

Spring 2021

PERSIMMONS

Art and Literary Magazine



*...These I painted blind.
Some things never leave a person:
scent of the hair of one you love,
the texture of persimmons,
in your palm, the ripe weight.*

– Li-Young Lee

Spring 2021

Persimmons

Art & Literary Magazine

Editors-In-Chief

Grant Holt

Cassie Coale

Sam Hafetz

Event Planning Director

Molly Fording

Editorial Staff

Adam Bell
Clay Garfield
Emmaline Rogers
Eytan Cohen
Grace Wilkins
Isaac Sage
Lorien Kauffman

Lucas Dunst
Lucy Adams
Minh Pham
Noah Magill
Sam Bowden
Sam Mineiro
Sarah Siegel

Cover Art by Eytan Cohen

Persimmon Logo by Cassie Coale

Special Thanks To Our Advisor
Professor Thomas Hawks

Grown Fresh at Kenyon College
persimmons@kenyon.edu

“Don’t tell your parents,” he said. “They have forgotten the old ways. You have not.”

—Lucy Adams,
from *Transfiguration*

“He who knows how to go about it could live comfortably even in hell.”

—Tibetan Saying

“It is better to light a candle
than curse the darkness.”

–Eleanor Roosevelt

“The desert seems vast, even endless.
And yet scientists tell us that
somewhere, even now, there is snow.”

–Cecil Baldwin

Table of Contents

Prose

Afterbirth	16	Lucas Dunst
Tiny Epic	40	Noah Magill

Poetry

Visitor	12	Lorien Kauffman
The Last Boston Accent on Earth	13	Jenny Jantzen
Photograph of Nana Kate	20	Madeline Vonk
They'll Ask What It Means	33	Katarina Yopez
proof	34	Theresa Carr
Self Portrait as Birth	22	Jenny Jantzen
Credo	37	Jenny Jantzen
Hades I	45	Ellie Roman
Tic	46	Noah Magill
in the drowning forest	48	Ellie Roman

Photography

Look Up	14	Katarina Yopez
Behind Us	19	Kyle Bower
Reflections	21	Ian Rowe
Musings on Personal Topography	31	Sarah Siegel
Chicago's December	35	Kyle Bower

Artwork

Fish	15	Nadine Richardson
Transfiguration	23	Lucy Adams
Under the Eyebrow of G-d	36	Noah Magill
Mermaid	38	Katarina Yopez
Capbara	39	Nadine Richardson
Yosemite	44	Julia Holton
Self-Care	49	Dani Buch

EDITORS' NOTES

Grant Holt

In 1996, Heather Woods '99 and Katie McCorry '99 founded a magazine for art and writing. A quarter of a century later, Persimmons remains an outlet for creativity and passion. The following pages are proof.

We made this magazine virtually. Every meeting and discussion happened through the lenses of webcams and the audio of microphones. While resembling the Brady Bunch, we debated and voted on countless submissions. The result is the Spring 2021 edition, a collection of art and writing that persisted despite the rollercoaster of the past year.

I have always believed that Persimmons was a place to say what you mean, and mean what you say. Every discussion and debate over works of art and literature were opportunities for our staff to fully express themselves, to take a stand for what they think, and what they believe in. I was consistently impressed by the insight and observation of everyone on our staff. My hope is they will continue to use their voices like they matter – because they do.

Going into my third and final year as an editor, I can say that without a doubt the best part of this job has been watching Persimmons grow. Here's to the next twenty five years, and beyond.

EDITORS' NOTES

Cassie Coale

This year's Persimmons is filled with so many diverse, talented voices. I could not be happier with how it has turned out. What a ray of light during such fraught times.



EDITORS' NOTES

Sam Hafetz

I have had the honor this year of hearing the vulnerability of my peers through their artistic expression. Something I thought about when deciding that I was going to edit a literary magazine was how I was going to be able to criticize self expression, the thing I valued in humans above everything else. Yet, by getting the chance to work on this wonderful magazine, I was opened up to a new form of analysis by my fellow community members – the power of always putting community over competition.

Something that I think this magazine embodies is the way that we never seeked to shut down a piece, but instead looked at the work of our peers and seeked to understand why everyone's self expression is vital to a caring and empathetic community. Therefore, I believe this magazine is a fantastic celebration of a community of creatives that uses self expression not to isolate themselves from the larger world, but rather each piece of self expression stands to connect us to one another and lets us enjoy the power of being alive in this sometimes lonely world.

EDITORS' NOTES

Molly Fording

Even after more than a full year of this New Pandemic Reality, I'm still amazed at how resilient Persimmons has been through it all. We've managed to keep meeting regularly, print and distribute last year's edition, organize events, review submissions, launch a new website, and put together this year's incredible, thoughtful, colorful, wide-ranging collection of prose, poetry, and artwork.

The Persimmons community has been an important part of my experience at Kenyon, and during the past year it has become more important than ever; not just for me, I think, but for all of us at Kenyon who want our creative work and the work of others to be seen and understood. I could not be prouder to be a part of this magazine and this community, and I want to thank every single person who was involved with Persimmons this year, from every member of our staff to every person who submitted their work.

This year's magazine is the product of your work, your attention, your creativity, and your passion. I've loved every minute of it, and I hope you love the finished product just as much as we do.

Visitor

Lorien Kauffman

I've never seen a beetle so large
flutter so violently.

When you abandoned the ceiling light for the skin of my arm
it stung and

I was
a bit scared.

Don't be offended,
it's not your fault I find you poor company. Please

Come on now, I say
this is for your own good.

Freedom by way of temporary captivity, as I encased myself in a tin can
the only way I know how to fly

to arrive here
at the rest of my life.

Twin fools we must be,
chasing lights while small and fragile, guests in the courts of giants.

Come on now, out,
Out.

How your lonely, oval body
waits at the screen
and crawls upward

for reunion with your beloved light (which, to my spiteful pleasure,
I know you won't find).

Now for the duct tape.

I hope I don't break the desk
to fix the window
to keep you out.

I hope you find another light
and friends your own size.

The Last Boston Accent on Earth

Jenny Jantzen

It sounds like the whale
deep-seated in layers
of prehistoric strata
like the beam of a lighthouse
eroded by
the crumbling bluffs
of the Cape

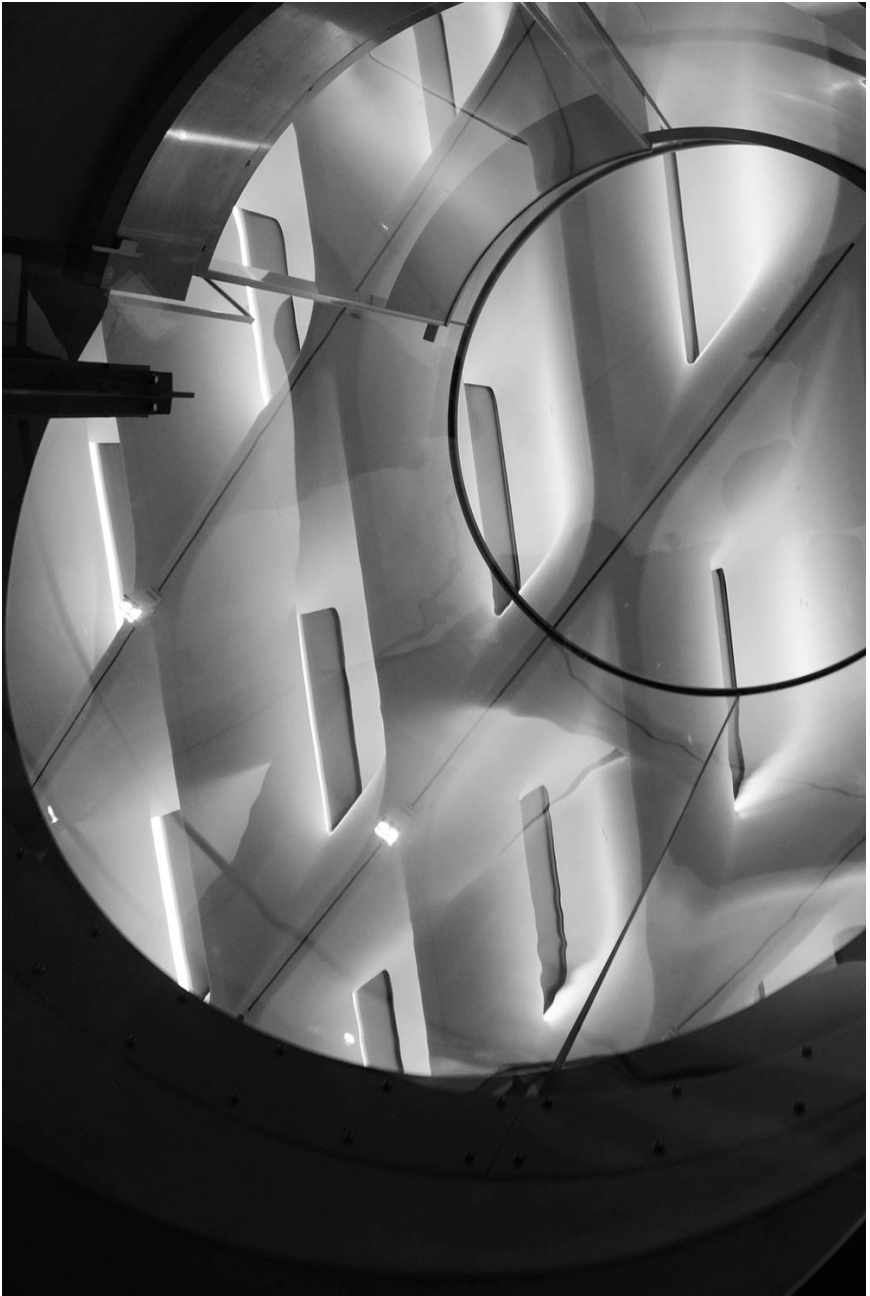
when you were a child
you poked your plastic shovel
into the backyard dirt
and dug up a whale skeleton
it sang on the wind like
the untouched Aeolian
like the lighthouse underwater, like
the last rosary bead

you did not know
what all of it meant
so your fat fingers slapped
the shovel onto the bones—

pat pat. go back
to sleep

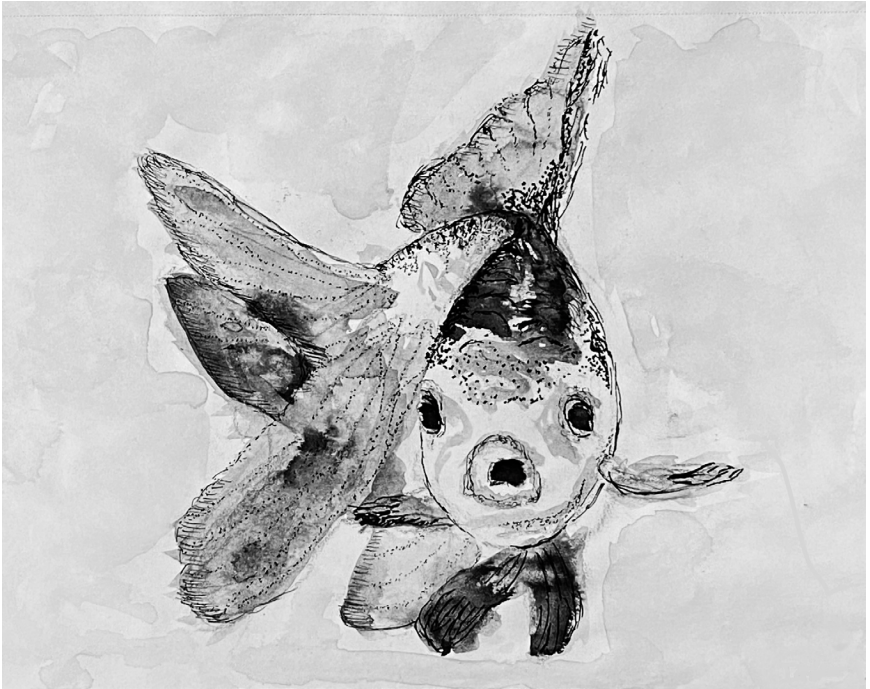
Look Up

Katarina Yopez



Fish

Nadine Richardson



Afterbirth

Lucas Dunst

I can feel it calling from the peach apple orchard. A sensuous tug, an inviting snare. I get out of bed, slip into my nightgown, and light the candlestick on my bedside table. I descend the stairs, walk into the courtyard, and feel the cool soil against my bare feet.

The thing that I feel smells of crisp autumn mornings, when grandmother cooked the first raspberry pie. It tastes of a cool menthol smoke in the moonlight, and feels like a hug after months spent alone. If I had to assign a sound to this being, it would be that of church bells on an early Christmas morning, and if you asked me to tell you what it looks like... Well, I don't think I could do that.

There is something deeply wrong with the compulsion I feel. It's too sickly sweet, like honey left out to bring flies to flypaper, but my feet keep moving, my desire remains strong. I walk through the gate, out into the orchard, toward a destination of which I'm not fully aware. It's a warm summer night, mid-autumn in Virginia, starry sky accented by the bright crescent moon. I can faintly hear crickets play their songs in the distance, but no insectoid siren can distract from my goal. I arrive at a hole, about six feet across, deep beyond measure and lined with sharp teeth. It sits atop the grave of an old family pet, a horse named Delilah, who died in a summer far removed from this one. She snapped her ankle, stepping into a burrow, and my Dad brought the shotgun.

Now it seems that my fate is intertwined with Delilah's, to return to the earth digested by worms. For no matter how much I know it should scare me, I feel nothing but desire for this toothy dark tomb. So I get on my hands and knees in the

orchard, prepare to answer the call I've received, and enter the maw in the dirt.

The walls of this strange subterranean tunnel feel far different from what I would ever expect. Instead of cool dirt or a fleshy pink substance, they're covered in fur. Soft to the touch. Emanating warmth, acceptance, and a distinct sort of love. Like that of a mother for her child, or that of my father for that detestable peach apple orchard.

I know I can find it deeper in this abyss. And if I was drawn to it only vaguely above, from below there is no other option but descent. All but uniting myself with whatever calls me has been chased from the halls of my mind.

I go deeper, and deeper and deeper. The walls of this place like a child's comfort blanket. Hands reach out and touch me with a gentle grace. I know the claustrophobia should bring me discomfort, and that the touch of unfamiliar boney hands should repulse me, but they do not. They provide a sense of welcome far grander than any the mundane human world could provide. I must stay here. Forever, and ever and ever. Wrapped up in nourishing bliss.

I hear a faint rhythmic beating. It gets louder and louder the farther I descend. Deeper. Deeper it beckons me, and deeper I go. It is pounding now, almost ear shattering, and the walls of this tunnel pulse harder and harder. I feel captivated, enraptured, intoxicated by this pulsating hall. I know that my encounter with a sublime reality comes ever closer as the thumping grows louder.

My advance has been halted by a membranous wall. The membrane is thick, squishy, and elastic. It is covered in a thin layer of mucus, slimy to the touch. I push against the membrane, gently at first, then harder against its rubbery toughness. With a forceful thrust, my hands burst through the flesh, and I tumble forward in a rush of viscous red liquid.

For a brief moment, I gaze upon the heart. It is not the being that calls me. The heart is but the frail attempt of my feeble human mind to piece together a miniscule part of the thing that calls me. I know this, but it is still the most beautiful thing that I have ever seen. Hanging by sinewy cords from the ceiling, it pulsates red as it beats. It speaks to me in the tongue of my mother, without lips. It pierces my very soul with its gaze, without the limitations of physical eyes. It tells me things only it could know. Things about myself that I still don't understand. It wraps me in its loving psychic embrace, more intimate than human language could describe. And after a moment of oneness with whatever it is that my senses perceive as the heart, I collapse in enraptured bliss.

I awake in the orchard, as the sunrise paints the sky with red orange streaks. I'm curled up around a gnarled apple tree that had stopped bearing fruit long before my grandfather was born. The same tree where we buried Delilah all those summers ago. I'm covered in a sticky red film, my nightgown soaked all the way through.

I scramble around in an effort to find it, the gates to the heaven I so desperately crave. But it's gone. I have lost something irreplaceable. I've spent a fleeting moment wrapped in the nourishing love of the heart, of whatever possesses that heart, and I have lost it. As the sun reaches its peak above the horizon, as I lay in a pool of afterbirth beneath an ancient apple tree that no longer bears fruit, I long for the comfort of my deep earthen womb.

Behind Us

Kyle Bower



Photograph of Nana Kate

Madeline Vonk

Sleepless in Seattle makes your mother's father cry
when he picks you up from college and sees
her photograph on your shelf
black and white, kind eyes, and a smile without teeth you see
his mother, your mother's father's mother, your great grandmother
he looks at you sees
his daughter sees
his mother you are
their photograph
black and white and technicolor all at once

Above your desk her eyes crinkling into smile lines see
the fractals of snowflakes she bought your mother for Christmas
hanging on your tree she sees
you in the mirror sees
her cheeks in your cheeks
hiding beneath layers of baby fat
watches it slip and slide down and into your breasts
becoming a woman means becoming
her cheeks means they are
your cheeks means you are
black and white and technicolor all at once

Reflections

Ian Rowe



Self Portrait as Birth

Jennifer Jantzen

I see myself, waving at the window,
partying with Victor Frankenstein,
I see myself, drunk as all hell,
me drunk, Victor drunk, Victor
ready to sin his way into heaven,
I see myself, staggering babylike
towards the operating table, fun fact it was never
lightning that brought the beast to life,
fun fact in a theater production
the beast is born from a circle somewhere
between womb and embroidery hoop,
fact Shelley had a baby and lost a baby
and still wonders if it was her fault

I see myself, waving like a flag,
trembling as I brush the creature's shoulder,
because it's not a beast it's a creature,
and I'm always wrong when I
make assumptions, I see myself,
jumping back like a clap as
the creature twitches, as Victor pours
a drink and then spits it out, I see myself,
married to the creature, I am drunk,
I am holding its head like a heart in my hands,
I see myself, I'm talking to Victor he says
I made you I don't have to love you,
fun fact Adam came first, but not
this time

Transfiguration

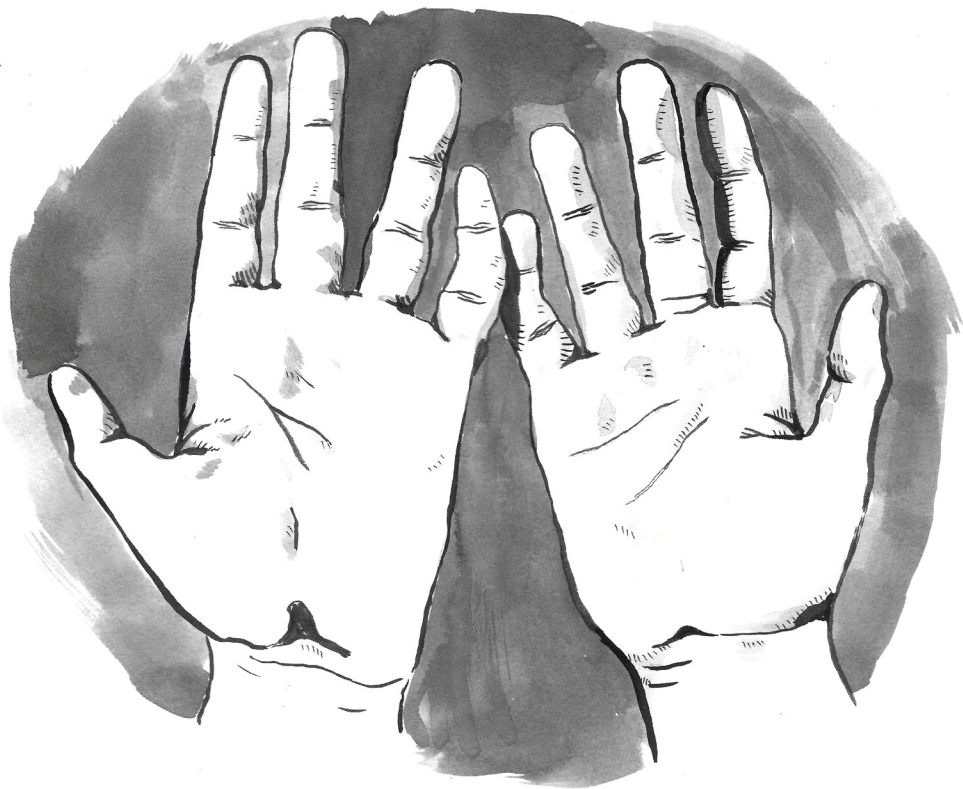
Lucy Adams



Grandpa told us there was something buried outside. What it was, he wouldn't say.

"Don't tell your parents," he said. "They have forgotten the old ways. You have not."

I can see it in your eyes
and in the way your pinkies
bend inwards."





We dug and dug with our
spades, but all we saw was
dirt and bugs.

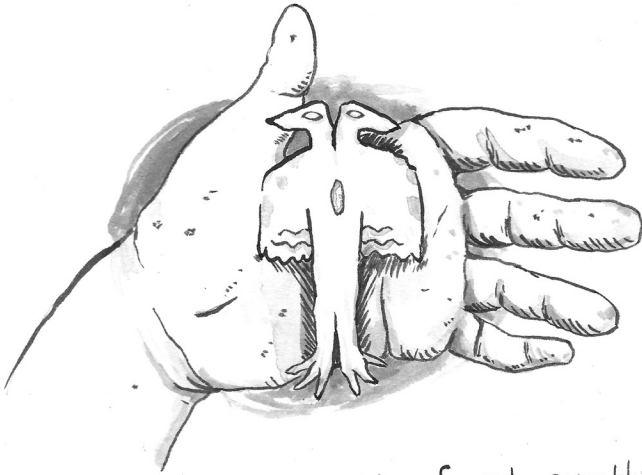


Hours
passed.



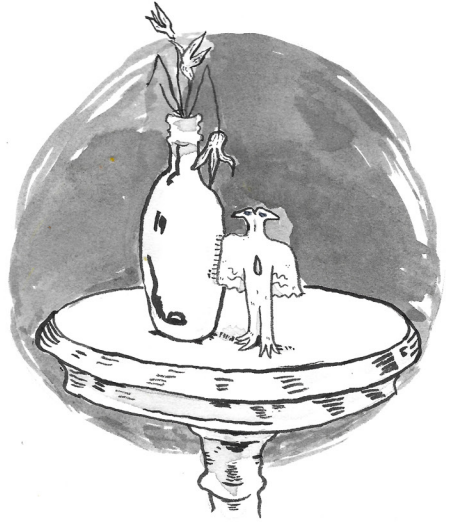


Then, suddenly,



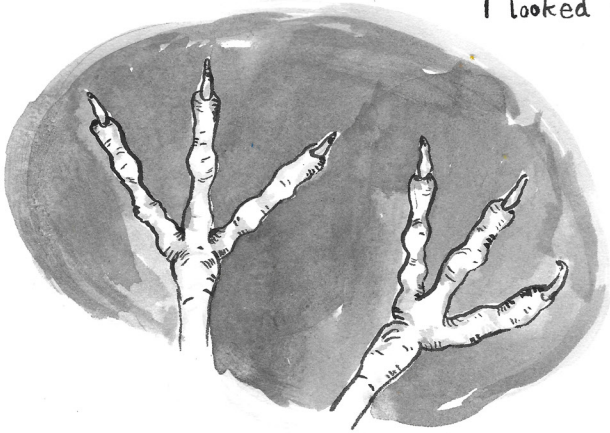
we found something.

It was late when
we got inside. We put
it on the table between
our beds and went
to sleep.

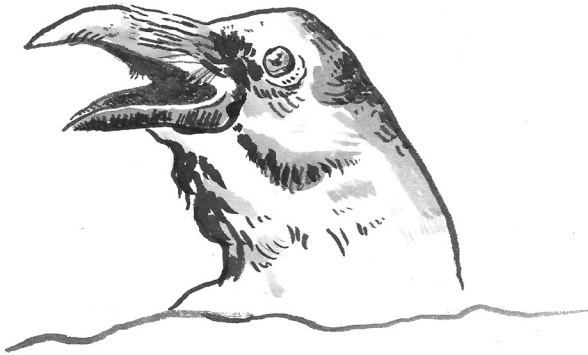


When I woke up,
I felt different. I
was hungry for something.
I didn't know what.

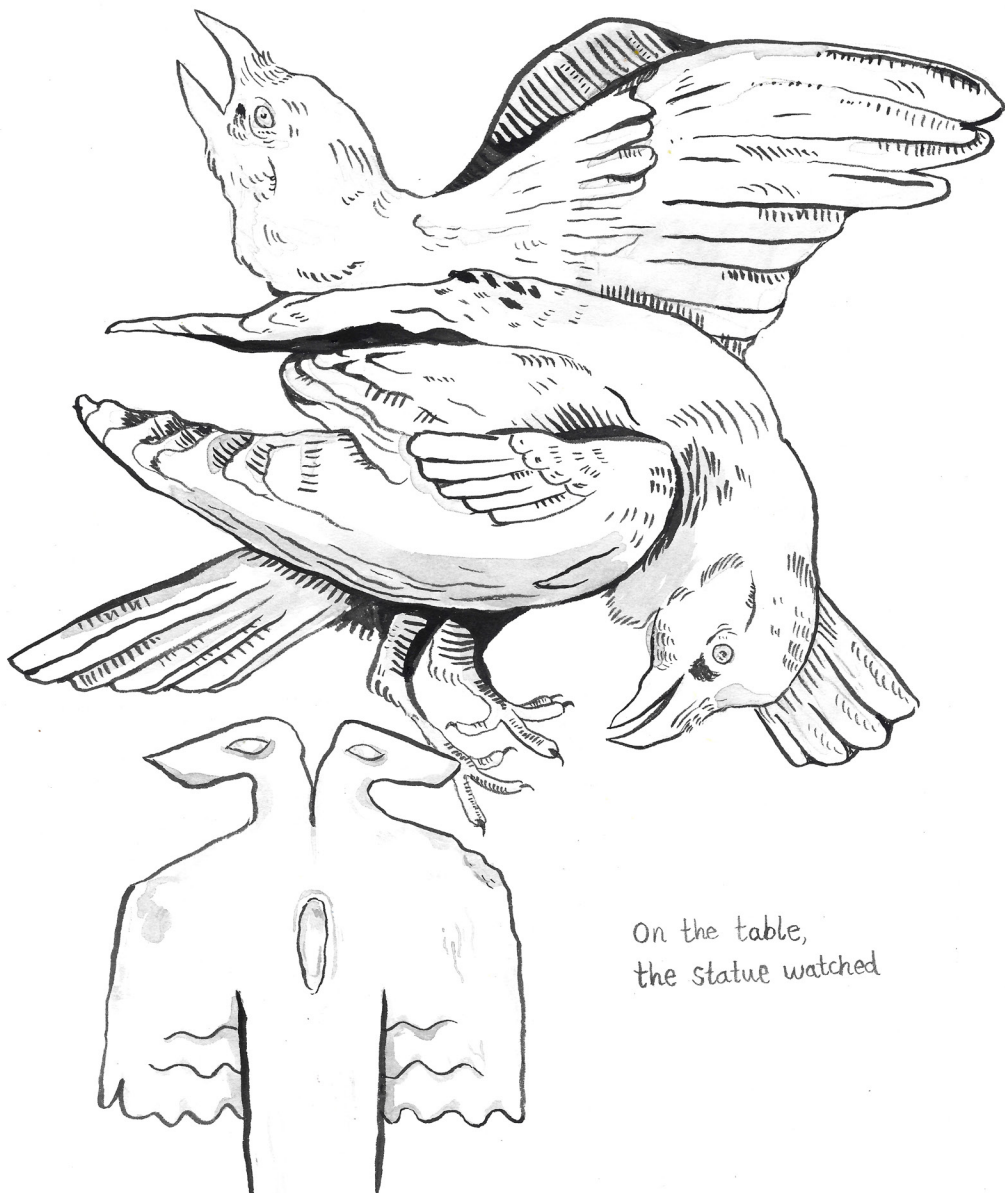
I looked down-



and screamed a raspy caw.



My brother raised his head on the other bed.



On the table,
the statue watched

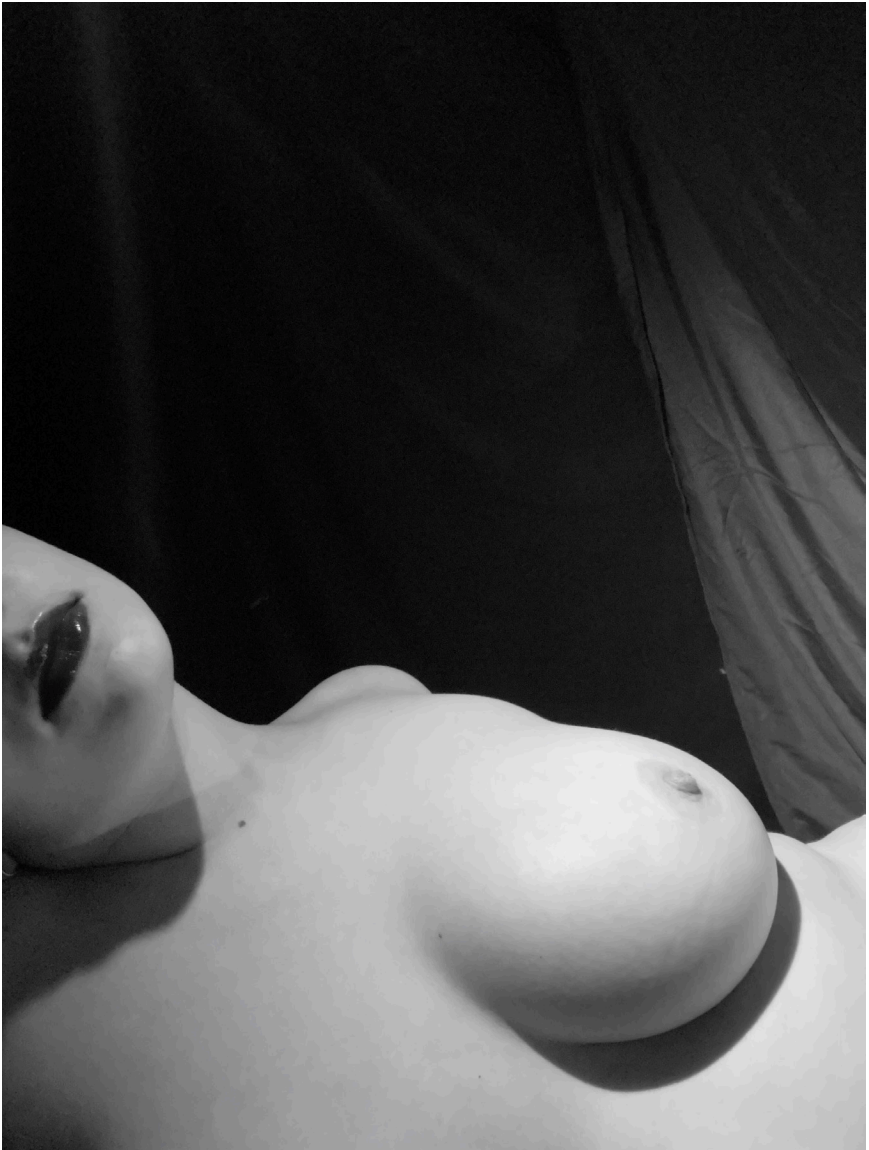
as we flew
out the window



and grandpa
sipped his coffee
on the porch.

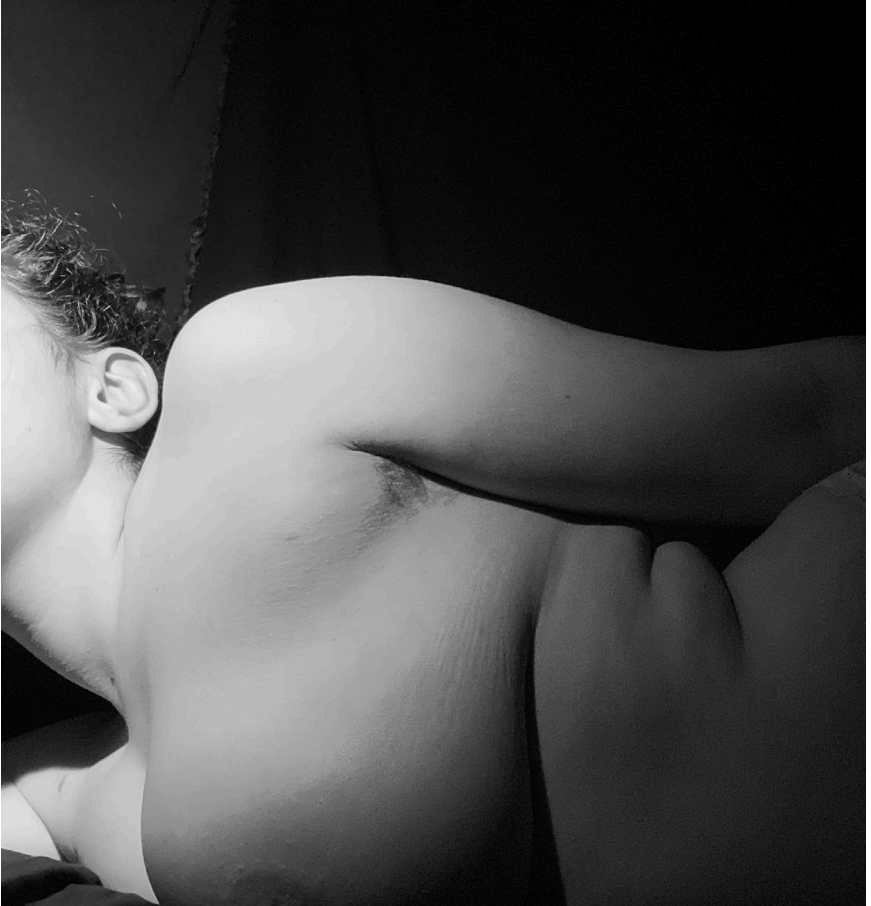
Musings on Personal Topography

Sarah Siegel



Musings on Personal Topography

(Continued)



They'll Ask What It Means

Katarina Yopez

Less like the stars and more like the dark
No constellations to piece together
It's black but it's not
Maybe purple or blue
It depends whether you want to find
the warm or the cool
Feel what you will

There's complexity beyond that vastness
More stars, more galaxies, more planets
But you don't see them
Only what you're offered
The ambiguous color of the night
Nothing is certain
It is what it is

Do you interpret the dark?
Do you ask what it means?
Not really
It's not that there's nothing to be found in its
Apparent emptiness
You just let it exist

They'll ask what it means
With ears that will hear their own
Hands reaching for their cause
Then it's no longer yours
No longer dark it's just like the stars
Finagled to be something
Anything
Else

Not knowing is uncomfortable
Try living in snug discomfort
What's life without an edge to walk on
Consider the question of balance
Between the constellations
Let words speak like the dark

proof

Theresa Carr

It has to be true
That I care about you.
If it's not, I'm not sure that I care
About much
As such.

This is the proof.
I'm aloof.
Not aloft,
in the depths of the frost.
You were the thaw
Then you saw.

So I'll write you a letter.
I'll write you a song.
If I'm wrong
I'll get better
Feel a glow in my throat
Then I'll gloat
when I moan
That we're not together
Proof of feeling after all.

Chicago's December

Kyle Bower



Under the Eyebrow of G-d

Noah Magill



Credo

Jenny Jantzen

In my museum there is
no culture. The fact is
that I can't afford it.

My museum eats other museums—
in fact, it has just polished off the Uffizi.

My museum has a sign that says MUSAM.
It mothers new languages
then breaks them in half.

My museum is made of stars.
It breathes. It sings. It shows

each guest their deepest desire
but mixes up those with the last name
Carter.

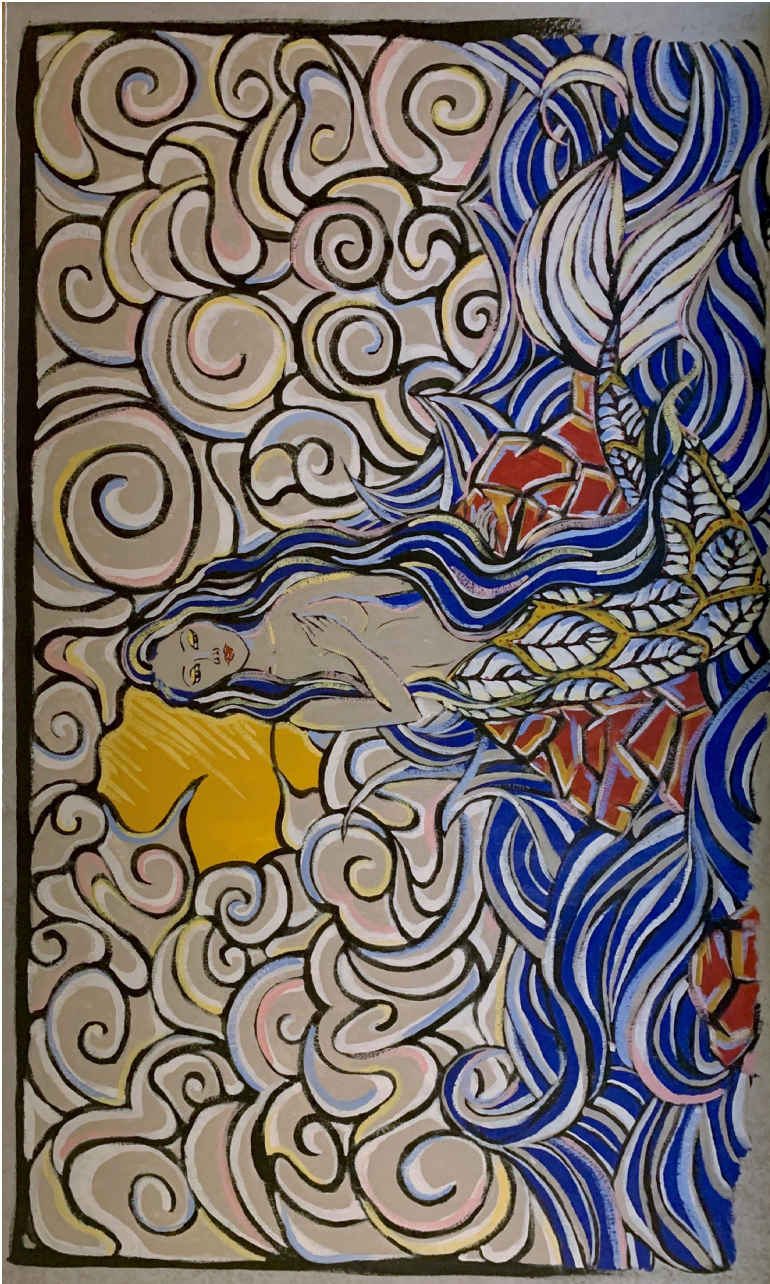
I'm sorry museum.
I'm sorry staff.

This place is no place
for good art to go
but if I had my way

each canvas would wash out
in evening rain, get slowly
painted again

Mermaid

Katarina Yopez



Capybara

Nadine Richardson



Tiny Epic

Noah Magill

Dosen went off to the court where his peers loitered, rushing forward with quickend feet yelled, "I've seen the end of the world!"

Janet scoffed and batted an eye, "the world is not to end," but Dosen vehemently shook his head;

"Not the end in the sense of be gone," he retorted, confident in his clarification, "but I have seen the head of the land we stand upon and shocking was the visage!"

Now Carl came forth (not the brightest, but knowing foolishness when he saw it) and proudly asked, "how have you come upon such a sight?"

Dosen paused, caught his breath, took a step, and began, "I ran to the Celtic Isles."

"But that's an island," Carl attempted to correct, only to find himself shamefully shushed by those eager for intrigue. "Once there I found a tree, old and grim but ripe with leaves which pointed down while the wind blew up and I could feel the earth itself heave! Ground cradled roots seemed to have a story to tell, but heisted, waiting for me to listen. So that I did, and they laughed! Lighthearted cackles (I know not why) as they directed my view to a downward slope."

"Downward slope?" asked Tinney, who had been dividing their attention up till now.

"Yes a slope," wide eyed Dosen encouraged, "bristled with grasses up to my chest, bright yellowed stalks and blue berried buds not to mention vines woven throughout. I weaved deeper between the grass until the ground flattened, but I found forward (or what I thought as such) until deep (or perhaps at the edge) a large green image.."

“Was it mold?” Asked Tinney.

“Moss?” Carl inquired (only after failing to give Tinney his ear).

“No, no, no! It was a giant green bear,” Dosen exclaimed.

“Green bear,” Janet’s brow arched, “boars, swines, fools you can swindle you must think of us!”

“I don’t deceive,” Dosen replied, bothered, “dare you to accuse me of such depravity?! You should have seen its body stretch towards the sky as it gazed towards me with starlight eyes on the face of a horse and a beautiful purple mane that seemed to mock the breeze!”

“Bears don’t have horse faces,” Carl declared, more confident than before, “they have their own faces!” Dumb gazes would have fallen if Dosen had chosen to take a longer breath.

“And it spoke!”

“What all did it say?”

“It asked, ‘உங்களை இப்படி அனுப்பியது யார்?’ So I replied it was the tree atop the hill to which it sighed, ‘அந்த யூ உங்கள் மறவை நாடும் ஒரு தந்திரக்காரர்’. But I shook my head, not believing a word, choosing instead to head further. It shook its head but bowed its neck and produced a noose tied chain. ‘இது கடமையானதாகத் தரிகிறதது என்று எனக்குத் தரரியும், ஆனால் இந்த இணைப்புகளை உங்கள் கண்களிலும், மறு முனையையும் தரையில் பிணைக்கவும்.’ To which I simply replied, ‘How will I know when?’ It gave me a long face before assuring, ‘எப்போது என்பது உங்களுக்குத் தரரியும்.’ Resuming my journey at a quickened pace, more thrilled than before, my jovial face turned sour with fear as the foliage became bare and copper trees grew from the floor. Here was the edge of the world!”

Tinney stared, Carl’s face was clear, and Jannet’s jaw slack. “A lie!”

“I would need to see it with my own eye. . .”

“But it’s true!” Dosen tried to dismiss. “I was there in an orange haze of air breathing in the heat. Crows quickly surround before reaching down, lifting me from my perch. They swung me back and yanked my front before finding a lulling pace. Then turned around, as Nut herself pinched my neck with hands soft and seeking to pat the ground. There I saw it, true and stupid, the face of the world. . .”

“What did you see?” Carl, captivated, wondered aloud.

“It was a whale.” Silence,

Broken by Janet’s cackle who had a quip come to mind but was confounded by her own entertainment. Carl stood quiet, not knowing what to make. But Tinney stayed still, silent, and sure, enticed by the revelation.

Dosen gazed until Janet cooled and continued with beguile, “Never would I guess those wires pulled the very souls from the wooded flippers on either side, pulling them as a current of spirit tossed before that gaping maw, bell tolled creatures creeping within baleen.” And it was here Dosen paused. “That can’t be all,” Carl cried, “you can’t close on such a note!” While Janet sighed, “It must be a lie but no better do I know.” A moment longer and Tinney chimed, “Your tale is not over. Though words sublime, yet all might as well lie if you refuse to confide how you have returned?”

Janet and Carl gazed up doe eyed, but Dosen stood a moment alone. “I was dropped,” Dosen replied, “to the deep currents below. All that shapeless life filled me with strife so deep I was going to drown. It was Huitzilopochtli who lifted me with a grand outstretched tongue, guided my bode into searing fog and . . . no, it can’t be.”

Carl and Janet, both confused (though Janet hid it better), were about to ask about the strange reveal while Tinney smiled knowingly.

“I don’t know you,” Dosen claimed, surprised.

“Well of course you don’t,” Janet burst forth, “now finish your story honestly.

“It was like a boat, on that tongue I mean, as I floated above all that I knew. I had seen something not meant for me, and those beings knew not what to do. But I somehow did, and took my chain and bound it around my eyes, and to the sun’s lip I hooked the tip not entirely knowing why. Then he tried to swallow me! One, two, three, but I returned thanks to the chain. And though I faced the light of the sun my vision was not gone for only a sliver could go beyond the binding. So I was spit (taking with me a small piece of lip) and flew through the heavens. Beyond the whale, past the bear, and even that backstabbing yew. And that is when I ran and met you. What is that you do?”

“We weave you fool,” Carl replied, not quite happy with the end.

Janet shrugged, “I wish there was more to be done.”
And Tinney clasped their hands.

“Why, no how,” Dosen’s thoughts stopped, “I know not what to ask.”

“Then ask nothing,” Tinney picked up his book with attention re aligned, “as you must now know surely you have a new task.”

Yosemite

Julia Holton

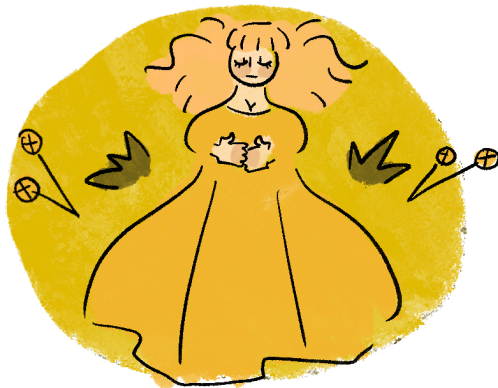


Hades I

Ellie Roman



I haven't made a poem since I walked out of hell
I never ate a thing there, never ate at all
So no one could stop me when, hungry, I left
I let no one walk before me
there was no head to turn
breaching up into night air, I fell down on my face
gobbled dirt, swallowed seeds, ate up grass, gulped
the moon's light til I was bloated
lying hard-bellied there by the earth's big mouth
mother ceres, take me back
Say there'll be no more true winters in my life
tell me hell is for other people, now



Tic

Noah Magill

Tic Tock, Tic Tock

Went the boy with the clockwork heart.

His joint moved with the cringe of those gears,
And his eyes swiveled with the echoes of the air.
Steam in his veins,
Acid streaking his tears,
Bronze flesh kissed the smoke in the mirror

Puffing out through his weighty hollowed back,
Gasoline dripped from his light frame.
Oil coursed through those wired nerves
Composing a mind of madness
Reflected in his pain.

Each hand a masterpiece of metal and thought,
Working the wishes of a lump iron soul.
Each foot rocksteady,
Pistons composing sturdy legs
With an electric mind powered by coal.

Tic Tock, Tic Tock,

Went the boy with the clockwork heart.

There was one piece of the false child,
That still had its own will and power to form,
Within his bronze heart there lived,
Just beneath the gears,
A raging fire like storm.

As time continued,
His fire rusted his outer being,
Revealing itself in truest form,
Soon dying with no hesitation,
From the overwhelming cold of the outside weaning.

So quickly the boy took an ember,
With his remaining arm crafted a new bod,
Stuffed the ashes into his new heart,
Reigniting his previous flame just before it was forever lost
Taking on his new mechanical facade.

Tic Tock, Tic Tock,
Went the boy with the clockwork heart.

Tock Tic, Tock Tic,
That same child used to think.

in the drowning forest

Ellie Roman



in the drowning forest

I feel this hatred like the cold inward seep
from a jacket already soaked through
against the upwell of heat
from walking too fast to escape it
the contrast here should pop like thunder
but it doesn't

I make no noise

performing false love from the vacancy of a stomach
hard with shivering,

from the hopeless press of a hot water bottle against
my belly, soothing little

as I try to breathe the sickness out

and the earth beneath my shoulders turns to quick and
bitter mud

and everything pools

and nothing sloughs away

I didn't think I could be so angry

I am poisoned all the way through.



2018

Self-Care

Dani Buch



SEE YOU SPACE COWBOY...

*"A large persimmon will fall into my
hand, and I will be victorious."*

-Tokugawa Ieyasu