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1996 – 1997



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Poetry

*Kirby Wright*  
*Susan Lucinda Helwig*  
*Allison Grayhurst*  
*Jessica Hopkins*  
*Greg Kennedy*  
*Jonathan Yam*  
*Kate Wagner*  
*D. Lerech*  
*Sarah J. Kligman*  
*Marie Carrière*

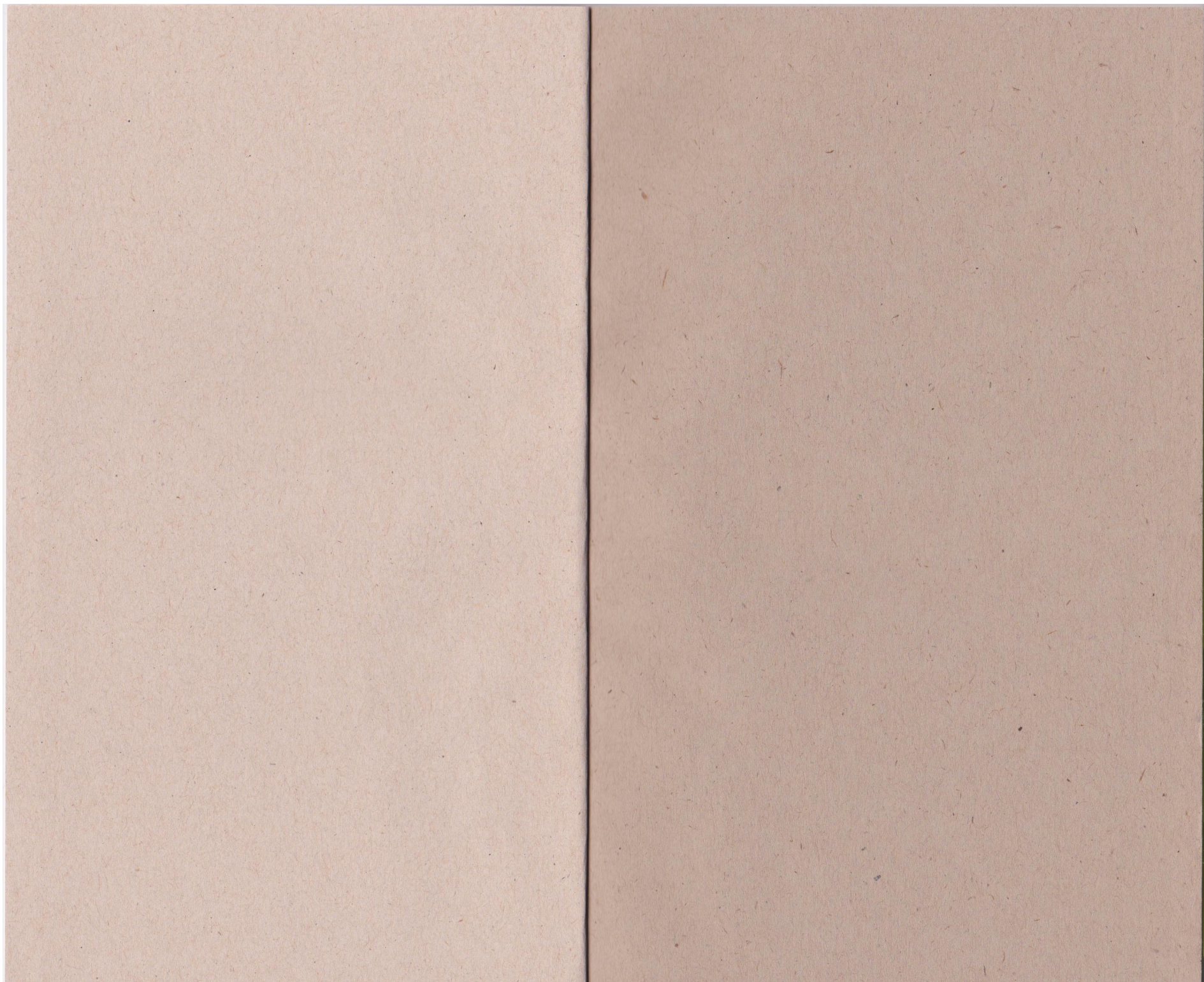
Fiction

*Sarah Elton*  
*Andrew Loung*  
*Richard Preiss*

Photography

*Christine Ho*  
*Brady Maeck*

1996 – 1997



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The  
University College  
Literary Review

1996-1997

University College,  
University of Toronto

## The University College Review

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Assistant Editor Sarah Michealis

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The staff of the 1996-97 U.C. Review would like to thank all those brave souls who submitted their work for consideration. As a result, this year we are proud to present an outstanding selection of poetry, fiction and photography for our readers.

We would also like to thank the U.C. Alumni Association, the Creative Writing Committee and the Norma Epstein Foundation for making publication of the U.C. Review possible. Special thanks to the Norma Epstein Foundation for their generous support this year.

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Submissions for the U.C. Review should be dropped off at, or mailed to, the U.C. Registrar's Office, University College, 15 King's College Circle, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1A1. The U.C. Review accepts typed submissions of poetry, fiction, artistic pieces, essays, interviews, photography and camera ready artwork. Unpublished submissions will remain at the U.C. Registrar's Office for one month before being recycled, unless a SASE is included with the work.

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## *Retirement and the Home Boy*

He refused to go overseas with his wife a second time because that first trip he'd had a nasty case of diarrhea on a bus touring Lisbon. He hated to travel because it meant waiting around in airports and going on tours and tipping strangers. He hated changing dollars and hailing cabs and shopping for knickknacks. He'd refused to stroll with his wife to the Eiffel Tower because he thought thugs would frisk him and discover his money belt.

When his wife suggested a Mexican cruise might be easier on his nerves, he pictured two weeks of hurricanes, heaving decks, and Montezuma's revenge. He said it was a good time for her to fly to Boston and visit her mother, while he concentrated on gardening and home improvements.

She left him a month later for a steward she met in economy class.

KIRBY WRIGHT

*calvin klein is a denim sex hypnotist*

two mannequins were caught  
making love in the store window.  
they had record sales in jeans that day.

JONATHON YAM

*Breakdown*

It's obviously her fault  
the stiff-necked way  
she keeps her head staring west  
the stab of her belligerent arm  
the relentless pattern of the feet.

No, I'd say he's to blame  
the determined twist  
of the gaze to the east  
his forearm thrusting out like a boxer  
those firm unchanging steps.

That furious tango.

SUSAN LUCINDA HELWIG

## *Early Poems*

I labour in a muddy garden, nurse  
colic tomato plants, limp  
victims of last night's cut-worm;  
little grows in my thick-seeded rows;  
Where are the August Atwood plums,  
the purple fruit of pungent harvest?  
Every day I plod through the plot,  
heavy clay sticking to my black rubber boots.

SUSAN LUCINDA HELWIG

## *Canaries*

Breasts are like canaries  
sent down into the coal mine  
I say  
and everyone laughs, especially Sandra  
grit like an oyster;  
when you're twenty-two  
cancer isn't the mutator it will become

Peter tries to settle them down.  
She means the disease kills the breasts first,  
a warning, as it were.  
He knows about my surgery next week

I'm angry at the rest,  
bird brain crosses my mind,  
then suddenly appalled  
using a man's turn of phrase  
to win.

SUSAN LUCINDA HELWIG



## *Lentils*

Pieces of your love are still around the house  
though I can't stir them back together  
into a family-sized soup  
I keep finding one here and there  
like a cup of lentils spilled on the floor last winter  
I thought I'd cleaned up thoroughly  
those from behind the fridge so durable and cold  
I'm glad for each one, not for nourishment  
but to sweep the kitchen clean  
once and for all.

SUSAN LUCINDA HELWIG

## *Old Baldy*

Ah to jump.  
For one moment to fly  
Scuttering upon the air currents which blow my shirt and define my figure.

The white cedar to my left,  
Gnarled with age  
A watchful tenant upon the creviced face.

A thousand cracks and indentations chronicle the many storms he's weathered.  
Thompson would be jealous.  
His jack pines never told such a story.

As I fall, I should look above —  
Towards the sky  
Stretching for a thousand miles beyond the puffs of transformagination.

And finally to see the underbelly.  
Less regal than his cloak of brown feathers, but no less graceful than his cousin.  
They say nobility lies in the contours of the face.  
Vulture — impersonator!  
Old Baldy is a gentleman.  
(Written following a trip to Old Baldy Conservation Area, Kimberly, Ontario.)

JESSICA HOPKINS



*"untitled"* / Brady Maeck

## *Animal Sanctuary*

He turns his hawk head  
to view the shell of turtles streaking  
the still-shroud of water in tanks  
as blue as sky.

He lifts a leg and talons tensed,  
pivots to defend against an enclosing shadow.

With whitish eyes and an unquenchable urge  
to fly, he hops along his man-made perch toward  
the cages where squirrels leap  
from metal to wood, scattering like leaves  
in unpredictable flurry.

He listens to the ducks' lipless sounds.

Spring, he will never experience again, nor know  
the scent of a pent-up life released like  
sunflowers blooming, or the feel of the moon,  
colder but more comforting than being touched.

He is without time or tribe,  
and like fire, he haunts  
by just being.

ALLISON GRAYHURST

*The Orlandobury Tales Prologue Lines 1—18*  
(With my apologies to Geoffrey Chaucer)

- 1 whan that Decembre with their Canadian snowe
- 2 The droghte of winter hath mak them colde
- 3 And so it maken them to feyne pilgramages
- 4 To the place where all is fun for every age
- 5 whan families with their smale children
- 6 so packeth automobiles to the brimen
- 7 And slepen al the nyght at cheap moteles
- 8 In soothe of Mason Dixon, with southen belles
- 9 And the yonge ones hath in their dreames
- 10 A special mouse nome Mickey as it seemes
- 11 Thanne longen folk to heare soothern drawle
- 12 To ferne in restaurants of gritts and waffle
- 13 And though the yonge battle in back seates
- 14 The parentes hir drive three dayes through the states
- 15 And anticipated aires near trips ende
- 16 Of Toronto to Orlandobury they wende
- 17 The hooly blissful Walt Disney Worlde for to seke
- 18 That hen hath holpen see Space Mountain and parade

SARAH J. KLIGMAN

Ruth and Kitty

It wasn't supposed to snow but it did anyway and Ruth put on her Birkenstock sandals without socks. Technically winter had gone the day before last. Still it lingered, overstaying its welcome and toying with Ruth's emotions. She longed for days when she could slosh through mud-puddles and sit on the verandah reading the comics on Saturday morning.

Ruth hated winter.

Just to make sure that the cold outside was real, Ruth scratched at the frost on the window pane before turning off the TV. Then, with ice crystals burning under her fingernails, she picked up the converter and pressed power. It was time for her to go out. She was meeting Kitty in forty-five minutes.

As Ruth left the apartment she made sure not to lock the door. She walked down the hall suspiciously, scoping for spies. She didn't trust anybody anymore.

Ruth was stressed. The door was unlockable because Ruth had dropped her key down a sewer drain and didn't have a spare. The superintendent could get her another but only in two weeks because of complications with the locksmith. This meant two weeks of intense vulnerability and acute stress.

The superintendent was slow. Ruth was convinced that this was the result of inhaling too much nail-polish remover in the small basement office. But the super did wear the loveliest colours on her nails: fortifying fuchsia, sly cinnamon, Beaujolais. Ruth never had the courage to beautify herself with such frivolities. So

Ruth wore nail polish vicariously through the superintendent and didn't complain out loud about the unusual key delay.

Outside it was colder than Ruth had expected. The tips of her toes immediately turned a colour reminiscent of fortifying fuchsia.

But the walk wasn't that bad. The wind barely blew, her coat was warm, the sidewalks were shoveled and soon she couldn't even feel her toes.

Ruth started to skip.

Ruth kept on skipping for quite a while. She skipped down Dundas, up a small side street and then onto College. She skipped so quickly that winter seemed to be only a blur passing by.

And then Ruth fell. She fell hard on her right hip and her eyes smarted with the pain. She swore and started to stand up when she saw what she had slipped on. It was a stray bouquet: red tulips and small yellow flowers with babies' breath in a purple cellophane wrapper.

On the sidewalk was the blood of a crushed petal.

Ruth bent down and picked up the bouquet. She tried to imagine where it came from. Someone was missing their tulip bouquet. Ruth figured that she might as well bring it along and give it to Kitty who liked flowers and chocolates. Kitty was always dating men who came to her apartment with "After Eights" and roses tucked under their arm.

Ruth got to University Avenue and crossed the street halfway to the wide island that divided the lanes of traffic where she and Kitty had planned to have a picnic.

Ruth sat down on a bench, curled up her toes and began to wait for Kit.

The medicine cabinet mirror was already steamed up. On the window panes the ice melted slowly and the bath was the perfect temperature. Kitty's flesh glowed red.

Making sure that her skin didn't touch the cold metal of the soap holder, she placed her legs up on the sides of the bathtub and then slid her back down deeper into the hot water so that only the tips of her nipples poked out from the surface. Bath time brought out the most sensual part of her persona. She was sexy when she inhaled the humid air. She was sexy when she let drips fall from her elbow onto the linoleum floor. She was also sexy after she cleansed and purified her entire body. The water soaked all the impurities out from her pores.

It was still winter and Kitty did not want to go outside. The thought of cold air on her bare hands repulsed her — especially when it was supposed to be spring. She was relieved when she woke up to a day-off, free from obligation and could relax in the tub.

"Rub-a-dub-dub cute Kitty's in the tub," she thought and flicked at the water.

Kitty's favorite thing to do in the bath was to daydream. She would fantasize about things in her life.

Roger.

He was the first person she thought of as the water crawled up her body when she slid into the bath. She would think about Roger.

Roger was her hero. She had met him at the library when he had reported to her that

pages 117 through 119 of the Journal of Herbal studies were missing — torn out. The journal had been defaced, vandalized. She was so grateful that she had put his name down on the merit list that was posted once a month on the information board. He was a library hero. Few people reported cases like these. Coincidentally, Roger had fallen in love with Kitty because it was she who had repaired the journal. She was his library hero too. That gave their relationship an interesting twist.

Ever since then, Kitty had been sublimely happy. Whenever Roger came to pick her up for a date he brought chocolates and flowers which Kitty just loved. Whenever Roger kissed her she could taste his Chlorophyll gum. Kitty just loved his minty kisses.

Roger and Kitty had been going out so often lately that Kitty was beginning to wonder if things were becoming serious between them. They had even spent a weekend together at a Bed and Breakfast in the country. Kitty hoped, without hoping too hard, that just perhaps maybe Roger would pop the question. She had also started to notice the diamond bands on show in the jewelers windows she passed on her way to work.

Kitty stretched out her bath-pruned hand in front of her and imagined a sparkly diamond on her wedding finger. Then she closed her eyes and settled deeper into the water that was still quite hot.

Ruth had started to shiver. She was hungry for the devilled eggs and pita bread Kitty had promised to bring. She was also growing very, very cold. The people in

the cars driving by did not pay any attention to her. In fact she was quite sure that they didn't even see her. In two days she could sitting on the bench, frozen stiff and still no one would notice.

The tulips were beginning to wilt. It was time, Ruth felt, to go home with or without devilled eggs. She got up from the bench and headed back down the street holding her bouquet close to her chest in an attempt to keep it warm.

A short way down Ruth noticed a beautiful vase on display in a shop window. It was red and blue and would match the tulips perfectly. Inside she told the saleswoman that she wanted to buy the vase in the window. While Ruth waited for it to be wrapped in newspaper, her toes began to thaw.

The bath water was almost tepid and it was time for Kitty to get out. She wrapped herself in her lavender bathrobe, put her wet hair up on her head in a towel, and slid into her slippers. Next her plan was to read a good book with a good cup of coffee made with fresh beans and hot milk.

Kitty scuffled out of the bathroom. The rest of the apartment was cold. Kitty shivered feeling sorry for anyone who had to be outside. She went straight to the coffee maker and spooned in the grounds. She put a saucepan on the stove and opened the fridge to get the milk. On the second shelf sat a plateful of devilled eggs adorned with paprika sprinkles and parsley.

"Oh diddle," thought Kitty and popped an egg into her mouth.

SARAH ELTON

## Ordering

Summer entree—  
of short short skirts, sandals and sarongs,  
night porch conferences on oven heat,  
water unreally blue and clear,  
apricot sunsets at nine-thirty  
and lemon dawns at five,  
—is coming.

Gnawing on rolls of the tongue—  
we check the melting progress  
curse March's last gasp  
wish he'd strangle himself faster  
go back to our midnight snacks  
of sunny stadiums,  
Yonge Street and making friends,  
humidity that makes Medusas of our hair.  
—Our stomachs knot in hunger.

Salad Days—  
baby maple buds, yellow-green shreds  
of tulip leaves and the stems of dandelions,  
ravines twice green in the creek,  
fields squelch-happy backkicking chocolate mud on our jeans  
—Spring is the appetizer.

Grueling are stuffy musty lecture halls and professors—  
bland and white and cold in the bowl of your mouth  
sweetness replaced by nutrition,  
spice for regularity.  
—Over this we can smell the kitchen wafting to us.

The door to the kitchen is open—  
set your place,  
fill your brimful goblet fuller  
wake your children from moist, half-baked dreams,  
shed down wool nylon shells,  
—Dinner is served.

D. LERECH

## untitled

Mood overtaking me, I stole downstairs  
Quiet as the frosted layer outside  
And sat to watch a new day born.

Night, tired in her revelry,  
Was creeping out of the boundaries of the sky  
Reluctantly— a stately madam anxious to stay at her last winter ball.

The elegant woman lingered on  
While tiny crystals fell and formed  
The winter's dew upon the silver ground.

Through the frosted window I gazed as she bade me farewell  
Sung it mournfully to my heart  
Softly, a murmuring only I could hear.

Her lavender dove's gown swept across my view in a waltz  
It spun, flared, lifted tantalisingly,  
For me to glimpse the golden gown of Day.

Poor Night! That her final minutes should have faded,  
Like her over-sweeping gown,  
Into strands of midnight.

In the south and east Day planned her ascent  
While still clinging to the heavy tatters  
Of Night in her quickening departure.

Now she fluffed her own skirts wide  
Arranged her virgin light to best advantage  
Shivering with chill and in anticipation of her debut.

She climbed the sky cautiously  
On padded feet that knew only silence as their falls  
Adjusting her pearl gown to adequately replace the diva that has  
departed

Day beamed. She had established her dominance  
And Night, no longer needed or seen,  
Died in the north-west with a smile upon her face

Content to let Day reign for her time  
Dance her time at the Ball,  
Until Virgin Night came to call.  
And I, chilled by the cold death of Night,  
Half awed and dazed by the dawn,  
Stumbled back upstairs to greet Day with sleep.

D. LERECH

## Sea Salt

The remnants of a kiss with the sea:  
Do you know the holler well?  
Hear the cry? The plea?  
It burns the corners of my mouth to free  
every word, every little sigh —  
everyone but me.

And to this, blinded.  
Navigating on the sniff of the seaweed  
who had once your breath — stole it for its own.  
Believed in one greater need  
should have what I have  
and live the life I lead.  
Now it is no more — all is gone —  
all of it the rivers bleed.

Sea salt lingers.  
And who is to blame now but the sand,  
for shifting and disturbing  
the very ground on which I stand?  
Nothing in this landscape can be trusted,  
Nothing is authentic on this land.  
And so the tide, only this —  
nothing else is left to reprimand.

Attune with the sound of anger against  
a towering wall of brick.  
And left on a distant lattice works of green  
the tears of a sort of heaven stick.  
The most profound sympathy to it,  
and to God's most worthy pick.  
And from it's depths, simply this —  
the sea salt that makes me sick.

But only in the sea's mirror  
lies this naked fault  
for the burning and abandonment  
and taste that will result.  
Everything — all of this — from a  
single  
grain of  
salt.

KATE WAGNER



David / Christine Ho

## *The Aging Artist*

Curse the breath of illness beating upon your flesh.  
Curse the dizzy and slow-paced walk causing you  
for the first time to know dependency.

A breaking down of smile and thoughts.  
A terrain, where even your hands can't move enough  
to create the sculptures that inspire you  
to ward off the grave.

Elizabeth, with your mind that has weathered  
an age of nagging conformity, but has risen,  
individual, brave in your isolation.

How lonely the trees must seem, peering from  
your cabin doors. How lovely the sounds of waves  
and wildlife, mingled in undying symphony.

What mourning, what wonder you must know,  
with your eyes as blue and clear as they are old,  
as you sit at your table –  
the years of longing past  
and the peace, at last, beginning.

ALLISON GRAYHURST



## Pictures, All Around

When I was a child, my parents tended to confuse me. My mother told me always to walk with my head up, so I would not bump into telephone poles or other such things. My father said I should go about with my eyes to the ground, so I would never pass up loose change or step in dog mess. Needless to say, I was always getting sore neck muscles from trying to listen to both my parents. In public, strangers would think they knew me somehow, for I was always nodding at them, it seemed.

This is how I found her, when I was twelve and did not know where to look.

"Hello, excuse me," the lady beside her said. She was gripping the young girl's arm as the two of them got off the bus. I had gotten in the way of the girl's walking stick, its long, slender shaft ending in a point that sniffed out an arc of ground before her like the snout of an aardvark. It came to a suspicious halt at the side of my foot.

"Could you help this young lady across the street?" the woman asked. "Good boy," she said, and moved off before I could answer. I stared at my new companion. We mirrored each other in size and age. The shorts we both wore exposed four skinny legs. She had a proportional slenderness, though, a neat symmetry and posture, while I seemed more a lanky composition of loose hinges and limbs. Our knapsacks were the same shade of worn gray-green, the same shade of vervet monkeys. The dark sunglasses over her eyes blended into the early summer sundown that was already tinting the city.

"Hi," I said, tugging at the tattered hem of my untucked teeshirt.

"Is she gone?" she asked.

"Yup."

"She smelled like oranges. And she kept running her hand over my head and saying 'my brave little one'."

"I just had a Big Mac," I said. I offered this of myself to her for final adjudication. She responded by holding out her hand. I did not know what else to do but take it in my own, and for that one moment I felt her palm imprint upon mine.

She flung away my hand. "No silly, just walk beside me and I'll hold on to your arm." Her voice forced its way through the thick heat of my flaring blush. I checked around for witnesses to my blunder, and then took my position beside her, her flawed yet dutiful tin-soldier. We waded across the inky street, and I was extra vigilant, on guard against charging headlights in the brimming dusk.

We reached the other side but she did not let go, her hand at my bare elbow causing my breath to hasten. This act of clinging wrapped me in exhilaration, not so much in the sense of a physical intimacy, but rather, for provoking abstract notions of a vested, enduring connection, the type that existed only for adults.

All I could think to say was, "Do you live around here?"

She responded that no, she did not, and then left a silence in which I hoped she would tell me where.

"Which way is Ruebens Park?" she asked instead. "I have to meet my parents there."

"I'll take you."

"Thank you," she said, and the stern trust encased in those two words made me feel gloriously heroic.

It was not a long walk to the park, and in that short distance we remained quiet except for a brief burst of words in which I learned that she attended a "special" school named after the saints Cosmas and Damian. "I stay late for arts and crafts sometimes, but my parents don't like it," she said.

"Me too," I said quickly, reveling in each bit of information she gave to me. "Except that it's soccer, and my parents don't really mind."

We reached the verge of Ruebens Park and waited, but nobody approached. "I guess they're not here yet," I said, trying to sound protective but only coming out tense. I hoped she would have to rely on me for a little while longer.

"You've been super," she said, and I felt the words echo in my lungs as I held my breath. "They'll be here soon. Thanks again."

"I'll wait with you," I said. "It's getting —" (I was going to say "dark", but would that have had meaning for her?) "— late." The last of the sun had bled out into a bronze hide, stretched across the sky between a swab of taupe clouds and the horizon; night was swelling up in its place with spectral solemnity.

She smiled, and it reached me like a luminous butterfly. "Is there somewhere we can sit down?" she asked. "I'm awfully tired."

"Well, there's a bench in the park. But it's way over behind this great big hill." I started to point, and when I put my arm down quickly, realized that both actions were equally of no need.

"Let's sit on the hill, then," she suggested.

"Okay." And we ventured through the darkened park spread glumly out before us in a dapple-gray tones, the hushed silhouettes of maple trees swaying in a soft breeze, their pistachio-coloured leaves turned to shadow along the sweep of evening. The hill seemed more a mountain as we approached it, then crashing over us like an umber wave. But it was not steep, and we gained the top with our childlike instinctive ease. I slipped once, and she called out from the loss of contact. My chest folded in with that: it was a sensation that hollowed me out.

I led her to a spot of thickened grass, and, unburdening ourselves of knapsacks, we sat: she, knees bent up together; myself cross-legged. The closeness of her shoulder to mine was like the warmth of a fire. On that rise of ground, everything else around us seemed so far off: a blurred shape moved distantly in the park, a hobo scrounging, perhaps. The night proved deep. The sky was changing from cocoa to sable, and zinc-coloured stars had begun to freckle its broad face. The moon had come out, round and full, a great smooth porcelain wheel.

Her features were becoming lost to me in the dark: the cupid's bow of her upper lip; the high, pale forehead that creased as she concentrated; the concave profile of her nose turning slightly convex when she smiled; her trim throat undulating when she swallowed. It is a curious thing, to watch a person beside you when you know she cannot look back, the closed detachment of examining art mixed with the breathless trepidation of voyeurism. Strange, I thought, how it both delighted and saddened me to know she could not return my stare.

She bumped my elbow with her own. "What are you looking at?" she asked, startling me.

I turned away from her face so my voice would not betray me. “Nothing. The sky,” I lied.

“Tell me what you see.”

“Huh?” What a monumental request.

“Are there stars up there?” she said. “Can you see the moon? Describe them to me. Please, tell me about the moon.” Her plea was an ache that traveled through me in staccato rhythms.

“It’s a full moon.”

“Is it beautiful?” she asked. A strange question, one of those that seem arbitrary at first, but never really, because of intent, rings empty.

“Nah,” I said. “I’ve heard that those guys who first landed on the moon found it so boring, they didn’t want to stay long. Couldn’t find anything to do, so they split. Didn’t even spend the weekend.”

“Oh.”

“Actually,” I immediately tried to compensate. “It does look pretty cool from here. I guess you don’t get the full effect when you’re lumbering about on its surface in a big fat space suit with a fish bowl on your head.”

“Yeah, maybe those astronaut guys got gypped. They should’ve just come here.”

No, I thought. *This is only for us.* How I wished she knew that. But she was laughing, and I could think of nothing else that mattered so much to me. I took up a ladybug and placed it on her leg. She noticed, and let it run to her finger.

She asked me again to tell her about the moon, and I searched desperately for images I could share with her.

“It’s like a glistening pearl in a pool of black oil,” I tried. “The pearl remains clean because the oil runs off it, just as the moon still shines in the dark of night. Or maybe, it’s like my mom’s best plate of china, on display on the top shelf of the china cabinet, where everyone can appreciate it.”

“Yes,” she said, and that was all I needed.

“And the stars?” she asked.

“Well, I guess it’s like the sequins on my mom’s black velvet evening gown. Or—what’s that thing the blind use to read?”

“Braille.”

“Yeah, stars are like Braille. They actually form words and pictures up there, like the Big Dipper.”

“They have stars that spell out ‘Big Dipper?’”

“I suppose. Somewhere.”

Words were something entirely different for her, I thought. How strenuous it must be for her to read, it being a much longer journey from hands to brain than from eyes to brain. I imagined what a Bible would be like in Braille, immense and medieval.

“So,” she said, “are they beautiful?”

“Beauty is only skin deep.” It was all I knew of the subject, and I hoped it would be enough.

“What does that mean?”

“Um, well, if someone was to tell you that you were beautiful,” I found myself saying, “would you know what that person meant?”

"No, but tell me anyway."

I was taken aback by this, and what she meant, I am still uncertain. But it drew me closer in. I leaned towards her (to whisper something? What else? I cannot say, it evades my memory). The dim but disruptive scent of cherry lipstick soaked through the more pristine smells of the park: sassafras and lilac and catnip. Our faces were so very close just then...

She rapped me hard across my chest with her walking stick. "Ow! Hey!" I fell backwards against the ground, sprawled out on my back.

"Oh, sorry," she said. "Just checking where you were. There was a weird silence." She was smiling, one corner of her mouth turned up like the tilting of a pair of scales.

I sat back up, rubbing my chest. "Ahem. Yes. I'm sorry I couldn't do better. About the moon and the stars, I mean. Do you want me to try again?"

She was still a moment, and then sighed through her nostrils. "I once had sight, you know," she said. "Born with it. But I lost it in an accident when I was very young."

"You mean you could see?" My voice was high and hollow, as if I were screaming into an empty cathedral. I felt betrayed by this confession, as if she were not the same person, as if her blindness were only a mask put on to fool me. I stood up. "Why did you make me describe all that stuff to you? You've seen them before, but you pretended not to." I walked off a few feet.

"I was little when I lost my sight," she said. "I guess I have seen all those things, the moon and the stars and the sky, but I never really looked at them. I..."

She paused. "...I just wanted to see them again. You did that for me. Thank you. I'm sorry, though."

I did not move.

"Are you there?" she asked. "Hello?" She lifted her neck, like a prairie dog peering over tall grass, a frantic motion, a helpless gesture. "Please, don't leave," she called out, and my heart turned in my chest.

I sat beside her again. "I'm here."

She was sniffing. "Please don't leave," she repeated.

"Never," I whispered. I meant it.

"Do you understand?" she asked, turning towards me as if she could read my face for an answer. This unsettled me. "I never really looked at them, the way you let me look at them."

"Yes," I said. "I understand"

She reached into the pocket of her shorts, brought out a stick of gum, her last piece she said, and gave me half.

"Hey," she said.

"What?"

"I know what beautiful is."

"Yeah?"

"Beautiful is anything you can share with someone else."

"Even pain?" I asked.

After a moment's hesitation, "Even pain."

I put my hand on the ground beside her, palm down. She found it with her own,

placing it, shaking, on top. We sat like that, in tremulous silence, for a time that seemed our own forever.

I did not see her parents until they came charging up our hill, hollering and waving their arms angrily. She held on to my hand briefly as they grabbed her and then pulled her away. They screamed and cursed and pointed at their watches, and I think her father threatened me with physical harm, but she remained calm and silently subdued.

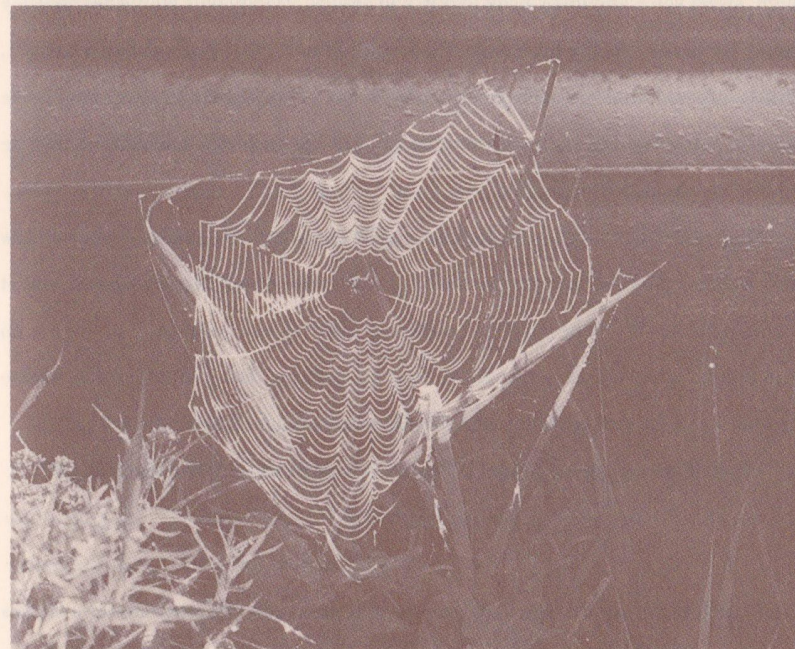
I desperately wanted to call out for her name, but dared not in the midst of all that chaos. Or shout my own name out to her. It did not matter, I knew. As she was being led away, the last I saw of her was her head turning back to me with a saddened half-smile. Was she trying to locate me for a final time? Should I have called out something? Anything?

She mouthed something to me.

But it was too dark, and she too far.

I am older now, and she recedes in my memory, as an ice cube recedes in warm water. But each time I close my eyes I see her, as, I'm sure, she sees me.

ANDREW LOUNG



*untitled* / Brady Maeck

## Seven Scenes

When he is small his parents put him in the back seat and go for a long drive. His stubby legs poke out over the edge of the seat like little thumbs. His mother puts on the radio and it plays lots of strange, funny songs and she sings along in her high, sweet voice and looks back to him and smiles. Daddy puts on the heat so they won't get cold from the crisp winter air outside and the car floods with a moist, queasy warmth that makes him feel safe. From where he sits he can't see where they're going but when they go over bumps his stomach lifts and flutters and he knows they're going really fast.

The car flows over the road, frictionless, like a dream. He stares out the window and watches the trees and people flash by, so fast it's all a blur rushing past him at impossible speed. As he watches he narrows his eyes and imagines that there is no car, that he is the one moving. He is running, running, faster than light, so fast he is floating, the world parting before him like two endless ribbons.

His fingers curl silently around the cold metal of the door handle, and grip.

\* \* \*

In school the girl learns about words and numbers. Seven times two makes fourteen. Nine divided by three makes three. Anything divided by zero is infinity, higher than you can ever count. There are numbers hidden within numbers, her teacher tells them.

She likes words especially. They have spelling tests, write stories. In the margins

of her notebook she keeps a list of the words she likes most. Telephone, velvet, fireman. Her teacher says that sometimes you can look really hard at a word and the thing it talks about will be there, inside it, a picture in your head. She tries it with fireman and sees a man on fire, his arms waving.

She plays with the words, makes them change shape, mean different things. Her teacher says there is no limit to how many words there can be.

One day her family goes out to the beach. She wades out until she is waist-deep in the water and starts to swim. She swims far out, farther than she should go, until her father can no longer see her. She takes a deep breath and plunges under, opens her eyes. There in the blue-green stillness she sees an infinity of words, suspended in the flickering light. A billion tiny, luminous shapes, all the words no one has thought of yet.

\* \* \*

In bed together for the last two days, the couple get into an argument.

"It's all your fault," the young man says, kicking his long legs out of the covers and sitting up. "You don't understand what I meant. Sometimes you don't seem to understand me." He stares at the wall.

"Yes I do," she says, sitting up also, putting her hands on his shoulders. "But sometimes you have to try, too. Help me understand. Let me in."

He turns to her, crying. He embraces her and cries into her hair, sobs for long minutes with a power and intensity that surprises him, frightens him. She strokes her fingers gently over the smooth skin of his back, hushes him. "I love you," he whispers.

He pulls his wet face back to see her smiling calmly, warmly at him. He wipes his eyes. "How come I'm always the one doing the crying?" he asks, sniffing, and she laughs and pulls him to her. A moment later he is laughing, too.

They are in the kitchen. He is making lunch while she watches a soap opera. He sits down for a minute to watch with her. A woman with terminal cancer is in the delivery room in a hospital, giving birth. She is losing her hair and has dark circles under her eyes. She screams, pushes, cries. When it is over they give her her baby, and as she holds her and gazes at her tiny face she begins to weep, tears of joy and sadness. "I didn't think it would be so hard," she murmurs softly, "to finally have you when I know I'm losing you."

He turns to look at her. A single tear is sliding down her cheek, leaving a wet track.

\* \* \*

The city lies under a broad blue sky, a dream of reflected gold in the setting sun. A wind blows in from the north, crisp, cold gusts between the tall buildings. Street signs rattle, pockets of litter collect and swirl upward in ever-widening spirals. People move hurriedly along the sidewalks, clutching at hats, their coats flapping wildly behind them. In a pane of mirrored glass the woman catches a brief glimpse of herself, briefcase in hand, an indistinct face in a streaming crowd. Bracing herself against the wind she squints upward to the horizon and wonders momentarily if it might not be sunrise, they are beginning to look so much the same these days.

On the street she sees a bearded man wearing a sandwich board. His face is grey with dirt. He does not move but stands silent, his eyes closed, his face turned upward to the blazing sky. As she nears him she can see the words printed on the sign. *This world is already gone*, it says. As she passes him he opens his eyes and turns to look at her. She sees his vacant smile, his blue eyes piercing her, looking through her as if she were not there.

Down in the subway she moves with the crowd through the turnstiles, stands shivering on the drafty platform. The train comes and she steps into its warmth, finds a seat in the hushed murmur. Gently they pull away from the station, enter the tunnel. In the dim light she sees all around her a sea of pale faces, their eyes all closed, nodding together in sleep. The faces of the dead, already gone, as the train hurtles through the dark.

\* \* \*

The young man pushes through the door, steps into fierce sunlight. The thin fabric of his shirt clings to his sweaty skin, the endless Mediterranean sky spread above him. He has just come from the bank, where he has cashed two traveler's checks. As he strolls down the bustling avenue in the city centre his thoughts are of returning to his wife and young daughter, of their cramped apartment, of resuming his studies at the university.

On the narrow street the little cars bleat and squeal at each other, locked in hopeless traffic. The air shimmers with heat and the choke of diesel. From down an alley he can hear the faint, high babble of the marketplace, a thousand merchants

barking and calling in their harsh accents. He smiles, by now familiar with these strange sights. He thinks of his father, whom he has spoken to that day, his voice so small and distant on the crackling line. He remembers his stern cautions about the political situation, his tone carrying that restrained edge, his way of expressing concern. I love you, dad, he had said. His father had wished him well.

At the intersection a crowd stands waiting for the light, bodies crammed together on the hot pavement, pressing, pushing, jostling. In the crush he notices the man next to him, dressed in dark, heavy clothing, his brow drenched in sweat. Something is not right with him: he stands rigid, his gaze nervously scanning the crowd, something intense and feverish in his dark eyes. His lips move silently, as if in prayer. Down the street two policemen are running, shouting, pointing. By the time he realizes it is too late. Slowly the man's hand lifts, reaches for something in his jacket. The light turns green, the crowd loosens.

There is a blinding flash, a searing instant of pure heat. He feels something rip through him, break him in half, feels himself being carried outward, upward. Weightlessness, a sense of floating, like a balloon released. Time slows down, the world recedes to a glowing point. In that final second, before blackness closes around him, he feels a strange awareness, a knowledge. Somewhere across the ocean a man is clutching his chest, is losing a son.

\* \* \*

The old woman pushes her cart up and down the supermarket aisles, wandering the displays, the rows and rows of brightly-packaged goods. The wheels are squeaky

and she can't find the soup. It used to be in aisle seven but now it's not; they've moved things around again. It seemed to be happening more and more lately: just when you'd gotten used to things they'd change again, and it was getting harder to keep track. It was all part of a shifting pattern, the foundation beneath her suddenly feeling unstable, precarious.

She feels an employee approaching from behind. She knows: lately they seemed to seek her out.

"Can I help you, ma'am?" the girl says.

She searches momentarily for the words. They tended to float now, more elusive, vague forms inside her head.

"I can't find the soup," she says.

The girl lifts her eyes, briefly scans the racks, then quickly smiles. A pretty smile, showing neat rows of white teeth, that familiar mixture of pity and condescension.

"It's all around you, ma'am," she says, gesturing to the adjacent shelves. "It's right here, aisle seven, where it always is"

Shock and disbelief well up inside her. She turns quickly and makes as if to scrutinize the cans, hiding her face in embarrassment. Can she be right? The lettering on the cans swims, refuses to cohere; but suddenly she recognizes the pictures on the labels, bright tomatoes and fat mushrooms. She feels shame and terror. What is happening to her?

"Oh, dear! It seems you're right," she manages, turning back to her and offering that practiced, cluckish grin. "Thank you."



"Not at all," the girl smiles again, that same sweet young smile. The old woman lingers a moment. She doesn't know why, the girl's face is the clearest thing here: the bright eyes, small mouth, long brown hair tied back in a pony tail. Something familiar, calling to her from the recesses of her memory.

"Is everything alright, ma'am?" the girl asks suddenly, and the image vanishes. She realizes she has been staring.

"Yes, yes," she says, abruptly breaking her gaze, again that silly, weak grin. "Everything's fine."

When she gets home she does not put the groceries away. She leaves the bags on the kitchen table and goes to the old oak cabinet. Stooping, she retrieves her photo album, the little one with the faded flowers on it, its pages crumbling with age. Patiently she turns them, going further and further back, until she finds it, the photograph she is looking for.

She sits in a chair and stares. There she is, in the picture, the girl from the supermarket, wearing a white dress, her long hair tied back, holding her father's hand. That same bright smile, undiminished by age, reaching out to her across the years.

Beneath it there is a date, an inscription she cannot read.

\* \* \*

Old age covers him like a fog. The days pass, flow into one another, yawning pockets of emptiness. He lies in bed, is helped to a chair, is allowed to watch television. The shows are whorls of colour and movement, random fragments of a

life he can no longer remember.

Occasionally there are moments of clarity, brief flares of awareness. He is at his home in the country. His wife, a bent and wrinkled figure, tends to him, feeds him, bathes his poor body. People come, vague forms moving in the shadows. There are snatches of conversation. Yes, a voice says. I'm all right. I get tired sometimes. No, he's getting worse. Can't speak, doesn't recognize me. Like a child again.

There is a girl that visits him, tells him she is his granddaughter. She speaks softly to him and reads him stories she has written. Each time she seems to grow a little. He can see her face in front of him, her smooth white skin, her smile.

One day his wife is not there. He sits for hours in the chair, waiting. A strange woman wearing white appears and takes her place. Her hands are cold, rougher. She does not talk to him.

One day the telephone rings. He hears the woman answer it in the other room. He does not know why, he reaches for the receiver. His mottled hand, weak and heavy, grasps the cold metal and brings it slowly to his ear. There are voices, faraway, grainy. It is the doctor, saying he is sorry, saying she is gone.

The sound of the dropped receiver fills the room, echoes in the stillness. He hears the woman pause, her voice rise sharply and fall silent. With both hands he grips the arms of the chair and pushes, slowly forcing himself up, his thin legs trembling beneath him. The world looks different from his true height, so long has it been since he stood. With tentative, quaking steps he moves toward the door, turns the knob, throws open the full daylight. He hears the woman coming, heavy footsteps, quickening. He pushes open the door and moves outward, into the brightness.

Across the lawn, running. The woman's voice at his back now, calling, shouting, fading. He limps at first, a ragged, loping hobble, but gradually he feels his strength returning, his legs remembering. A softness in the ground that sustains his flight, buoys him. Uphill with broad strides. Panting, wheezing, arms flailing, the world a blinding blaze of light, warm against his skin. Over the tall grass, sparkling green under the summer sun, a dream of earth.

He reaches the road, mounts the embankment, does not stop. His legs burn, his chest heaves. Cars pass him, heads turn to stare, flash muted, dwindling signals. How strange it must seem, on this brilliant summer day, an old man running on the empty road.

RICHARD PREISS

## *Words of Love*

Why, is it now  
A Time that refuses the ease of a past's  
Dissipation into the difficult distance  
A time already future  
Making itself durable    unknowable as you are

I realize you    you spoke words of love  
For me, for-ming me    face-to-face  
I, presented to you  
Preserved, and essential  
    Eros dancing on the ceiling  
    Striking shadows in the light  
    The pathos of love  
    Held there –  
    le contraire absolument contraire  
In a time, making itself bearable

MARIE CARRIÈRE

*Latent Allusion*

I used to think,  
That haunting museums  
And art galleries  
A pathetic ghost,  
Would make a poet out of me.  
I wondered if  
Meeting strange and exotic people  
Was the great door to Knowledge.  
I searched histories  
Of great men  
And vainly attempted  
To see me, reflected,  
In their gleaming lives.  
Defeated, I retreated from the battle,  
Fought hard and piteously lost,  
To a warm haven  
Where light rained down on me;  
To a person who was at once  
Strange and Exotic,  
Because I had never seen her  
In so fine a light before.  
I searched her stories  
And found they were reflected in me  
And I was a part of them.  
I haunted the place in which she lived  
And learned I lived there too.  
I looked for meaning and sense  
In both our lives  
And the poet in me said  
I'd found it.

D. LERECH

*untitled*

She said to him again:  
I am a Troy  
Insidiously entered  
Ravaged from within  
My women taken  
My royal stirp  
Run through at altar  
A wailing hole  
Of Blood  
And Conflagration  
Yet come you again knocking  
and with gifts  
I will entertain you.

GREG KENNEDY



*untitled / Brady Maeck*

