man's task. It came to him in a dream, many years ago: he dreamed of an asphalt road which led to nowhere, and he stopped a woman who was walking on it. What is this road? he asked her. The only road, she said to him. But as she spoke, the highway divided into three, and the old man panicked, and began to cry. How would he know which one was the right road? The woman gripped his hand, and when he turned to look at her, she was no longer a woman, but a man with no face. You will know, the man told him. Then the old man woke with tears dried on his cheeks, and he left his too-large house with nothing but a wallet and a Bible, walking, counting, occasionally working or begging, never losing sight of the road. He didn't tell his wife and children where he was going; he only prayed that they would understand. Sometimes, he wonders if they were happy to be rid of him—if they smiled, if they laughed, thanking God for the vanishing of Papi and his drunken rages. Other times, when he is cornered by the rabid dogs of his thoughts, he wonders if they think of him at all.

Another incident of melancholy.

The evening air is laced with ice. When the sun is gone, the temperature will fall, and the old man will be blind in the darkness. So he shuffles further from the road, searching for a place to sleep. He spots a rocky overhang; he moves toward it.

By the time he reaches the cliff, the sun has died, and a chilled wind snaps at his skin with invisible teeth. He pulls the jacket close around his chest; he shudders; his lungs heave and hitch. He fumbles in the encroaching blackness to settle himself on the ground, fingers dragging across rocks and dirt and—something warm. The old man recoils.

It's a child. A girl. Bird-boned and half alive, curled on her hip, shivering, too tired to move when the old man nudges her. He frowns. He has met too many like her on the road: drop-outs and runaways, drifting between addictions. Nothing can be done for her. So he sits on the ground and leans back against the cliff, groaning. He closes his eyes. Opens them. Looks at the girl. She sleeps. If he talks to her, she won't hear, and the thought is comforting, so he speaks.

I have a daughter like you, he tells her. I saw her again today—she is a diner waitress, now—but she did not know me. Then I left her again. I did not *want* to leave her. But I

cannot be what I want. He adds this last part in a whisper, and the wind sweeps his voice into the night.

The cold creeps into the old man's joints; his bones seize and crack. He tries again to sleep and fails, woken by the whipping wind. A storm is coming. He glances at the girl. Nudges her ankle. She is silent. Well, if he can't sleep, he will read. So he pulls the Bible from his pocket, holds it toward the moonlight—and blinks. Something is wrong. He closes the Bible, opens it again. It can't be. He's blind—there is sand in his eyes—he's imagining things. Slamming the book shut, he shoves it back in his jacket. One incident of rage.

Who does *she* think she is? he says to the sleeping girl, though he is only talking to himself. The pride, the arrogance! As if she is any better than him, than anyone. Doesn't she know it is pointless? And why would she do such a thing in the first place? She has no justifiable reason; there is no reason involved, at all. He never asked her for it, and she shouldn't have given it to him, but now there is a debt, a debt he can never repay. Two more incidents of rage—one of despair.

All around him, the wind flies like horses, howling, mourning, swirling into the sky and dousing the stars. The road! The road! He has lost sight of it, he can't see, all is dark. The sand scalds his eyes,

coats his tongue. The old man panics. He repeats to the sleeping girl: pointless! He says to himself: oh, God. It is the sand in his eyes which spurs the weeping. It is the cold which causes the trembling in his fingers when he touches the final page of his butchered Bible, where, in crunched script, the diner waitress has written: *I forgive you.*

"What is this road? he asked her. The only road, she said to him."

The storm rages, and the road is gone. But though he tries, and though he has committed many sins, the old man can't think of any more things to count. His tired feet feel suddenly light; for the first time in many years, he remembers his own name.

“Saúl,” he says. “That is my name.”

This night! He is filled with music—the wind, the earth—it pours out of his chest, out of his fingertips—there is too much of it, it must be shared. He looks down; he sees the girl; she is, in an instant, the most beautiful thing in the world to him. Laughing, he strips off his jacket and lays it over her bony shoulders.

“I know, I know, I know!” the old man cries.

He huddles on his side; he feels no cold. Everything has occurred

to him—there is a light—he reaches out, out, out with trembling fingers.

The cold seizes at his throat. The wind dies, and the stars appear again.

At dawn, a pair of vultures circles the old man’s body. He lies beside an empty jacket; there is no girl, now, if there ever was one. The smile on his face is a strange one for a corpse. While the birds devour him, the sun rises, and the old man’s daughter is kissing her husband goodbye, leaving for her shift at the diner.

Katie Rohrbaugh |

The Gaze of History through William Logan's "Fall of Byzantium"

William Logan’s *Night Battle* is a collection of contemporary poetry, published in 1999—yet it undoubtedly finds weight through a careful selection of classical historical references and imagery. Even in one of his starkly modern poems, “Florida in January”, Logan cannot help but include a comparison of restless strangers visiting the state to the Roman poet Ovid roaming the Black Sea. Throughout the poetry collection’s first four sections, subtle references to historical moments and figures serve as foils to the contemporary world Logan observes around him. However, history and Logan’s perception of its passage become all-encompassing themes in the poetry collection’s fifth and final

grouping, aptly titled “The Fall of Byzantium”. Twelve poems compose this group, each self-contained and oriented around a specific location of historical significance to the city once known as Byzantium (renamed Constantinople in 330 CE and now known as Istanbul).

The relevance of Byzantium to classical studies cannot be understated. Byzantium, a reference to both the city itself and to the Byzantine Empire, adapted many Greco-Roman traditions and characteristics, cementing it as somewhat of a successor empire to Rome. The city acted as a cultural center for the empire until its capture in 1453 CE by Sultan

Mehmed II and the Ottoman Turks. While the exact date of the empire's decline is contested by historians, the capture of the city is widely seen as the end of Byzantium.

Logan himself seems to be a bit of a contemporary Romanticist—he is a great admirer of the classics and the emotions they arouse, championing Romantic figures like Milton and even Captain Ahab from *Moby Dick*. As a testament to his love for Romanticism, Logan dedicates one section, called “Milton’s Tongue”, of *Night Battle* to contemporary poems on Miltonian locations and themes. But Captain Ahab and *Moby Dick* also play a central role in “The Fall of Byzantium”. Logan begins the section with an epigraph from *Moby Dick*:

*The firm tower, that is Ahab;
the volcano, that is Ahab; the
courageous, the undaunted,
and victorious fowl, that, too,
is Ahab; all are Ahab; and this
round globe is but the image of
the rounder globe, which, like
a magician’s glass, to each and
every man in turn but mirrors
back his own mysterious self.*

Logan points to the subjectivity of history and to how his own perceptions of the physical world reflect “his own mysterious self”—rather than offering objective, physical descriptions, Logan assigns metaphors and figurative language to the churches, hotels,

and walls within Byzantium. This perspective goes both ways: we see history through his eyes, just as his reflections reveal a man enamored by the cruel past. It is then unsurprising that there are few moments of plain description or explication within these poems. Instead, the places Logan writes his poems around are conduits for his own perspective. For instance, while looking out the window from within the Pera Palas hotel, Logan sighs, “each view not a lie, but the fossil of a lie,” speaking directly to his profound sense of loss at being unable to experience the past as it was. Because this past isn’t Logan’s reality, he can only construct his own imaginings—or as he phrases it, his “lies”—of the city as it was experienced in 1453 CE.

Along with offering his own perspective on Byzantium, Logan uses the geographical concreteness of his poems to immerse the reader in locations distant both physically and temporally. The poems’ sense of place makes it seem as if the reader is travelling alongside Logan as a witness to his somber observations on the nature of history. The arrangement of poems almost feels like a travel itinerary of sorts, as the first poem begins with a visit to the historical “grand-no-more” hotel Pera Palas—a fitting first stop for weary travelers. Besides the spatiality of the poems, Logan uses internal elements to create an intimate connection between the reader and the imagined space they

**"THIS
PERSPECTIVE
GOES BOTH
WAYS: WE
SEE HISTORY
THROUGH
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JUST AS HIS
REFLECTIONS
REVEAL A MAN
ENAMORED
BY THE CRUEL
PAST."**

occupy in Byzantium. Logan places the reader in the midst of the poem’s action through the inclusion of a second-person subject: “In the Spice Bazar / men swarmed around us” (“Spice Bazaar”) and “You thought you heard the jazzy clamor of a horn” (“Galata Tower”). In the midst of action, it is easy to see how Logan gets swept away by the history of the places he visits, and how he pulls the reader in with him.

Logan further breathes life into historical structures through an emphasis on physical changes over time. For instance, in the poem “Haghia Sophia”, Logan describes the church-turned-mosque, the center of Byzantine life and culture, through a variety of personifying language, with lines like: “even the cold stone had ambitions for itself” and the scintillating “cool mosaics flayed from the walls like skin.” Logan reinforces the church, marked by “stray chisel marks, cold plots of betrayal, [and] fires pitched against the living wall,” as a symbol for constantly changing history. Once again, physicality becomes entwined with notions of history. Changes in the composition of these structures reflect a wider historical moment, such as a changing of regime, as in “Great Palace”, or the rising of a new religion with “Haghia Sophia”.

Logan offsets revenant depictions of ancient structures with declaratory sentiments on the nature of history. His melancholic lens produces the image of an unflinching past where “what survives is not love but order / the remnants of a past refused by the past” (“Basilica Cistern”). Historical and religious figures also do not escape Logan’s gaze. Much like Percy Bysshe Shelley’s infamous “Ozymandias”, Logan’s conception of time leaves “the last kings of Sidon” (“Alexander Sarcophagus”) locked in a stone tomb to be eaten away until they

are nothing. Using the image of sand as time, Logan writes “the Christian God took his powers from the sand / and left His powers to sand again” (“Haghia Sophia”) to explain the religious transformations undergone by Haghia Sophia as the Ottomans gained control of it. Time and history, its byproduct, leave nothing untouched in their ceaseless progression ahead (1).

Though Byzantium is no longer, Logan manages to muster much of its allure and power with a few lines of poetry. Enchanting lines fixated on changing physical appearances piece together a material account of Logan’s journey through the city and the

various historical sites he has visited. Yet, there is a tangible spiritual aspect to these pieces, as if one should only read them in whispers. As Logan would likely attest to, time will continue moving, but “Fall of Byzantium” will surely remind its audience of the history it leaves behind.

(1) Other lines on this subject that caught my attention: “Past has no need for forgiveness and the future no need to pardon” (“Alexander Sarcophagus”); “We came to see the past, but the past was blind” (“Basilica Cistern”); “No one survives the pastness of the past” (“Aqueduct of Valens”)

Christian mosaic in Hagia Sophia, *courtesy of iStock*



Site New

Drew Pugliese



Henry Wright

Cross-Eyed

though I've known people capable
of focusing on two things at once,
perhaps even been introduced to a few
who could handle three on a good day,
and maybe brushed shoulders with one
who could take four for a stroll;
I could never bring so much with me.

whether for lack of talent or trying,
I've only ever been able to hold
one thing at a time;
the smudged halo of the accelerometer,
or the soft bristle of wind
breaking over the hood,
the moon-sketched silhouette of
firs growing above the road,
or the broken white lines
diving beneath the car.

I hesitate to blame my father
for this gift,
as I watch his eyes match
the dusty gaze of the headlights
from the rear-view mirror,
and wait for him to glance back,
once more,
to see my sister
asleep against the window,
and I, tucked into
the far side of the car,
watching the darkness swirl
in the heavy summer air,
trying to make out the clouds
sailing half-mast
through the night.

WHAT WE'RE LOVING:
WINTER BREAK 2020 EDITION

Edge of Midnight (Midnight Sky Remix)

Megan Pan



Courtesy of RCA Records

On November 27, 2020, American singer Miley Cyrus released her seventh studio album entitled *Plastic Hearts*, marking both the tail end of a universally tumultuous year as well as a significant departure from the sound of her

previous discography. Merging 80's-era influences such as disco and glam rock with modern-day pop sensibility, *Plastic Hearts* features Cyrus's strong, versatile vocals on tracks ranging from uptempo punk rock belters to soulful power pop ballads. The album's crowning jewel, however, has to be the digital edition exclusive track "Edge of Midnight (Midnight Sky Remix)," a mashup of the album's lead single "Midnight Sky" and legendary Fleetwood Mac frontwoman Stevie Nicks's 1982 release "Edge of Seventeen."

As the result of several traumatic experiences, including the loss of her house to the California wildfires and a public divorce from longtime partner Liam Hemsworth, Cyrus

had written the original “Midnight Sky” as a means of reclaiming her independence, encapsulating her personal growth, and celebrating her own self-expression. Many of the lyrics make reference to her lost love (“I don’t need to be loved by you”) while also alluding to her post-split romances, which were the subject of heavy scrutiny by the media (“See my lips on her mouth, everybody’s talkin’ now”). In a similar manner, Nicks’s “Edge of Seventeen” was also written in the wake of tragedy, following the death of her uncle and the murder of John Lennon in the same week of December 1980. Its lyrics feature the recurring motif of a white-winged dove, meant to symbolize the spirit leaving the body on death, whose coos are captured in the discarded refrain: “ooh, baby, ooh.” Given the comparable contexts of the two songs—both composed in the face of devastation—it is only fitting that their mashup works so well as a triumphant anthem of resilience.

Though standalone hits in their own right, the marriage of the raw vulnerability of “Midnight Sky” with the mystical sensuality of “Edge of Seventeen” creates a coupling that elevates the best qualities of the originals. Kicking off with the latter’s distinctive, chugging 16th-note guitar riff, the remix launches into its opening verse, in which

"Given the comparable contexts of the two songs—both composed in the face of devastation—it is only fitting that their mashup works so well as a triumphant anthem of resilience."

Cyrus confesses that “it’s been a long time since I felt this good on my own.” As the subdued guitar accompaniment blooms into the resonant chorus, Cyrus’s raspy belt defiantly declares that “I was born to run, I don’t belong to anyone” before pairing with Nicks’s crooning vocals on the iconic lines that follow: “Just like the white winged dove / Sings a song, sounds like she’s singing...” Buoyed by the harmonization of its two powerhouse vocalists, the song continues building up in passionate intensity up until the final climactic end, as it rides out the high of a euphoric freedom, as clear as the air of the midnight sky.

Emma Mohrmann |



**sugar
on
my
tongue**

Supervision

How long ago was it, now? I swam in a pool thick
with dead leaves and bumblebee carcasses. My skin was scarred
with goosebumps, and
my brother, just a shape beneath
the dark water, kept grabbing my legs—but I didn't turn
to hit him, my neck prickling
beneath my grandmother's gaze, though the glare
from the sun on the great triangular window
rendered her face a yellow streak, a non-face,
ghostly in the rays.

Lara Katz



Jimin Kang

Dutch Oven

Today I am thinking of a Dutch oven.
I am picturing its curves of gravelly black,

remembering the way my finger tingles when it runs across
its smooth, heavy surface. How I'd love to master

An object like that: Forged in fire
And immune to heat, to the hot weariness of time.

Today I am thinking of the dough it holds, sticky and wet
like rained-upon clay. Then what emerges with flame:

Craggy hills of freshly baked bread, steam rising
from where flour and water once met. A miracle...

And I am thinking of your hands as they open and close
the recipe book, like two palms meeting in prayer.

One cup of flour, a teaspoon of grace...
I am picturing the way your back bends

As you open the oven, how you receive the hot air.
How you cut the bread and place a slice on each of our plates.

How later you leave the cast iron to burn on a glowing stove;
The heat—as you told me once, and I'm recalling today—

will clean it, prepare it for the next loaf.
An endless burning that gives and gives.



Charley Moon Jr. Chases a Star

Charley Moon Jr. Hides from the Sunshine

My Mother, whose name is Molly Moon, once told me: “Charley Moon, you are absolutely no different from anybody else.”

Looking back, this should’ve been a sure-as-the-sky-is-blue sign that I am, in fact, different from everybody else. But back then, I believed in Molly blindly, my pretty blonde guardian angel. I was only five-and-a-half, so you’ll have to forgive my stupidity.

Now I know better.

Because, I was born very white. I don’t mean white like a normal white Boy, who colors himself in with the Crayola crayon named “apricot” or “peach” or maybe even “tan.” I mean white like the Crayola crayon named “white.”

White like the normal white Boy, dipped in an extra layer of bleach.

White like the dandelion, towards the end of its life-cycle.

White like the blank page.

Briony Zhao

desktop < view < blindfold

a short folktale

The Doctors call this kind of white Albino. And just for the record, yes, all of me is white—my skin all over, my hair all over (including my brand-new pubic hair). My one and only droplet of color is my eyes. They are a shade called “fuschia,” which is a mix of red and violet. You’ve probably never seen anything like them. Molly claims they look pretty, “like ruby gems,” but I do not believe in her so blindly anymore. All I know for certain is, whenever I go outside, the Sunshine glares down like it hates me and pains my fuschia eyes terribly. The Doctors call this kind of pain Photophobia.

It is halfway the Sunshine’s fault that I hide myself away. And halfway because the last time I emerged, I made an entire elementary school full of small children cry. Millions and millions of teardrops dripped down from their blue or green or brown or black-colored eyes, and my fuschia-colored eyes, too. It was very traumatic. We could’ve flooded the whole world.

Eight years flew by like a flock of white-feathered geese. I wonder if I am ready for the outside world. I wonder if the outside world is ready for me.

The Moon Family Rises over East Eden, Illinois

From watching plenty of television, I know that Mothers are supposed to be dowdy. But never Molly! She keeps an endless supply

of handsome boyfriends and Marlboro cigarettes and rainbow lipsticks in her patent leather purse. Every single day, Molly paints herself a new and different-colored face. This advertises that Molly is a professional beautician at Betsy’s, the one and only beauty salon in East Eden, Illinois. For your information, Betsy died twelve years ago, but they kept her name because it has a nice ring to it.

There was a time, though, when Molly had dreams bigger than a dead lady’s beauty salon. Dreams so big, they threatened to crush the town of East Eden, the county of Caskaskia, the state of Illinois, and possibly the whole Midwest. She tried to hitchhike out to Hollywood, where little Girls with pretty faces and big dreams turn to solid gold. Only on the way, she accidentally fell in true love and got stuck there. So, she preserved all her dreams in carefully labeled jam jars for the winter. And instead of getting famous, she got married and got pregnant.

As Molly grew ripe-apple round, the white-coated Doctors promised that I would be perfect. They forgot that ultrasounds are in black-and-white like old movies. So, it was shocking for everyone when my lilly-white head was plucked from Molly’s rose-pink vagina.

Especially my Father, Charles Moon Sr., who I haven’t met yet. According to Molly, he is a man of very little consequence. The day I

was born, he started running down to the South, where the Sunshine turns white people brown. According to local legend, he’s still running to this day. Probably he’s reached Florida by now.

"So she preserved all her dreams in carefully labeled jam jars for the winter."

To his credit, Charles Moon Sr. did leave a few important things behind:

He left his house. Admittedly, it isn’t the nicest house, not even on a block full of not-so-nice houses. The house is white, and sheds paint chips like a molting dove. The lawn is grey, and no flowers will ever grow. But none of that matters because the house is home.

He left his names. Personally, I hate the first name “Charles.” If I ever work up the courage, I’d like to trade it in for something more foreign and romantic, like Jean-Claude or

Rafaello. But both Molly and me adore the last name “Moon.” Molly’s maiden name was something long and Eastern European and hard to pronounce. But Molly Moon sounds like the name of a chanteuse or a B-movie star.

He also left \$5,000 in a spit-sealed white envelope. We’re saving that for a rainy day.

Charley Moon Jr. in the Depths of Night

In my nightmares, Charles Moon Sr. is running back up to the North, where the Sunshine is weaker and white people stay pink-ish. Once he arrives in East Eden, he takes back the house, and he takes back the names, and he takes back the \$5,000. He even takes back Molly.

Then, Charles Moon Sr. sells me to the Ringling Brothers’ Circus and its candy-red striped tent. Those Ringling Brothers are always looking for Albino children to lock up in their human-sized cage. They charge people fifty cents to come take a good long look at me. And they shout into ugly megaphones:

“Come one, come all! Step up and BEHOLD the VAMPIRE BOY! The spirit is dead, but the body lives on! In the Sunshine, he MELTS like a VANILLA ICE CREAM CONE!”

Then I melt down to a puddle of sticky nothingness, in front of the cheering crowd.

Luckily that's just a nightmare, and not real life.

Charley Moon Jr. Goes to Homeschool

I spend most of my time completely alone, while Molly seduces the men and beautifies the women of East Eden. Apparently, this is called homeschool.

At homeschool, sometimes I watch films from Hollywood's Golden Age. The best ones are from the 1950s, and full of musical numbers and happy endings. For example *Oklahoma!* and *Guys and Dolls* and especially *There's No Business Like Show Business*. I am in love with Mitzi Gaynor, who is precisely the size, shape, and color of a porcelain doll. I know all of her songs and dances by heart. I think that if she met me, she would want to be my friend.

Sometimes I sit by my lacey-curtained bedroom window, and watch the outside world change color. Day by day, the skies change. Month by month, the trees change. And year by year, the people change.

Sometimes the people my same age (meaning very old children or very new adults) come to visit me. My least favorite visitors are the Boys, who bang on the front door and call me a "Freak" and one time, wrapped the entire house in toilet paper. Needless to say, the toilet

paper was white. My most favorite visitors are the Girls. The three of them are multicolored—the one on the left has light brown, pinkish skin; the one in the middle has medium brown, orange-ish skin; and the one on the right has deep brown, blue-ish skin. They come every Tuesday, to stand in the front lawn and wave "Hello." One day soon, I'd like to reach my white hand out through the lacey-curtained window and wave back.

Sometimes I take a good, hard look at myself in Molly's vanity. Little lightbulbs circle my reflection, winking like fireflies. And I think about how handsome I might look, if only I had the right colors.

Sometimes I read erotic novels and librettos (that's a fancy French name for the script of a musical) and the King James Bible and fashion magazines. Those are the only kinds of literature that Molly owns. I don't enjoy the Bible, because it's neither creative nor well-written. I enjoy the erotica novels (which Molly hides by the dozen under her queen-sized bed) possibly a little too much.

"I am in love with Mitzi Gaynor, who is precisely the size, shape, and color of a porcelain doll."

Overall, I think that I am learning a lot in homeschool. Except I still don't know how to do long division. I'll just have to hope that it will not be relevant to my adult life.

Charley Moon Jr. Shines Down on Men

Also, I recently discovered something worrisome: that I might possibly be a Queer. It's very confusing. All of the people I love and admire (such as Molly and the three Girls outside my window and especially Mitzi Gaynor) are Girls. But all of the people I want to kiss on the lips are Boys. When I confided this to Molly, she laughed like a lark, and said, "Honey, me too!"

If I actually grow up to be a Queer, I will have a grand total of FOUR terrible diseases in the eyes of the Doctors:

- 1.) Albinism
- 2.) Photophobia
- 3.) Crippling Social Anxiety
- 4.) Homosexuality

On the bright side, Homosexuality is probably easier to disguise than Albinism.

Charley Moon Jr. Applies his Stage Makeup

Molly must be unhappy with how she made me the first time. She is always trying to make me over. We both know full well that even beauty salon magic is not

enough to break all my curses. Nonetheless, every single day, Molly tries her hardest to disguise me as a normal person.

She smears creams and powders and glosses over my white skin. She buys movie-star sunglasses at the Dollar General to protect my fuschia eyes. She even dyes my white hair to match her color of the month. In the past I've been a brunette and a redhead, but currently I am a blonde. Molly says this means I'll have more fun.

The whole time, Molly gossips like a tabloid magazine. Today's gossip is as follows:

Donna Mayfield, the mayor's wife, took too many little white pills and walked down Main Street in her birthday suit.

Walter King, who lords over fields and fields of genetically modified corn, swears on God, the Devil, and everyone in-between that he saw a U.F.O. The aliens must not like the look of us, because nobody got abducted.

Abigail Boone (née Atkins), last year's Prom Queen, had her baby only seven months after the bolt-action shotgun wedding. Good thing the Atkins family is not much for math.

Randy Fletcher, the town's criminal, is back in jail again, this time probably for good.

"A white Moon and a bright Star shining out in the big, empty, American sky."

Soon enough, it's time to try and emerge from my chrysalis. For an hour or two or three, we stand by the hopeful screen door. We look out over the grey-green earth and the indigo sky. Molly whispers soft encouragements to me. But I just stand silent and lifeless, like the alabaster statue I am.

Charlie Moon Jr. Catches a Star

I wash off my stage makeup and take off my costume. My soft white body gets tangled up in my soft white sheets. I look up at the full Moon, who gave her name to my Father. Then, my Father gave his name to me. I don't imagine I'll give my name to any new Moons. It's a lonely way to be.

And that's when I spot her, through the lacey curtains:

Mitzi Gaynor, in the flesh.

Star of such films as *South Pacific*, *Les Girls*, and especially *There's No Business Like Show Business*. Admittedly, she looks slightly more wrinkled in real life than in the movies. But it's not 1954 anymore; you can't blame her for growing up and growing old. Her costume for tonight's show is a pearl necklace and a hospital gown and a fox fur stole. She stands underneath the yellow glow of a single streetlight. Or maybe it's a spotlight.

Obviously, I have no choice. I climb out the window and shimmy down the drainpipe and run off into the star-spangled night. It's so late, there is no Sunshine to hate me. Just Moonshine to love me. I taste outside air on my tongue, cool and sweet.

I follow her through the spiderweb streets, all the way to the old train station. Mitzi Gaynor is catching a midnight train, possibly to Alabama or Hollywood. Apparently, she doesn't know that passenger trains don't stop in East Eden anymore.

Up close, teardrops glimmer in her dark-colored eyes. After all these years, she still looks like a porcelain doll.

Mitzi says, "Hello, strange Boy." I say, "Hello, Mitzi Gaynor."

Mitzi says, "The Doctors say I'm senile, but I don't believe it." I say, "The Doctors say I'm Albino, and I believe it."

Mitzi says, "I escaped from the old folk's home." I say, "I escaped from my home, too."

Mitzi says, "I like your eyes. They look pretty, like ruby gems." I say, "Thank you. I like your performance of 'Alexander's Ragtime Band.'"

Mitzi says, "I am not Mitzi Gaynor, you know." It's sad that she's senile

and older than hills (except Illinois is flat). It's sad that she's forgotten she's a Star.

Just to be nice, I say, "That's okay. I am Charley Moon."

We wait all through the night for the train that isn't coming. A white Moon and a bright Star shining out in the big, empty, American sky.

Budding Night



Julian Gottfried

Waterproof

Cassandra James

When I turned on WPLG Local 10 at 6 a.m. like always, the weatherman said it wasn't going to rain today, and I trusted him, with his stern furrowed brow and his crisp yellow button-down, Daniel, Antonio, whatever his beautiful name was, so I wore my real-cow leather pumps and didn't pack my new umbrella, I left for my 8 o'clock shift at Morning Star Financial Planning where I convince people to go into debt for a living, where people sometimes catch the irony of my last name, Enterrado, though most of the time they don't, where I trim their lives down to numbers on a spreadsheet,

and that's where I was walking, Morning Star Financial Planning, when it poured, out of nowhere, a bucket dumped from skyscraper height, turning my shoes to fish tanks, and I had to hold my files above my head, which soaked them, so I can't tell now whether my client is a billionaire or broke, I don't know whether to bring them an Italian seltzer or a free mint, and my anxiety is multiplied by the state of my hair, which looks like a coiled rat, my mother is always telling me to loosen up, let it go—breathe in, breathe out—but if I let this hair clump go it just might scamper into a storm

**"I could've
practiced
letting words
leave my
mouth instead
of dying like
crippled birds
on my tongue
but now I can't
go anywhere"**

drain on tiny-rodent feet and isn't this their job, all those human weather vanes, aren't they built with special noses, special nodes in their fingertips for forecasting, predicting, reducing lightning to percentages, nimbostratus clouds to pixels, don't they read the skies like books and pronounce their golden gospel, sunny with a chance at 3 p.m., you see, today I would've gone on a lunch date with Miguel who is an aspiring actor, I say aspiring because that's how he says it, with a sideways grin that makes his canines look sharp, he reminds me of Clark Gable only shorter and it would be something

new, to go out on a date, to go out with someone like Miguel, I could've felt pretty, or skinny, or at the very least not fat, I could've flipped my hair out of my eyes and winked one gorgeous eye, I could've practiced letting words leave my mouth instead of dying like crippled birds on my tongue but now I can't go anywhere, it's a facade, those weathermen, with their rented suits and Doppler radar, the loving way they weave their hands around the waists of Maria and Sandy and Katrina, their meteorologist bobbleheads crowned in fancy labels, precipitation and cumulonimbus, long-letter parades for a cats and dogs storm and I don't think it's much to ask, am I right, just morning news that you can count on, at least that's what I told my father in a letter when I was seven years old and desperate, long before I knew for sure that he was never coming back, I said, Dad, here's a house (I sketched it out and everything), Mama's the roof, you're the foundation, I knew I'd never be an artist when he didn't write me back and what I'm saying is Biblical, let your yes be yes, your no be no, but this weatherman just looked at me through my living room TV screen and said no chance, no rain on the horizon, as if Daniel/Antonio has an emergency line to God, I mean, Mama has one too, it comes pre-packaged with motherhood, apparently, batteries not included, she only uses it on me, she's

ringing heaven off the hook and demanding instant grand-babies, she set me up with her friend's son Miguel because I "need to act my age," and I don't know how to do that, I don't know how to be twenty-two or carefree like a girl in a Corona beer ad, how can anyone be carefree when life comes at such a price but when you say no chance of rain, no chance of flood, no chance of water turned freight train in the dark, well, then, I'll plan my beach trips and take my sick days, book ridiculous dates with ridiculous men and I won't be ready, I won't be ready for the one percent in a hundred, the knife-blade margin of error where everything flips upside down and wrong. I'll be in the bathroom of Morning Star Financial Planning—I'll be smoothing my frenzied hair—I'll be heating my shirt under a hand dryer—I'll be wringing my skirt over a sink—I'll be thinking about Miguel—I'll be pouting my lips and grimacing—and my cellphone will be drowned, so I won't get the call from Miami General Hospital, it'll go straight to voicemail while I drag paper

towels between my toes and then my father will call me for the first time in ten years, and he'll croak hi honey, hi sweetheart, and I'll ask who is this because I won't recognize the truth of his voice and he'll say Jeff, honey, it's Jeff and I'll say don't call me honey, don't call me at all, and he'll say I'm not calling for me, and I'll listen for thirty-two seconds exactly before hanging up, then I'll drop my files to the bathroom floor and stumble to the bus stop shoeless, I'll tie a mask over my mouth and pant all the way to the ER, and the woman behind the desk will say I'm sorry, you can't see her—I can't see my own mother—you'll have to wait like all the others, look, they have her on a ventilator but it's close, too close, a fifty-fifty shot, and how's that for a weather report?

You should've told me, Daniel/Antonio. You should've told me about the rain. If you'd told me, and if I'd known, I would've brought my new umbrella. I would've worn a raincoat. I wouldn't have curled my hair. I would've made myself waterproof.

Dog's First Snow

Julia M. Walton

The video I have captured
is too long, I must edit,
cut it
down to fifteen seconds

I only want to see
the leaping part

snowflakes dusted on white fur

I want to develop this skill, wipe away
all that's not happiness
If frame it perfectly, only this:

a pearl-toothed grin
in circles pushing up
tiny snowdrifts



Courtesy of IMDB

WHAT WE'RE
LOVING:
WINTER
BREAK 2020
EDITION

Batya Stein

Ted Lasso

As someone who feels at best neutral towards most forms of organized sports, I found myself surprisingly invested in Ted Lasso, a comedy about an American football coach hired to turn around a failing British football (soccer) team. What sounds like

the setup to a joke (and, in fact, originated as a sketch from an NBC commercial) is turned into an exploration of forgiveness and friendship that is given genuine emotional heft by its well-rounded characters. Ted, the titular coach, is unfailingly optimistic in his

attempts to build up the team's trust in themselves and each other. His optimism is saved from becoming outright naivete, however, through the insights we're given into his own struggles with his slowly declining marriage. He's not a cartoon character, cheerful to the point of delusion, but someone who chooses deliberately and repeatedly to view the world with curiosity and compassion instead of judgement.

The show's emphasis on honesty means that interpersonal problems are dealt with head-on, precluding the kind of drawn-out drama hinging on a lack of basic communication that often frustrates me in sitcoms. The female characters, too, are given fully formed ambitions and friendships, and the dialogue takes an unexpected delight in wordplay: "What if I joined forces with a swashbuckling cat to play tiny guitars for women of the night as we read Alex Haley's most seminal work?" "You'd be in cahoots with Puss in Boots playing lutes for prostitutes reading 'Roots'."

By the season's final match, even I, who has been known to root for the opposing team if it means a game might end more quickly, felt as caught up as the screaming fans in the (fictional) stands. Spoiler alert: the team doesn't win, in the end. They face a demotion from their premier league as a result. Not even Ted can simply take this

loss in stride. Yes, it is sad, he tells his dejected players afterwards in the locker room. But at least, and most importantly, none of them are sad alone.

Cheesy? Maybe. But honestly, as I sit typing this up from my single in quarantine, being able to sit with a bad situation and know that I'm surrounded by friends is something I'd give a lot to do right now.

"But at least, and most importantly, none of them are sad alone."

self-entanglement



Sandra Yang

CONTRI BUTORS

ADITI DESAI '24 is a rising sophomore from New Jersey studying English with certificates in Cognitive Science and Global Health Policy. She likes using statistics to predict just how not-round her bagels will be, spending (multiple) nights down the shore, and pretending to know how to play chess.

JULIAN GOTTFRIED '24 is a freshman from London, Chicago, or Philadelphia, depending on the time of day. He's a birdwatcher, and so he's studying ecology. He also takes photos.

BEN GUZOVSKY '23 is a rising junior and History major. This summer, he'll be translating Russian writer Isaac Babel's short stories into English. Their protagonist's name is Ben, too, but protagonist Ben is also a mobster so hopefully the similarities end there.

CASSANDRA JAMES '23 is a sophomore studying English with certificates in Creative Writing, Theater, and Music Theater. Her lesser-known talents include eating avocados, collecting Disney merch, and hunting for the wardrobe to Narnia.

JIMIN KANG '21 is a senior from Seoul, South Korea and Hong Kong in the Spanish & Portuguese department. At Princeton she has worked mainly in journalism, literary translation and creative non-fiction, but poetry has held—and will always hold—a special place in her heart.

SAL KANG '24 (she/he/they) is a professional sluggard and occasional writer who spends most of their free time sleeping and reading Anne Carson. She was born in South Korea.

LARA KATZ '24 is currently planning to major in Comparative Literature with a certificate in

Creative Writing. She loves Latin, curling (the sport), and not following recipes.

CORDELIA LOWRY '23 is a rising junior from Boulder, Colorado studying sociology and Persian language. She has captured photographs of landscapes (both near and far) and portraits of loved ones since she was young. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, cooking, and listening to podcasts.

EMMA MCMAHON '21 is a senior from the Chicago suburbs studying Geosciences. When she's not drawing, you can find her by the ocean, hiking with her dog Huckleberry, or devouring copious amounts of donuts.

EMMA MOHRMANN '24 is an artist from St. Louis, MO. She has enjoyed creating art that focuses on projections and self perception, along with art that explores and questions mental states, time, change, and growth. One of her favorite phrases for art and life is "trust the process" and she tries to find beauty in everyday moments.

CARY MOORE '24 (pre-covid '23) is a sophomore from New York. She realized several things over her gap year, but her major was not one of them.

MEGAN PAN '22 is a junior from Short Hills, NJ concentrating in comparative literature with certificates in theater, creative writing, and Asian American studies. These days she can mostly be found organizing her makeup collection, cuddling her husband pillow, and sinking more hours into Stardew Valley. Due to personal reasons, she is evil now.

RODRIGO PICHARDO '21 is a senior from San Jose, California majoring in Spanish with

Latin American Studies and Creative Writing certificates. He loves playing zombie video games and hanging out with his cat, Vito. Sometimes he binge-watches Youtube videos.

JEREMY PULMANO '21 is a senior from New Jersey studying computer science with a certificate in creative writing. Now that he's finished his two theses, he's not sure what to do with himself. Maybe sleep twice.

DREW PUGLIESE '23 is a sophomore from Northern New Jersey studying art history and vis. Caesar salad and pizza are his passions. You can probably find him hanging around Brooklyn making/ordering/eating caesar salad and/or pizza.

KATIE ROHRBAUGH '24 is a sophomore from Orlando, Florida interested in studying history and environmental science. She loves ancient architecture, listening to the Strokes, mumbling, and letting her mind wander.

MEERA SASTRY '23 hails from Los Angeles and studies comparative literature. She is the new mother of a spunky cat who failed to beat teen pregnancy.

BATYA STEIN '22 is a junior from central Jersey (it does exist) studying English and computer science. She can be found around campus eating ice cream, sitting on various rooftops, and trying to convince people to play just one more round of anagrams with her. She does not believe in matching her socks.

SIERRA STERN '24 is a freshman from Los Angeles with no concrete major but a very severe Ernest Hemingway complex. When she isn't asking herself WWEDIHWAPYWOC (What Would Ernest Do If He Were A Plucky Young Woman of Color?), she is

working to assemble an encyclopedic knowledge of every teen movie and rom-com ever.

GRADY TREXLER '24 is a freshman from outside of Richmond, Virginia, studying linguistics, philosophy, or something else. He is currently using a bamboo toothbrush.

JULIA M. WALTON '21 is an English concentrator with certificates in Creative Writing, Humanistic Studies, and East Asian Studies. Her creative work has previously appeared in *Arch & Arrow*, *COUNTERCLOCK*, *The Nassau Literary Review*, and *The Best Teen Writing of 2016*. She currently serves as Editor-in-Chief Emerita for The Nassau Literary Review and will miss Nass Lit very much after she graduates.

HENRY WRIGHT '23 is currently on a gap year trying to "find himself" for the third time. He is studying Economics, Cognitive Science and Creative Writing. His accent can usually be found drowning in the Atlantic somewhere between New York and London.

SANDY YANG '22 is a junior from northern New Jersey studying English and dabbling in art now and then. You'll probably find her in Murray-Dodge breaking the 1-2 cookies rule when the basement is back open again.

BRIONY ZHAO '24 is a part-time writer, part-time-artist, and full-time squanderer/imp/prevaricator from Beijing, China. Her preferred superpower is the ability to speak in different tongues, but she can barely hold a pen with one tongue. She loves indie rock music, the smell of linseed oil, food in Twin Peaks, and cats in Murakami novels.

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