



Cafe' Cultura

Volume IV 2013

Café Cultura

Volume VI

Editor's Note

“Language is never innocent,” Roland Barthes once said.

This simple phrase encapsulates the complicity we as humans have with language. Everything in language is deliberate; it yearns to have its true meaning coaxed from behind the veil of civility; desires a place at the table.

This system is our most prized conduit of knowledge because it is the evolution of the symbol. In the early days of human communication, a hand signal or a bloody smudge on a cave wall spoke for itself. But as language became the representation of the self, the ghost of the ego, intent became the medium. With intent came complicity with language and, in that connivance, the innocence of communication was lost.

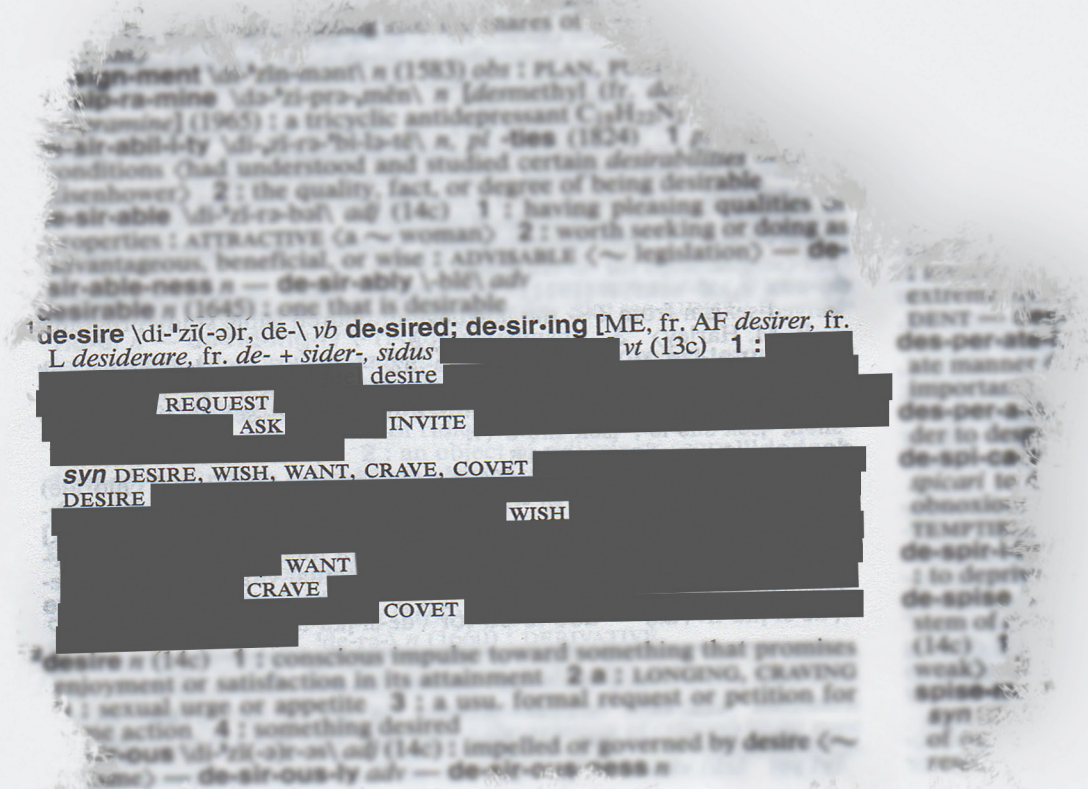
Even as innocence is lost in desire, desire is still elemental as our drive to survive.

Our very existence is tied to words. But what are words when they are not asking for water or shelter, when they cannot grasp the tangible?

They are the “soul.” They are the “I.” When we no longer desire food or flesh, we desire to be known, to have a presence, to be seen, to be heard. We want to carve ourselves into the smoke. We want.

Within these pages, the work is not just about our theme of desire but about desire in its different facets. To go beyond the want of things or others. We desire to hold our lives as a vessel in our hands. To share in the experience, to partake in each other's stories.

This is difficult but worthwhile. In the end, even though our innocence is lost, words and our desire for words create the space where the reader and the text meet. It is our hope that Cafe Cultura becomes this space for you.



Contents

Poetry

Marks / Neylin Castillo	8
Yellow Freesia / Miguel Ortiz	13
How to be a Follower in the Life Cycle / Hellen Rivas	17
Commandments on an Android Tablet / Bianca Rodriguez	28
The Future / Miguel Ortiz	40
Jersey Trip / Osvaldo Moreda	43
Auguries / Elizabeth Fernandez	56
The Lost / Genesis Fernandez	63
How to Fail Math / Neylin Castillo	67
Fo(u)r (33) / Chris Carmenate	77
Perception / Miguel Ortiz	81
Odneccerc / Elizabeth Fernandez	86
Sunrise Agony / Sindy Vilar	89

Fiction

Instructions for Assembly / Elizabeth Fernandez	10
Atalanta / Neylin Castillo	18
Sown / Rosendo De Vicente	21
Tibia / Elizabeth Fernandez	22- 24
Granada / Leslie Alfonso	30-37
A Little Time Alone / Bianca Rodriguez	44-53
Todo Depende / Maria Elena Quesada	64-65
The Door / Hellen Rivas	68
Juggling / Miguel Ortiz	71
Telemarketers / Bianca Rodriguez	78-79
Schulamit's Journey / Atara Marko	82-84
Point Blank / Leslie Alonso	87

Non Fiction

Sugar Pill / Leslie Alfonso	14-15
The Hand / Michael Sanchez	72

Plays

Political Deception / Jeffrey Romeu	58-60
Transplant / Leslie Alfonso	74-75

Art / Photography

Impassibile, Impassibile 2/ Jorge Cura	1, 96
Obvious Occupancy / Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz	9
Voyager / George Calonge	11
Enero / Jorge Cura	12
Set up / Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz	16
Sky Fight / Alex Veliz	19
Formulaic Interior / Ani Gonzalez	20
The Phantom of Steel Heart / Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz	25
Fruitful , Half Life/ Ani Gonzalez	26, 27
Blue Asymmetry / Jorge Cura	29
Casa Blanca, Aperture / Jorge Cura	38, 39
No Tension / Alex Veliz	41
01011000 /Diana Nunez	42
Recess / Isabel Ruiz	48
Give Me a Woody, Pals / Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz	54, 55
Littering / Jorge Cura	57
Melon Grab / Alex Veliz	61
Fxlos Aquae / Rosendo de Vicente	62
Nerys / Devora Perez	66
Transit / Frank Pellegrino	69
Foetus / Jorge Cura	70
Spelunking / Isabel Ruiz	73
Accordion / Alex Veliz	76
Infinite Storm / Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz	80
El Residuo Resume / Andres Cabrera	85
The Birds Amass / Isabel Fernandez	88

Marks

Neylin Castillo

Wood marks
 forming
 in brown dark
 circles, reminding
 us there was a cup
 idly sitting once
 with black
 strokes of foreign luck.
 It held some grains of rice
 lily seeds and coffee beans.
 And for what price
 a crowded heart?
 To fill the holes in our
 selves with teacup flowers.

*First Place
 Fred Shaw Poetry Contest 2013*



Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz - *Obvious Occupancy*

Instructions for Assembly

Elizabeth Fernandez

Always kiss everyone's cheek when you walk into a room; never scowl or else they'll think you're a brat; only speak when spoken to unless: you have something funny to say, you have something nice to say, you have a compliment to give; never have an opinion, not in front of guests; eat as much as you like, but don't get fat; life isn't nice to girls who are fat; remember to respect your father; remember that if you disrespect me, you disrespect him; and that disrespects God; he is right, you are wrong; if you don't think so, stay quiet; it hurts your father's feelings otherwise; be a lady; they always follow their husband's words; and should never be put in power; women are too spirited for things like that; they are useless a week before they bleed and three days after; it is just the way it is; if you don't like it; take it up with God; but you are wrong, He is always right; I say these things because I love you; it will make life easier.

after Jamaica Kincaid



George Calonge - *Voyager*



Jorge Cura - *Enero*

Yellow Freesia

Miguel Ortiz

Constantly chopped down
yet it regrows time again
even through winter

Sugar Pill

Leslie Alfonso

The screams were louder than usual that night. Every time my father begged my mother to lower her voice, her indignation grew larger. I was sitting on the top step of our staircase, running my hands through the hideous burgundy carpet of the apartment. Somehow I was calm. Somehow I knew that it would not last much longer. As soon as that thought entered my mind, the voices stopped. Keys were being scraped off the counter's fake marble and they were heading towards the door. My mother had left, most likely to her mother's house just like every time before.

My father popped up at the foot of the stairs and looked up. His face broke out into a

smile that was distinctly his. My mother used to tell me she fell in love with his smile. My father raced up the steps with an agility that I never thought possible for such a large man and he flailed his arms like some sort of spaghetti monster that wanted to eat me.

He reached the top and pulled me high up in the air and started tickling my stomach. I used to think that was the funniest thing in the world in those days. When the laughter subsided and he made his way down the stairs, carrying me under his arm like the daily newspaper, I asked what the fighting was about. But seldom are children privy to what ails their parents. He simply said, "We're okay, sweetheart."

I was placed atop the kitchen counter and my father instantly dodged into the fridge, appearing seconds later with a carton of ice cream, two spoons and a bag of M&M's. It was always the same. During winters, we would drink hot chocolate with churros. During summers we would do this. I hopped off and we made our way out the front door.

We sat on the ground and began our feast: my father in his flannel pajama pants, and I with my Princess Ariel dress pooling around me. He opened the bag and dumped it in the carton of vanilla ice cream. We sat there for what seemed like hours in the sticky southern heat at night, eating until our stomachs begged for mercy.

He was staring blankly ahead as he said it. My father finally let out the words I had been so desperate to hear. "We're not going to be with each other anymore."

It was as if the storm departed and I was finally able to see the blue sky. He was so sad and I could not understand why. It certainly could not get worse. I hugged his arm and said, "We're okay."



Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz - *Set up*

How to be a Follower in the Life Cycle

Hellen Rivas

Be born.

Deposit faith in fantasies,
in magic, and dreams.

And when, too soon, they no longer seem correct;

Be careful when you suspect,
for innocence you shall mourn.

Learn what you didn't want to know.

Let reality smite you - and hurt.

Discover the subterfuge. Become alert.

Each day the world gets worse. Cry.

Ask, "Who and what am I?"

And grow.

Listen to the complaints your parents have to say;

Question if you're a treasure or a nightmare.

Frown at all the things that aren't fair.

Wish this wouldn't happen to anyone, oh!

Promise you won't be the reason

why someone else goes through the same.

Learn to drive.

Enter the superb season.

Forget it all. Think of the fun.

Then lie. Call it an "accident."

Say you didn't think it would... that you were innocent...

Create a life.

Atalanta

Neylin Castillo

Luz breezed by the gangly sunflowers, rushing toward the incoming ball of blazing heat just arms above her. The wind battled against her body, waving her blonde hair and tugging at her polka dotted dress stained with dubbin. Tall grass ripped from the earth, joining her locks in a lively dance before departing for the heavens. Rays of light mirrored back into Luz's gaze, playing a game of hide and go seek behind painted clouds. Her vision turned white like the snow that had just yesterday paved the field, and Luz was suddenly joining the blue sky, light as a feather, humming along to a welcoming spring waltz. She thought she heard a deafening ringing in her ears, and all around her were spots of black and orange. A shadow came over Luz, an instant cold touched her face, and when her eyes barely opened, a beastly creature stood hovering like the rising sun. As it came closer, she could make out some traces of somebody she might have known.

“Why are you wasting time, girl?” Thomas whispered in short, hot breaths.

“Get up!” He was pointing a firm finger back into a blackened brick house concealed behind a forest of bare dead branches.



Alex Veliz - *Sky Fight*



Ani Gonzalez - *Formulaic Interior*

Sown

Rosendo De Vicente

Change the baby's diaper when your wife is busy. Dump the diaper in the trash. Take the trash out. Replace the trash bag when you take out the trash. Put the garbage bin on the curb twice a week. Pick up the garbage bin from the streets the next day. Go to work to support your family. Work hard to move up the career ladder. Drive home after work to spend time with your family.

This is how to kiss your family when you get home from work. This is how you play with your child after work. This is how you go to the market to buy meat for dinner. This is how you smile when someone at the market looks at your child. This is how you smile when someone you don't like looks at your child. This is how you wash the meat you bought at the market. This is how you season the meat you washed. This is how you cook the meat you seasoned. This is how you prepare dinner for your family. This is how you wash the dishes from the dinner you prepared. After the dishes take a shower, watch a movie with your wife, and go to bed; get a good rest and repeat it all over again.

Your weekends are going to be busier; wake up early and fix up the house. This is how you mow the lawn. This is how you trim the garden. This is how you make a bouquet out of the flowers trimmed from the garden. This is how you water the garden after its trimmed. Water the garden twice a day to keep it fertile. Nobody likes a flowerless garden. This is how you fix the stove. This is how you fix the stove after you break it while fixing it.

This is how you take your child to the park. This is how you teach your child how to play baseball. This is how to mend your child's leg after it gets scraped while playing baseball. This is how to kiss your child to make the pain go away. This is how to shower your child. This is how to shower your child without hurting the injury. This is how to tell your child a bedtime story. This is how to kiss your sleeping child.

This is how to kiss your wife after your child is asleep, gently and passionately; remember a watered garden is a fertile garden.

after Jamaica Kincaid

Lisette had placed it up on the counter beside her. The old plastic paint bucket was smeared with the dark streaks of time and use. The metal handle had long since lost its arched shape. Its ten gallon capacity made it invaluable. It was a step ladder, a tray, a rain collector, chair, tool box, and today a meager burden.

She stood facing the tiny dingy stove in the tiny dingy kitchen. A pot of water sat unperturbed on the burner. Her eyes watched the tense surface, waiting for the first tiny bubbles to appear; a poor man's champagne glass. In the next room she could hear the soft chatter of old Russian cartoons and her little sister, Emilia's, laughter. Their father was with her. Lisette pictured him reading the paper, a thick cheap cigar hanging from his thin lips, unlit.

He seemed to sense her thoughts on him and grunted from the other room, "There's no need to boil it. Cold water will do just the same."

Lisette dipped a finger into the water. It was warm and welcoming.

She took the pot and emptied it into the bucket, the sloshing an oddly comforting sound. Again she filled the pot and set it on the burner, waited for it to warm, and then emptied it into the bucket. She did this again and again till the bucket was almost full. Lisette enjoyed filling it. The water pushed out the emptiness and left only itself.

Lisette grabbed the misshapen metal handle but soon realized that the weight of the liquid would likely break it off. It would be a waste to ruin a perfectly good bucket. She wrapped her arms around it and hugged it to her chest. The warmth of the water permeated the thick plastic and seeped into her. For a moment, she found herself wishing that the water was for her bath. She was usually much too tired to heat up water for herself at the end of the day. Lisette did it for her sister because she was small, and for her father because he was old, but not so old he wouldn't give her hell otherwise.

Bringing the bucket down on the ground with a wet thud, she brought her foot behind the bucket

and pushed. It slid and turned awkwardly, but Lisette slowly guided it her foot. The weight made her leg strain, but she pushed on. As Lisette passed the living room, Emilia's curious eyes caught her.

"What are you doing with the bucket?"

"Cleaning."

"You don't cook water to clean, silly," Emilia giggled.

Lisette glanced at her father and saw him peer over the newspaper. He was just as she imagined, reclined in his favorite moth eaten sweat-stained seat.

His teeth gripped the cigar, and his words sounded as

though through gritted teeth. "Let me help you."

Before she could object, he was on his feet. He was old but quick and strong. His arms were corded with sinewy muscle, and his hands gripped the lip of the bucket and slid it out towards the back of the house.

Away from Emilia, he spoke, "Cold

water is better. It'll give 'em a shock, and they'll go down quicker."

"I know what cold water feels like," she said.

They reached the back door, and her father stood to his full height, back cracking, and opened the door. "I'll do it. I know how sensitive you women can be."

Lisette didn't care enough to be offended.

"I'll be fine," she said as she pushed the bucket through the door and shut it behind her. From the other side she could hear her father grumble something about disrespect.

The yard was a mess. Pieces of rotting wood and scrap metal were strewn across the concrete floor. An old couch lay gutted, and inside she could hear a faint mewing. It was only then she became upset. The corners of her eyes stung, and her throat tightened. She kicked at an old trash can, and the loud bang stirred the mother cat from her litter. The cat was skin and bones, her teats sagged with only the

throat

possibility of milk. Self-preservation was strong in her, and she bolted from the premises. Lisette could not blame her.

She reached the couch and dug a hand underneath the rotted fabric and pulled out a pair of kittens, searching for more but finding none. They were blind and helpless, still too young to have even opened their eyes. Lisette brought them up under her chin and nuzzled them gently. The pair wriggled and mewed, calling for their mother, for her help. Lisette knew she would not come, not yet. Not until everything was silent.

That's when she'll know, she told herself. The stillness of everything after it was over. That's what Lisette remembered most. Not the day her relieved father handed her the wad of sweaty money, not the wait in the doctor's dusty yellow waiting room, or signing her name at the window, or the sad helpful eyes of the doctor as he spread her shaking knees and asked her one last time if she was sure this was what she wanted. It was the quiet after it was over. It had been the hot shower after. It had been the silent dreamless nights to

follow.

She moved to crouch down by the bucket and used a free hand to test the water. It was warm. At the very least, she could grant them that much. The squirming kittens felt full and soft in her thin dry hands. She brought the two tiny bodies to her lips and gave each a soft kiss. She hovered their bodies over the open mouth of the receptacle and hesitated briefly. Lisette felt the needle-like claws dig into her skin and she imaged the tiny scratch marks they were likely to leave on the walls of the bucket.

With shuddering sigh she dropped them into the water with an audible plop. Almost instantly she heard the struggle for life. Lisette grabbed a piece of wood and placed it over the bucket as a makeshift lid. Walking back into the house, she found her father in the hall.

"That mess is yours to clean up."

She strode past him to collect water for a cold bath.



Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz - *The Phantom of Steel Heart*

Ani Gonzalez



Fruitful



Half Life

Commandments on an Android Tablet

Bianca Rodriguez

28

Do not question, do not dream.
Do your best to never see.
Succumb to silent treacheries.
Smooth out skin and hair and teeth,
forget the mountains, boil the seas.
Never question, never dream.
Buy in bulk, seethe
at reason. Buy one six-pack get one free.
Seduced by disguised treacheries.
Decorate the house in garland, wreath
the massive SUV. Wake in Christmas glee
but do not question, do not dream.
Cough up blood, try to breathe.
Search for shade but find no trees.
Succumb to well-earned treacheries.
Smile. Shaky wrinkled hands bequeath
a shattered world to adoptees
who do not question, do not dream
and succumb to the same old treacheries.

*Second Place
Fred Shaw Poetry Contest 2013*

29



Jorge Cura - *Blue Asymmetry*

Roberto Molina was not a murderer, but he might as well have been. That is what he told his children and his children's children. It may not seem like an ordinary story, but the strangest tales come from the most unexpected places. Tales like this one should not be told by ordinary people. We simply cannot do it. Artists tell these stories; only bohemians can find beauty in horror. I am no artist.

I learned about Roberto Molina by chance. Going through an old closet, I found a brittle yellowed piece of paper with an image of a handsome man in a hat. My grandmother said his name, ripped the photo from my hand, and that was that. I asked my father about this man, thinking my grandmother might have had a torrid love affair with him during her youth in Cuba before she made her voyage to America. Back then, I was a romantic and curious little girl.

To my displeasure, the story was not

what I imagined it to be. Roberto Molina was her grandfather, and he was not to be mentioned again. I asked my father to tell me the story of this man, and he complied, not once looking me in the eye. Now, I regret ever asking him. My grandmother always told me, "Los secretos siempre buscan una manera de ver la luz del día."

Roberto Molina was never an idealist or a romantic, but it was said his face would fill with longing every time his home was mentioned. He loved his birthplace, more than he loved his children, and much more than he loved his wife.

The name he brought from Spain carried a burden, a secret so ghastly his family felt relief once he died. They could never show it, of course. In the Molina family, after his death, all that was left of Granada is a whisper of someone else's memory. Roberto's children, grandchildren and great grandchildren would wonder why guilt plagues them for an act they did not commit but the heaviness in their hearts is still the same. To

this day, the city's name is always whispered into an ear and never into the free air. Granada. Gra-na-da.

The memory of the city is messy, like the stains of pomegranates that grow on trees twice the size of a normal man. The branches heavy with fruit always reached towards the soft green grass. On a business trip, I made a stop there. Somehow it was exactly what I expected, and at the same time, completely different. The streets were loud and boisterous, but that can be said about any other town in the south of Spain. Stone buildings, more like pieces of art, adorn the sides of the roads as a testament to the city's past splendor: The Alhambra and the fragrant gardens of the Generalife, just a few of the many remains left behind by the moors centuries ago. Thankfully it had not been destroyed like many other mosques in the area. The startling Cathedral of Granada was built atop the oldest mosque in town, but the townspeople never complained about that. Muslims had been

chased off centuries ago in the name of God and Spain. The palace and its gardens still served a purpose; they were evidence of the fall of the Muslim kings that underestimated the might of Catholic Spain. The aroma of the blossoms relieved the visitors from the rancid stench of butchered animals and body odor that thickened in the middle of the city during summer months.

In the city, children ran through the labyrinth of buildings in the center of town, their feet drumming on warmed pebbled stones until the streets turned into dirt. They would reach the edge of town and sneak into the farms to race among the pomegranate groves. The Sierra Nevada loomed above the city. It was a lovely place where the people loved the land almost as much as they loved God. The people were strong and proud. And none were stronger and prouder than the Molina family.

Roberto was born in Villa de Saldar, on a sweltering summer day in 1913. The Molinas

made their wealth from growing the plumpest pomegranates in town and from their keen business minds. They sold the fruit to neighboring towns and made a name for themselves among the traders. Roberto's father had no doubt the boy would grow tall and strong like the rest of the family men -- broad shouldered, like oxen.

The Molina women were thick and sturdy as the finest Andalusian mares, and of fair coloring, an oddity in the area. The old townwomen whispered in disgust that their ancestors must have been northerners who trickled down south. I suppose their disgust might have held merit. Anyone could get upset if a strange family bought land in their city and reaped the rewards while those whose families have lived there for centuries were going hungry.

The Molinas barely had anyone working for them in the farm or the house. They themselves worked from dawn to dusk plowing the fields, nurturing trees, and tending the

livestock. People said if you passed by their farm before sundown, you would see them walking through the pomegranate groves eyeing the trees and squeezing the red fruits. The only exception was Sunday in which they would dress in their finest clothes, go to church and sit in a line the third pew from the back.

Roberto grew into the man everyone thought he would. He was a good son and an even better older brother. He mentored his brothers and protected his sister. He worked all day and never drank a drop of aguardiente. He never flirted with the young girls in town, and he would stand up and take his hat off in the presence of ladies. But the Molinas had a saying, "Nadie te conoce mejor que tu sangre," and Javier knew his son. He had no complaints about his child, but he was not blind. He could sense the fury his boy had inside him. La furia. He could feel it in the energy throughout



Alex Veliz - *Docking Sun*

the air when Roberto would come home. He could see it when Roberto plowed the fields with a vigor he had never seen in a man. When pesky weeds around the trees and shrubs sprang up from the dark brown soil, Roberto would take a hoe by himself and clear rows of them in a single afternoon. When land needed to be readied for new crops, he would plough the soil until his fingers bled and his back roared. Young and strong in the middle of the land, he strained and never noticed the smell wafting from the trees or the cool mist coming from the hills.

Javier Molina died of a stroke in the winter of 1932, and his wife followed him shortly afterwards. Roberto, just shy of turning twenty, had to support not only his siblings but the land as well, for that is what their parents had toiled and bled for all this time. The funerals were small affairs. Only the family and a few townspeople were in attendance at the church. That did not bother Roberto, but it did cause anguish for his

sister, Blanca. She had rarely been seen in town, and when she was, it was for church. She had spent all her time with her mother in their home, cooking, cleaning, sewing, and reading. Javier felt that was the way it should be. His daughter would be *una mujer de su casa*. Thankfully, she never asked to do anything else. Blanca held unto Roberto's arm during their path through the town on their way home, both of their eyes cast downward to the cool pebbled street, the sound of their steps bouncing off the elaborate facades of the surrounding buildings. They did not notice the townspeople staring at the new generation of the Molina family. They all knew Roberto would make a fine head of house for his siblings, and it was only a matter of time until he married and started a family of his own. The other young Molina boys seemed to be heading in the same direction. Little Blanca had grown beautiful, even more than her mother had been, even with red rimmed eyes and a black shawl over her hair. She

was fifteen and pretty; the men in town speculated she would have no problem finding a man that would not mind marrying an orphan.

Weeks and months passed and the transition was seamless, as if their parents were never needed. Blanca took care of the house and the younger children while Roberto worked and supervised the fields with the elder boys. A distinct and warm calm settled around the Molina home, nothing different from what the people expected from them. They were not the type to wallow or waste time for death. This calm would be disrupted in the most surprising way. A rumor, from the city, found its way in the house.

Roberto was the first to speak of it to his sister, "Azaña fears something is about to happen."

Blanca's face was set in stone while continued to wipe the kitchen table with a haggard cloth. Their parents always believed change was for the better. Their father, during dinner, had more

often than not exclaimed, "Spain needs something different! Something so the people can prosper!"

At least they were able to witness King Alfonso XIII deposed from his throne. They always reminded their children that the people deserve the power, not those thought to be chosen by God. Their mother told them God does not choose or love any human above another. A sweet thought for a child to have right before bedtime. Blanca paused her ministrations and turned her head towards her brother, "What does this have to do with us? What do we care what the prime minister has to say? We are not a part of any of that. Let them fight. We have our home and our health, and that is what matters."

"I have heard things, around town. People are getting angrier as more and more time passes. What if it gets worse?"

Blanca looked at her brother with wide eyes. He had never been one to concern himself with politics but the surprise was the worry in his

voice.

“What can we do? We have to wait. Let Azaña and the all the rest of them play their games. No one is going to do anything here. This is not Madrid or Barcelona. We don’t have those types of problems here, hermano. If it gets worse, we will handle it,” Blanca said.

Within three weeks, Alejandro, the second eldest brother ran in a flurry of dust and sweat into the house, quickly followed by Roberto. Blanca leaped from the sofa and looked at her brothers while they scrambled around the living room and kitchen closing and locking all the doors on the first floor. They yelled, but for the life of her she could barely understand any word from their mouths. Chasing after Roberto, she asked, “What is happening?!”

“People have attacked the Ramirez’s home. Get the kids and make sure you all stay together upstairs!”

Blanca ran towards the stairs while shouting the main question in her mind, “Who would

do this? Roberto! Pay attention! Who would do this?!”

Roberto did not answer, but Alejandro was soon behind her jumping from step to step on the staircase. Once they reached the second floor, they could both see their three youngest brothers in the hall trying to look as innocent as lambs in springtime. Of course, they heard every word; they were a curious bunch. Alejandro took a breath and in a lowered voice addressed his sister, “The people from town went to the Ramirez’s land. We were passing through, and we saw them. They started throwing rocks at the Ramirez house. Broke a few windows, pounded on doors, nothing too bad, but Roberto said we should be careful. We thought that maybe they had already passed through here.”

“Why would they do this? The Ramirezes are good people!”

“I don’t know. The Navarro boys were there.”

No one came to the Molina house that

day or that night or that entire week. They spent a week in there, peeking through cracks in the doors and shutters into the outside world. Once Roberto deemed it safe, they opened all the doors and windows, and the children were allowed to go out into the sunlight. Blinking away the sunlight Roberto looked towards Alejandro and Blanca and with his hands on his hips stated the obvious. “I will have to go to town to get some supplies. You stay here, alright? Everything should have died down by now.”

Roberto made his way to the road and continued on his path towards the city. He gazed across the mountains snow covered tops and wondered if he had just lied to his family. Upon reaching the city, Roberto stepped through the city streets as if he had nothing to lose, and not one man, woman or child got in his way. He bought what was needed but felt he had not accomplished everything he had to get done that day. With arms loaded with groceries, he walked towards the city cemetery. Stepping through the wet grass, he finally found what he was looking for. The Molina

family had not been left unharmed the previous week. There in shambles lay their parents’ tombstones, covered in only God knows what. Roberto could not say he was surprised with the violence he saw on the Ramirez estate, but this was truly confusing. Desecrating and disrespecting the dead was not something he had seen in this town before. Turning on his heel, he left the cemetery behind him and retraced his footsteps out of the city towards his home. Not one inhabitant looking at him in the eye. The butcher looked down at his table as soon as he saw Roberto pass by the front of his store. The eldest Navarro boy dodged into an alleyway. Doña Antonia and Doña Magnolia stayed seated on their porches, abnormally fascinated by their card game. He had felt it before but at that moment, he was certain. Granada was about to change, and not for the better as his parents would always say.

Jorge Cura



Casablanca



Aperture

The Future

Miguel Ortiz

40

Wild. Loud. Horny teens
Seniors watch, disapproving
this generation



41

Alex Veliz - *No Tension*



Diana Nunez - 01011000

Jersey Trip

Oswaldo Moreda

Blind like mice with knick knack and smack attack
 as slap, a nap, a never-ending gap
 this rabbit hole so dark and deep like a new jersey crack trap
 desert dunes and monsoons like mafia goons
 goose soup with space troops, dripping drops of space loops
 black holes and swishing swoops, it goes round and round like roller coaster loops
 never knowing, always showing like a canoe of thought I keep on rowing
 a rock he isn't towing doesn't show he's truly
 knowing

A Little Time Alone

Bianca Rodriguez

44 Alex sat at the cluttered table in dark trousers and a tailored dress shirt. Christina didn't iron, but his collar was always crisp. She hadn't done laundry in two months, but his clothes were always clean. He watched as she wiped the dribble from Liana's chin before grabbing two waffles from the toaster and placing them on a plate in front of him. It had been only two months since the doctors had thought it safe for the baby to come home.

"It's going to be cold. Take a sweater," she said flatly, alternating between taking bites of toast and bouncing the baby in her arms. The kitchen table looked to be part desk, part diner, part dresser. Plates sat atop stacks of books and unopened letters. Envelopes, the backs of which held anything from scribbled to-do lists to doodles, spilled over each other. A pile of unfolded clothes sat in a laundry basket in one of the seats.

When they had first gotten together, Christina's small one bedroom apartment looked like an Ikea splash page; her furniture all

matched and the carpet was spotless. When they collapsed on her bed after a night of dancing and gorging themselves on the city, she was always up and out by nine. On weekdays she had the university from early in the morning until just after noon. After that, she'd drive across town where she interned at the Hospital. Her weekends were full of text books on the beach and long drives to the west coast of the state, her manicured feet dangling out of the passenger's window, a cigarette trailing wisps of smoke across the tightly stretched green and blue horizon. Alex drove, and they listened to the radio and laughed until their cheeks hurt.

He watched his wife, saw her downcast eyes and noticed she hadn't bothered to change her sweatshirt by the bit of spit up around the collar from the baby. Alex ate quickly and without a sound, standing from the table before Christina had a chance to place the baby in her highchair and have a seat herself.

"I'm gone; I'll see you later tonight," he called to her, leaning in to kiss the baby on her

cheek before grabbing his sweater and placing his plate in the sink.

"When's later?" Christina asked, dropping the baby to her hip.

"I don't know- seven or eight, I guess. Love you."

"You guess? You're not the one stuck at home all day. I want some time to myself too, I want to--"

"Yeah, I know. I'm late enough as it is. We'll figure something out later. Why don't you start looking for that baby sitter?"

He threw his jacket over his shoulder, tapped both pockets to make sure he had his wallet and cellphone, and left.

Alex watched as his wife and child grew smaller in his rear view mirror, Christina absently bounced the baby on her hip, leaning in the doorway of their small two bedroom starter home, staring after him with the empty worn expression he had only discovered in her after they had the baby. Something in the pit of his stomach turned

as he adjusted his mirrors to point away from them.

45 When he came home, it was two forty five. Alex let the car coast into the driveway, headlights off, and selected the key to the house before reaching the doorstep. He felt his way to the bedroom, unbuttoning his shirt as he went, undoing his pants when he got there and letting them fall to the ground where he stood. Silvery bands of moonlight fell over the room, casting elongated shadows across the bed where Christina lay asleep, her chest rising and falling with each deep breath. Here Alex lingered for a moment. His shoulders ached, his eyes were red rimmed and tired. Alex contemplated sleeping on the couch again but dreaded the tension that would surely follow in the morning. Each step he took closer to their marriage bed was a labored crawl towards resignation. He pulled off his loafers and climbed in next to her.

Alex floated there for some time, somewhere in between sleep and consciousness, when

the sound of the baby's crying broke in thickly through the monitor. He lay there in the darkness, listening to her scream until Christina sat up slowly, picked herself off of the bed, and shuffled off to check on the baby.

Through the crackling receiver he heard the sound of his daughter's frantic crying, soon followed by the sound of his wife as she desperately tried to console her. He listened in the darkness as she sang, her voice scarcely rising above a whisper. He heard the desperation in her voice, the way it cracked in certain places, and as he began to sit up, resigned to do his fatherly duty and help, he heard Christina's ragged sobs. Alex shut his eyes; he lay in bed scarcely breathing as though some deep set paralysis had crawled over him and settled into his limbs, crawled into his lungs and made it impossible to breathe. When Christina came back into the room and crawled into bed, he lay as still as possible, forcing himself to take the long relaxed breaths of a person lost in slumber. A blue light came in through

the window and Alex' heart beat hard in his chest. He stared at the ceiling, his eyes making familiar shapes out of the shadows.

Alex awoke to the sound of his wife screaming. He would never recall the dozen of thoughts that rushed through his head that morning; he'd forget throwing off the blankets and leaping past the bundle of clothes from the night before. He'd forget rushing through the bedroom so fast that he'd slammed his arm against the door frame. All that he would remember after recounting that morning to the countless people who would come to ask him, in their round about and sensitive ways, would be the jolt of adrenaline that would send him flying out of bed and the deep seated guilt he'd come to feel for being angry at getting woken up.

He rushed into the nursery to find his wife in a rocking chair by the window, their infant daughter swaddled in pink cotton and pressed tightly to her breast. Tears streamed down Christina's cheeks, but besides the single piercing scream

that had torn him from his sleep, she made no other noises, save for the persistent creaking of the rocking chair as she swayed back and forth with the baby held tightly in her arms.

Alex moved in close, dropping to his knees next to Christina. He took their daughter in his arms. Her tiny body fell into him, the resistance he once felt, the heaviness of her lungs breathing, her heart beating, seemed gone. All that remained was stillness. He fumbled to find a pulse, tried to resuscitate her as they'd been taught in their parenting class, and, with his daughter's tiny limp body in his arms, yelled at Christina to call 911.

They followed behind the ambulance in their car, so that the doctors could confirm what Alex already knew. He raced along the freeway, knuckles white with apprehension. The cool winter breeze whipped Christina's hair wildly about her face and shoulders, giving her usually calm and level demeanor an anxious, undone edge that shook him and made keeping a safe distance from the ambulance all the more difficult.

At the hospital the doctor that confirmed Liana's death offered them his practiced condolences. Soon after, a pair of police officers questioned them both separately. Alex did his best to listen, but the persistent beeping of various machines, the scuffling sound of a nurse's thick white shoes on the laminate flooring of the University hospital, and the smell of bleach and sickness nearly overwhelmed him. Finally, the officer thanked him, patting him on the shoulder before offering him his card.

Alex found Christina waiting for him in the hall. A very kindly, very busy nurse took Christina's hand in hers and offered her a flyer for a support group for parents who had lost their children. He watched as his wife smiled back tears, clutching the pamphlet in her hands and nodding at the nurse. Christina waited until the car ride home to tear the pamphlet into tiny confetti sized pieces in her lap.

The funeral was a small affair. It had taken some convincing, but Alex had gotten



Isabel Ruiz - *Recess*

Christina to agree to a service. Alex wore his best suit and spoke for the both of them. He was careful to accept every word of sympathy with a warm embrace and a heartfelt thank you. He led Christina around the hall by the crook of his arm. At one point, carried away by an uncle in the midst of a monologue, he left her by the buffet table where she haunted a tray of pastries until he returned for her.

“It’ll get easier,” Tia Matilda said to them, hooking her thin old arm around his and patting his elbow. “She’s with the Angels now.” He listened to her and watched Christina’s face, but neither his aunts one-size-fits-all advice, the moving piece read by his sister, nor the hush that befell them as the absurdly miniature white coffin was lowered into the ground; cast the slightest shadow of emotion over her features.

The ride home was unnervingly quiet; Alex drove slowly, glancing at her from the corner of his eye, desperate for even the slightest chance at a conversation. It felt to him as though

the words he wished to say were so jumbled up in his throat that keeping them down any longer would cause him to choke. Christina sat silently, her hands collected in her lap, her eyes staring forward, unblinking, her hair a solemn black hood around her still face.

“It’s just too hard,” she said finally, breaking the silence. Alex’ grip on the steering wheel tensed; he shifted in his seat slightly. “I know, but we’ll make it work.”

“I think I just need some time alone,” she continued, as though she hadn’t heard him, her focus now drawn to the rows of trees that sped past her window, their long thin limbs reaching up and raking a reddening sky. Alex listened to the sound of the tires on the wet ground. He felt his heart beat hard in his chest. She couldn’t be doing this now. They drove on in silence, passing large homes with long winding driveways, whole family’s safe behind their perfectly trimmed hedges and their mountainous S.U.V’s. He turned onto their street, a little neighborhood full of smaller homes, crowd-

ed in together as though they could fend off the cold.

Alex pulled into their driveway and shifted the car into park. His hand hovered over the keys but he didn't turn the motor off.

"I think I'll start looking around tomorrow," Christina said, turning to him, her eyes clear and full of purpose.

"You don't have to do this, it will get better."

"Why not? That was always the plan. It's just a few hours a day and besides, I need something to focus on."

"What are you talking about?"

"A job at the hospital, Jesus... You can't possibly have thought-" Christina looked over at him, her eyes wide and clear with purpose. Alex' grip relaxed on the wheel, he shook his head as though shaking off the remnants of his fears.

"Right, of course, a job. That's a great idea," he answered finally.

That morning the weather report called for

a crisp, clear night. It rained.

They showered together. Christina threw on one of his old t-shirts and some faded jeans and they opened the door to baby's room. They went slow, disassembling the crib, packing the toys in one box, the clothes in another. They gutted the entire room, rolled up the carpet, took down the shades, and when it was completely empty, when every corner and crevasse was bare, they leaned against the wall where the baby's crib once sat and talked. Christina's hair was piled on her head in a messy bun, she breathed in deeply, leaning her head up against the wall. Sunlight filtered in through the window, catching upset dust motes in long rays of warm sunshine. They spoke about the future, of what to do with an empty room, of new projects and even of a possible vacation they might take.

"Where were you going?" Christina asked without looking at him, during a lull in the conversation.

He took a while to answer; his fingers

strayed from his side, pulling at the knotted fibers of the carpet.

"I was at work most of the time. When they got sick of me there, I found a bar."

"And when they got sick of you there, you came home?" She teased, turning to him and offering him a hand. He took it and she helped him to his feet.

Alex wiped his forehead on the back of his sleeve. The AC had been out for a week, and Christina, having finally found a job with the hospital, was unable to wait for the repairman. He looked down at the list of errands and mentally checked off those he was sure he wasn't going to do. His eyes strayed down to the third bullet point:

-Organize study

The study had been somewhat of a joke of theirs. It was the room that now housed everything they didn't want to deal with at the

moment, old clothes, boxes of electronics, broken things, furniture that clashed and all the knick knacks and trinkets a couple could amass in eight years.

He had no real intention of organizing anything in that room, but the heat and the boredom of waiting drove him in there for no other reason than to maybe find a fan and wallow in some nostalgia.

Alex grabbed a six pack of beer from the fridge and made his way to the study. The door opened up to a small room with a window on the far wall, partially covered by a large white bookcase, spilling with manuals, textbooks, paperbacks, a set of old China and a row of coffee mugs. In one corner was a stack of boxes, each one labeled in Christina's hand, "Things for the kitchen", "Bathroom Stuff" and "Baby". He took a sip from his first beer and knocked a bag off of a chair, dragging it to the window. Setting his beer aside he grunted as he pulled out the box labeled "baby," just enough to make a hole big enough to

see into, and if he had to, to sift through.

The box smelled of dust and lavender. Inside felt soft; baby clothes and blankets, tiny towels and shoes and booties, and then at the very bottom something hard and plastic. He stood up and put his arm in to the elbow, struggling to keep the tower of boxes from tumbling over. He turned the object over in his hand, felt something smooth and square followed by what felt like buttons.

It was the baby monitor they had received from his parents. A video monitor they could set up in a corner to watch the baby when they were in another room or even if they were at work and decided to leave her with a sitter. Alex sank back into his chair and finished off his beer before reaching for another one.

He turned the camera on. A timestamp flashed on the screen, dated nearly a year ago.

Alex watched Liana cry, red faced and lonely, her tiny arms balled into perfect little fists. His heart sank at the sight of her, helpless and alone in the dark. This had been her room, where he now sat. They had placed her crib right by the

window. Just as his heart was about to break he heard the sound of footsteps on the video, feet shuffling closer towards the crib. It was Christina's voice calling out to Liana.

Alex swallowed half of another beer and brought the screen in closer to himself.

He watched as she picked the baby up, bouncing her in her arms, her back towards the camera. He listened as she pleaded.

"Baby, please-please baby sleep. Why won't you sleep?"

"Alex, she won't sleep. Oh God, Alex!" she called. At least, he was sure she had called out to him. The room swayed gently. He watched on, sipping from his beer. His eyes and ears trained on the camera with a fixation bordering on obsession.

He saw as she walked in slow circles, cradling the infant in her arms. Gray streaks of moonlight poked in through the blinds and in their silvery light Alex could see Liana smiling. He felt the tightness in his throat, a pressure in his head and blinked back tears, the ghost of a

smile playing over his lips. He saw when Christina put the baby down on its back, watched as she bent to pick up an embroidered pillow and very lightly, very gently, began a game of peek-a-boo. She held it over the baby's face, yanking it back after a second only to press it over her face again. Liana kicked her chubby, dimpled legs. She reached her fat little fingers out and she cooed. Alex watched as a leadenness seemed to fall over Christina's arms, each round of peek-a-boo grew longer, more drawn out. He saw the way her shoulders shook and a panic swept over him, it shot up his legs and arms and took root in the pit of his stomach.

There in the moonlight, Alex saw himself standing by his wife. He expected himself to intervene, to pull the pillow back from the baby's face, to let her breathe. Instead, he watched as he stood, just behind his wife, passively looking on as they both let their daughter slip away.

"I miss her too," Christina said quietly, letting her purse fall to the floor. Alex dropped the camera in the box and spun around, the dull

throbbing in his temples, the beer and the stifling heat made it hard to breathe. The floor felt uneven, as though it were somehow tilted upwards towards Christina.

"I miss her, but I know that we'll be ok," she said again, stepping over boxes as she crossed the room to meet him. Alex let her wrap her arms around his neck but his own hung limply at his sides.

"I did this," he whispered, tears welling in his eyes. "I did this to us."

"It was both of us." She insisted, pulling him in closer to her.

Outside a truck pulled into the driveway, Alex heard the crunching of the gravel on the tires.

"That's the AC repairman. He's late. They're always freaking late." Christina unhooked her arms from around his neck and ushered him out of the room, hitting the light switch as she closed the door behind them.

Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz



Give Me A Woody



Pals

Auguries

Elizabeth Fernandez

I didn't mean to say
that it was what
it should have been
or that it isn't what
it always will be or
that you know nothing
of everything and so
much of so little
that when you speak
a rookery of bullshit
chokes on the fog
of your ignorance
which is only heightened
by that need you have
to explain what has
already been written
to blurt out the dregs
of knowledge and at
the end know only this:

You do not know me.



Political Deception

Jeffrey Romeu

*League for Innovation Literary Competition,
College Winner - One Act Play*

Setting: Two podiums are seen on stage, but there is no one behind them. In the middle of the crowd there is another table about 10 feet from the stage, and there sits the debate's moderator.

MODERATOR: Welcome to the first of three debates, in the 2016 United States Presidential Debates. This debate will deal with foreign and domestic issues. Please welcome the Republican and Democratic presidential nominees: The Governor of Florida Nick Bot and former Secretary of State Ailery Lipton.

Both nominees walk to the center of the stage and shake hands, then wave to the audience, and stand behind the podiums.

NICK BOT: Good evening everyone, it's a pleasure to be here to..... Buzzer

NICK BOT: What the budget cuts is that?

MODERATOR: This is a newly installed buzzer. When you are lying, it will detect it, and it will sound. When you say the truth it will beep like this. Beep

AILERY LIPTON: What a shame we didn't have this when my husband was in office. Beep

MODERATOR: OK, well let's begin this very important debate. Buzzer

MODERATOR: Shut up! I mean, I mean, Governor Bot, how do you think the higher educational system should be framed?

NICK BOT: Well, firstly we should offer more elective courses so our students become more well-rounded... Buzzer

NICK BOT: OK, OK, I believe there should be a greater focus on Math and Science courses, with minimum focus on electives.... Buzzer

NICK BOT: Fine! Only Math and Science courses so our students don't waste their time learning how to be pointless artists. Beep

MODERATOR: Madam Secretary, how do you feel about the matter?

AILERY LIPTON: Well, in our country there is a steady decline in the areas of Math and Science, but there should be an equal opportunity for college students to study the field that they desire. Beep

MODERATOR: Madam Secretary, were you upset that you weren't nominated as the Democratic Nominee in 2008?

AILERY LIPTON: Of course not. I was very proud that we elected the first African American president in the United States. Buzzer

AILERY LIPTON: OK, I was only happy when he appointed me as Secretary of State. Beep

NICK BOT: Yeah and I became Governor because I wanted the best for the people of Florida. Buzzer

NICK BOT: I was being sarcastic! Beep

NICK BOT: Oh, shut up! Three beeps

MODERATOR: Final question. How do you plan on settling the Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East, Madam Secretary?

AILERY LIPTON: As the former Secretary of State, I have been involved in many conversations with Middle East leaders, and if elected president, I will come to a diplomatic agreement that will once and for all end this race. Beep

AILERY LIPTON: Yet, if no agreement is found, we will take these countries to the International Court of Justice and bring them up on crimes against humanity. Buzzer

AILERY LIPTON: OK, now I sound like my lying husband. We will bomb the entire Middle East and

send billions of dollars that could be spent on education or Medicare on finally ending this horrendous war. Beep

MODERATOR: Well then, Governor, same question.

NICK BOT: Since we have this new machine detecting our lies and facts, I think it's only fair I give a 100% truthful answer. Whether the new president is Democratic or Republican he or she will face a tremendous amount of work in order to move this country forward, either domestically or internationally. Beep

AILERY LIPTON: The common misconception about politicians is that we are liars, and while some are, not every one of us wants to tax your paycheck until you have nothing or eliminate your child's ability to get an education. Beep

NICK BOT: The job of an elected official is never easy, unless your last name is Bush or Kennedy. If not, you're shit out of luck. Beep

AILERY LIPTON: So in the end, money always supersedes intelligence. The best candidate doesn't always win, It's the richest. (Cough) W Bush. Beep

MODERATOR: That concludes our first of three debates for the presidency of the United States. Join us next week when we will speak about why Cubans only vote republican and should the government fund the making of an actual death star aspace station. Beep

NICK BOT: So! Vote for me! Vote for a greater America! Buzzer

NICK BOT: Son of a bitch!



Alex Veliz - *Melon Grab*

The Lost

Genesis Fernandez

Rise when the sun shines. Hot

Coffee. Slide closet door.

Clothes on the floor.

Keys in hand.

Kids in the van.

Where's dad? she thought.

Feeling alone. She holds on.

Leaves the kids. Clocks in.

Drinks coffee. Manages a grin.

Clocks out. Picks up the kids.

It's something she can't forgive.

He's gone.

Gets home before the moon.

Sets the table. Only three.

Can't sleep. A cup of tea.

House empty. Sit by fire.

To mind came that tire.

If only he stayed that afternoon.

Nightmares. Nerves and suffering.

She saw it tumble.

The heart crumble.

The sun shone.

Fresh in mind.

She must keep on living.



Rosendo De Vicente - *Fxlos Aquae*

Todo Depende

Maria Elena Quesada

Cuando alguien te da una enseñanza que te hace reflexionar, difícilmente la puedas olvidar y estar en tu memoria toda tu vida.

Tenía yo 18 años. Estaba en una parada de guagua para ir a la escuela. Recuerdo que era una mañana lluviosa, fría, oscura, cerca de la playa. El viento batía fuertemente. Hubiese querido en vez de estar en aquel lugar, toda mojada, mirando que agresivo puede ser el mar cuando hay mal tiempo, estar en mi casa caliente, acostada, protegida.

La parada y la calle estaban desiertas. Sentí estar en un pueblo desolado, donde el único ser viviente era yo. En toda aquella soledad, con

el tiempo casi de huracán, la guagua que no se apiadaba de mí, que no acababa de llegar por más que yo la llamara con la mente para que me salvara de aquella difícil situación; pienso en alta voz, “Qué mañana más mala!!” Pero con la misma fuerza con que había dicho aquella expresión, oigo una voz detrás de mí que dice enérgicamente “Depende!” Me quedé por un instante sin respirar. De dónde venía aquella respuesta a mi angustia, cuando yo hubiese asegurado estar sola en aquel lugar?

Sin moverme, recurro a pensar que tal vez fue una respuesta interior. Pero ... unos instantes después vuelvo a oír la misma voz,

“Depende ... porque si es para tomar ron en una barra está buenísima!!” Rápidamente me viro para ver de dónde venía aquella voz, y veo un vagabundo debajo de un banco de la parada resguardándose de la lluvia y el tiempo.

Aquel vagabundo me dio una lección que nunca he podido olvidar. Tenía razón. Todo en la vida depende de qué lado mires. Lo que para algunas personas significa tristeza, angustia, para otros es felicidad. Un día frío de invierno, para algunos puede ser depresivo, incluso puede representar memorias pasadas no agradables por haber vivido en casas o lugares no confortables. Otros sienten

felicidad porque esto le hace recordar momentos en una casa agradable, cerca de un lugar caliente, toda la familia reunida. O como en el caso de algunas de mis amistades, un día frío de lluvia es un día perfecto para el romance, el mismo efecto de la luna llena.

Aprendí que todo en la vida es relativo; y que no solo en un aula se aprende. Una persona como un solitario vagabundo resguardándose de la lluvia debajo de un banco puede convertirse en uno de tus mejores maestros. Nunca se puede subestimar a nadie, ni a los mismos niños. Hasta ellos pueden darte lecciones que nunca olvidarías.

respirar

How to Fail Math

Neylin Castillo

Turn off TV show, open math
book. Stare hopelessly.
Whack numbers into calculator,
fiddle pencil,
regret the damn class.
Number questions 1
through 19, odds only.
Drink water, spill on paper. Write
down name and fake the date.
Poke skin with pencil.
Check computer,
look at the time
passing at the speed of a freaking
comet. Finish question
1. Momentary lapse of confidence,
sharpen pencil.
Find the Z score for the area of
0.45. God damn it.
Have dinner. Stain paper with
meat sauce, smudge
away, somewhat. Sit down,
pencil disappeared. Grab pen,
mess up every number. Close math
book, turn on TV show.



Devora Perez - *Nerys*

The Door

Hellen Rivas

Mia pulled the door with all her strength, hoping she would not fail as she had for the past two hours.

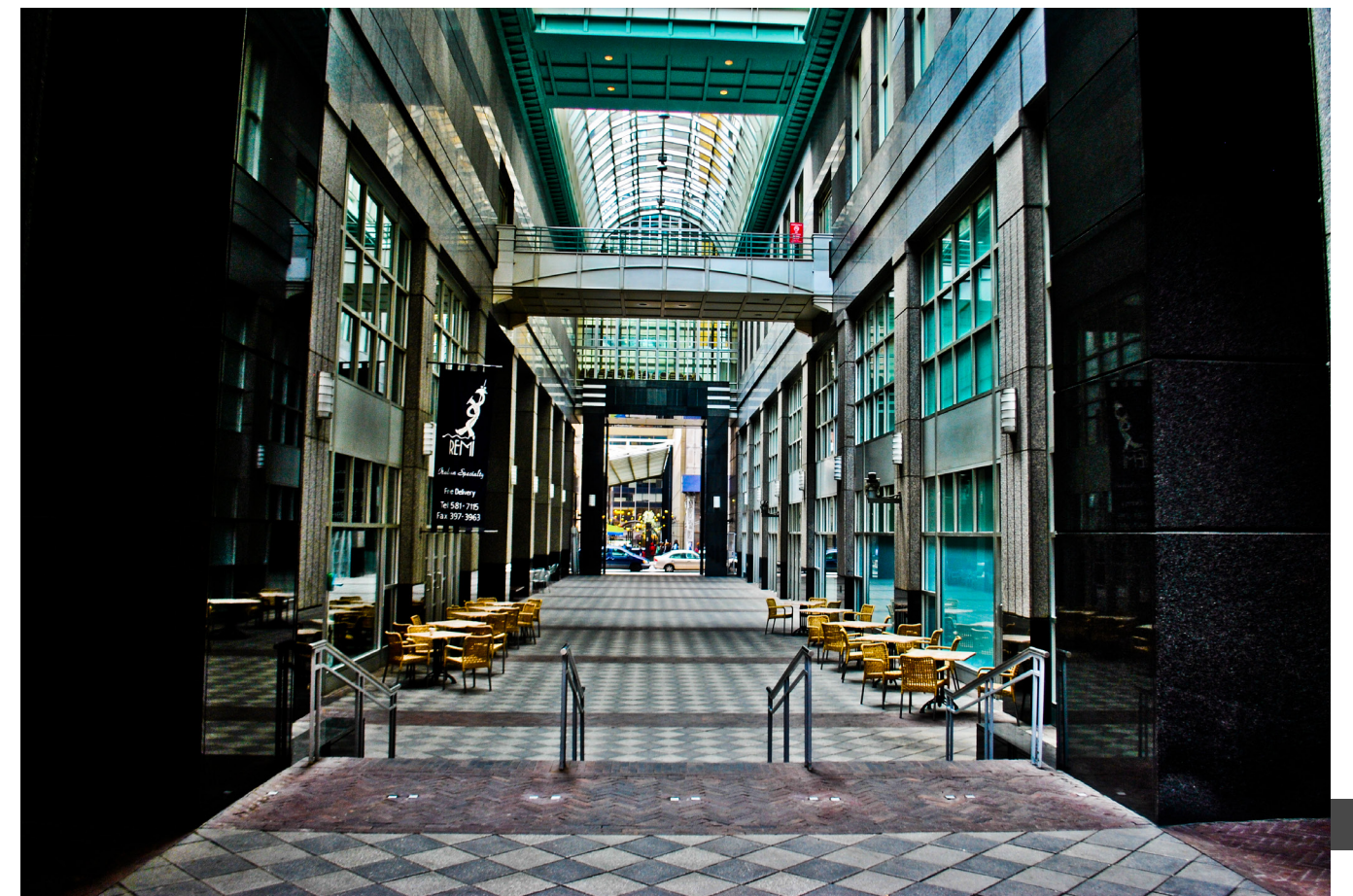
The water level was rising with each passing minute. Mia, who had hardly let go of the doorknob, looked down at the tools. The axe, matches, and saw lay before her, as worthless as they had been when she had last tried to use them. Her stomach grumbled and her arms ached.

For three days she had been listening carefully for the moment when a rescue team would arrive, make an opening, and save her life. Once, she dreamt it had happened, but when she opened her eyes, she was still there.

Mia banged on the door. Why was this happening to her? She recalled the warning alerts suggesting everyone be evacuated. Now Mia knew it was her own fault; she had chosen her fate.

An idea came to her. She half-crawled, half-swam away from the door and to the stairway toward her cellular phone. She dialed 9-1-1, waited for the operator and answered a few questions. Then she spoke, "I know, but I just want..." She panted, her voice breaking up, "I just want my family to know that 'Mia Loredana loves them.'"

Thirty minutes later, still struggling, Mia took her last breath just as the water reached the roof. As Mia sank, she reached for the door.



Frank Pellegrino - *Transit*



Jorge Cura - *Fetus*

Juggling

Miguel Ortiz

I grabbed the new bag and pulled out the carrots for the beef stew. I set them on the cutting board and began chopping away.

But if his mother's going to be here with the entire family then it's going to get awkward for me. What a selfish bitch, she comes to my house and doesn't even bother asking before telling me she's bringing guests.

I moved the chopped carrots into the pot and began shaving the potatoes the old fashioned way-- with a knife.

I swear if Jackie even looks at me the wrong way, I'll kill the bitch with my bare hands. She just makes me so fu-

"AHHH! Motherf-!" Blood oozing out of my thumb and dripping off the knife onto the potatoes.

I'll use these potatoes for Jackie.

The Hand (n.)

Michael Sanchez

Usage:

1. Expresses core desires/passions. Dances, caresses, writes, waves, etc.
2. Reaches out.
3. Grabs hold of our core desires.
4. Its thumb represents one direction; sometimes our core desires lead us in another.
5. Wraps around what we create.
8. Sometimes connects and comes in contact with something, part of a greater whole, making up an entirety of who we are and what we achieve during our time.
11. What our stories can grab a hold of.
13. Sometimes attempts to achieve something by aiding us in the direction we want to go. Like a rock climber, pushing something, turn of a knob on a door, hanging, throwing a ball, etc.
14. The hand is the most basic part of who we are.



Isabel Ruiz - *Spelunking*

Transplant

Leslie Alfonso

Characters:

Anne: A college student in her mid 20's.

Janet: Anne's best friend, a college student in her mid 20's.

Setting:

Anne's living room. The present.

Anne: You can't grow a liver on a rat!

Janet: Of course, they can. Don't they grow ears and shit on them? I read somewhere they have found a way to grow a pancreas on one of them.

(She takes a sip from her glass.)

Anne: All I'm saying is that a liver is different. They were able to grow a rat liver, and not even on the actual rat! Why would you want to have a liver grown on a rat in your body anyways?!

Janet: I didn't say I wanted it! You're the one that started this stupid hypothetical situation. I came here to watch HBO, man. Not to get brainwashed into your commie way of thinking.

(She takes another sip.)

Anne: Commie?! What are you talking about?

(She sighs and sits down next to Janet.)

All I said was that you might want to take it easy with the drinking.

Janet: You said my liver will crap out on me soon! You started it!

Anne: I was just trying to scare you! But of course, you'd come up with some random ass answer

to your potential problem. That's what you're best at, right? I try and try to help you but no! You are the Czar of rat livers and all that is right in the world!

(Anne takes a sip of Janet's drink.)

Whenever someone says anything you don't agree with, you have two go-to reactions.

Either you laugh at them or you get pissed!

Janet: I hate it when you say that!

(Pointing at herself.)

I am a multifaceted person!

Anne: You're a multifaceted person, my ass. Your "multifacetedness" makes no sense.

(Janet crosses her arms and leans back in her chair.)

Janet: You make no sense.

(Anne stares at her with a furrowed brow.)

Anne: You're a child.

Janet: Yeah, but you hang out with me all the time so...

Anne: You really need to lay off the drinking.

Janet: (She looks down at the glass in her hand.)

Yeah, I know.

(Janet laughs and Anne joins her.)

Fo(u)r (33)

Chris Carmenate

Fighting and shouting
agony lives within walls
- home will crumble



Alex Veliz - *Accordion*

Telemarketers

Bianca Rodriguez

She tried her best to stay asleep as dusk colored light fought to poke through her blinds. All around was the sound of suburban silence, the crunch of gravel sticking to oversized tires, the sigh of a house settling into itself, the hum of a ceiling fan beating the stale summer air.

She lay in her twin bed, springs from the beat down mattress pressing against her ribs, still as though the faintest sign of lucidity might give her away, as though the spring might uncoil and stab her right between the ribs. There, on her side, her eyes opened wide, limbs collected, she lay in silence.

From her side she could see the glow of her monitor sitting atop a large green workspace, littered with papers, scrambled sentences perforated with bits and pieces of the truth,

the more beautiful ones underlined, the more honest ones crossed out, rewritten, crossed out, and written out again. A glass of Pinot Grigio sat in a cracked plastic tumbler, among its degenerate cousins, all in varying states of emptiness.

On the wall above the screen was a cork board, affixed to it an assortment of accomplishments and promises. She kept her failures in a letter box on her desk, unopened envelopes that blushed bright red. Next to the cork board she hung a calendar, June 6th circled in red.

The calls began. The phone rang in its cradle like a baby woken from its fickle slumber. She swung her legs over the edge of the bed and sat for a moment. The world rushed up to greet her in a flurry of dancing blurs. Reaching out to her left, she found her glasses. After a moment of hesita-

tion, her fingers curled over the edge of the bed, dancing for a second as she willed herself to her feet.

She dragged her fingertips along the wall as she walked, stopping for a second to peer into an empty room. Twilight had passed and darkness crept in through the windows, a shadowy thief, driven by its hunger for light. She hung in the doorway, her fingers drumming against the frame. Inside, the master bedroom sprawled out before her. In the growing darkness it seemed less desolate; the layer of dust that had settled over the furniture, like the finest blanket of snow, was only slightly visible.

The phone rang again, and like the snap of a hypnotist's fingers, she was compelled to wake

from her daze. She passed stacks of old magazines, their pages yellowed and curled, upturned chairs with plastic coverings, a dining room table piled high with boxes of clothing and dishes and trinkets and all of the possessions a small family of three could accumulate over seven years. Surprisingly little for the emptiness she felt. Dust motes did their courtship dance, caught in the golden light of a ceiling fixture.

By the time she reached the phone, it had stopped ringing. She stood in silence, body drawn like a bow. Before the second ring she reached out and answered:

“What are you getting out of all this?”

fingers



Sadiel "Speedy" Ruiz - *Infinite Storm*

Perception

Miguel Ortiz

I lay in a bed of comfortable dreams,
The sun hidden behind gray clouds.
Dark, Raining, Wet, Peaceful
Raindrops singing beautifully on the roof.
The blankets wrap us warmly together.
I breathe in the smell of him.
I close my eyes and stay still.
In the stillness there is movement.
In both there is peace.

Schulamit's Journey

Atara Marko

“Yaama hu yaaba / Hu mas-hakon biti-uni,” she would sing while tending to the garden, as she washed linens in the river, and as she fetched fresh water. She hoped her song would be heard. It meant: “Mama and Papa, please do not sell me.”

It was a hot summer evening in the 1920's. The air was filled with the buzzing of insects. Twelve-year-old Shulamit sat still and quiet, behind the white clay wall, and just listened. She could hear her father's deep and assertive voice as he spoke with a man she did not know. After several hours of negotiating, she finally heard her father exclaim, “Congratulations! It's a done deal!” After that night, everything happened very quickly. A ceremony was held with red, green and gold wedding decorations. Joyous singing filled the village, and the feast was remembered for years to come. They even slaughtered a lamb for the occasion.

Shulamit was just a child, and now a wife too.

Her new home was in another town in Yemen, a few days travel from everything she ever knew. It was the farthest she had ever been from home. The journey was long and tiring. They were riding stubborn donkeys in the heat of the day and wore long white linens that wrapped their bodies from head to toe to protect their skin from the burning sun. When they finally arrived, Shulamit started crying quietly as she entered her home, for she knew her husband was to consummate the marriage.

They were not alone in that house; her husband already had a wife, twice as old as Shulamit; in fact, Shulamit would later play with her children, who were of the same age. She spent her time avoiding the jealous woman, who harassed poor Shulamit every chance she had. Two years passed and Shulamit had peaked into her puberty, and had now a child of her own. The love for her child kept

her going, and she carried on day by day; cooking, cleaning, laundering, and completing every other house chore, while having to live side by side with the other wife.

It wasn't long after this that Shulamit fell under deep illness; her face was pale, and her eyes sunk in from lack of nutrition. She had not received any care from any of the house members and was left in neglect to die. When she finally felt so ill that she could not care for her baby, the constant cries of her young child brought in a savior. The neighbor, who was a local healer, walked in, drawn by the constant cries, and found Shulamit on the floor colorless, powerless, her hair full of lice.

After coming back to life, Shulamit was committed to changing her fate. One morning, she dressed in her best, and with her baby straddled on her hip, she snuck quietly out of the house. She

did not know the way back to her parents, who she hadn't seen since the day of her wedding, but she did know how to find the big market. The big market was a three-day gathering of farmers and merchants from all the nearby towns that came together once a month. She sprung into the market commotion searching, looking for a familiar face. The market place was filled with the scents and aromas of Mediterranean spices; cardamom, cumin, cinnamon, vall of which smelled so good, especially away from her prison. The air was hot, and as she walked through the market stands and heard the shouting of the merchants around her, sweat dripping off her face. She suddenly felt the cool breeze of freedom brushing her skin, as she recognized her old neighbor setting up his jewelry stand. “Will you please take me home with you?” she spoke with a shaky voice. The old neighbor paused for

consummate

a moment. He stared at Shulamit for a minute before it had occurred to him who she was. He remembered how she used to play with his children years before, and with a big smile on his face, he nodded.

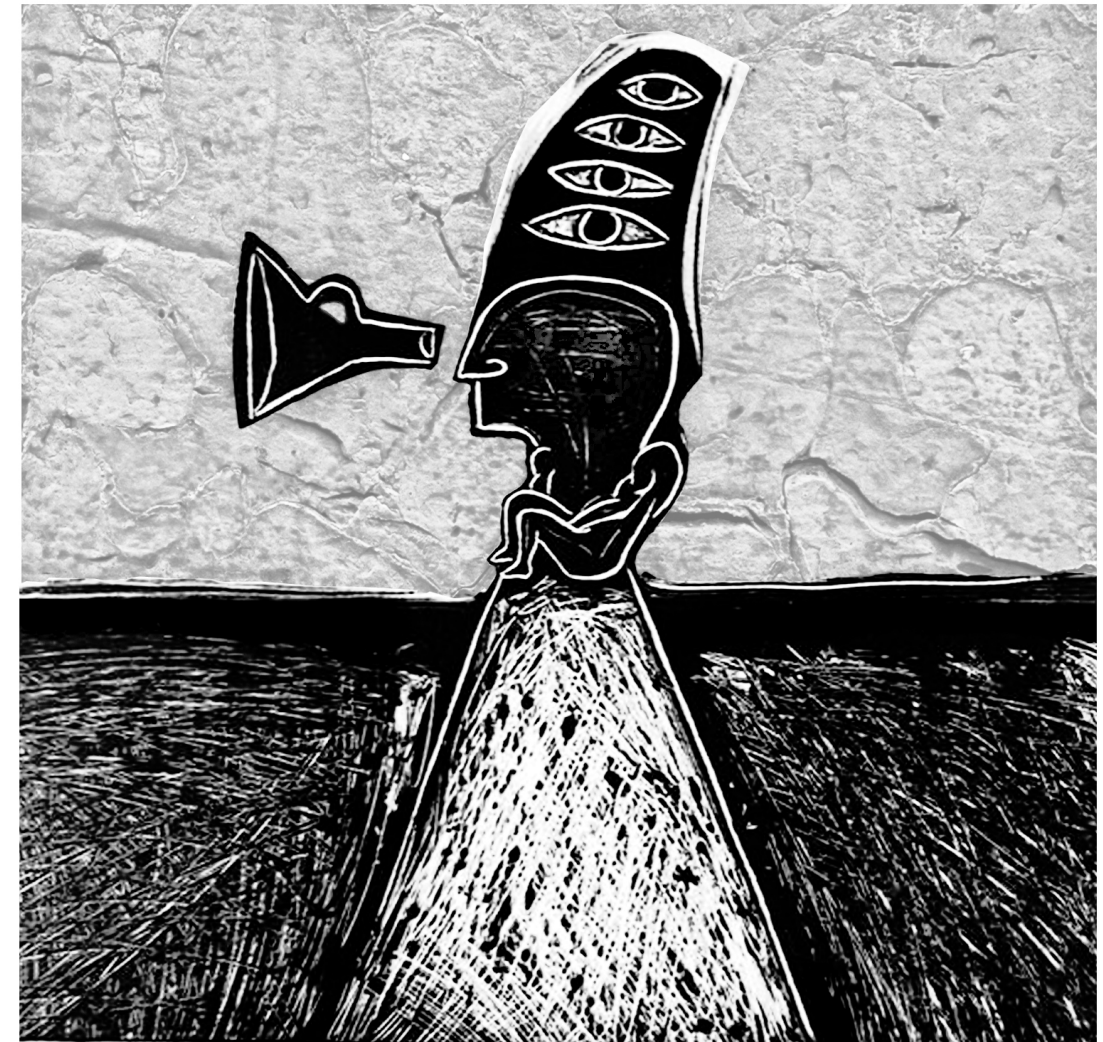
The journey back was by foot this time. For four days and three nights, she walked with the gracious man in the heat of the desert, while carrying her infant child in a white linen sling. Her swollen feet walking step after step upon the sizzling dirt road did not concern her.

When they arrived, Shulamit had feared from her father; she had disobeyed both her father and her husband. She knew she had brought shame upon the family. Rather than the slap in the face she was expecting, her father embraced and held her closely, and for the first time in years, Shulamit felt loved.

This story was told to me by my mother, and was told to her by her grandmother. It tells

the harsh reality of women in the past, and unfortunately the reality of many women still today. It makes me realize how blessed I am to be born in modern times and in a free country. Shulamit is one of the women I came from. Having a part of her in me and knowing her story empowers me and makes me the strong woman that I am.

“I am so lonely / I am alone,” she sang as she cleaned the cool stone floors, as she carried water in from the river, and as she prepared meals alongside her mother. This time her call was heard, and her father arranged for her to marry a young man of her age, a tailor. His name was Salim Ibrahim, and he was my great grandfather.



Andres Cabrera - *El Residuo Resume*

Odnecserc

Elizabeth Fernandez

Where does laughter go?

Does it simmer in the kitchen
skillet and spit up into your face
like a freshly cracked egg in the
morning before school?

Where does laughter go?

Does it tumble down the stairs
with the whirling thud of roller
skates underfoot three days after
they were supposed to be put away?

Where does laughter go?

Does it soak the grass with jets
of sprinkler water that fall like
snowflakes on the winter morning
of that summer day?

Where does laughter go?

Does it lay still and quiet
swept up under the rug
waiting
when crying has taken its place?

Point Blank

Leslie Alfonso

The room was dark except for the flickering light emanating from a television set. Fe walked across the room and turned on the light. Anne was on a step ladder, trying to hang a frame on the wall. She immediately stops and turns to look at her scowling mother. Fe looks at her daughter and screams,

“You are the only woman in this country who would think of hanging that in the dark. Eres tremenda monga!”

Anne drops the hammer on top of the nearby couch, steps off the ladder with very little finesse and makes her way to the kitchen with her mother following her every move.

“Milena didn’t call me today.”

Anne looks back at her while she washes her hands and asks,

“What did you expect?”

“I am her mother!”

Fe grabs a dishtowel and starts to wipe the counter with a fury Anne has seen one too many times. She has started doing this about six months

ago since she started her new relationship with Vega. Her eldest daughter had not spoken to her for six months and she will probably never do so again. Anne looks at her mother with an exhausted face and points out the obvious.

“Mima, you’re with her ex-boyfriend. What were you honestly expecting?”

“What done is done, Anne. I can’t change what happened. She was barely talking to me before it happened anyways. I gave birth to her. She should call me on mother’s day for Jesus Christ’s sake!”

Anne looked at her elderly mother wearing her too tight jeans and wondered why she was there with her. After all these years, why didn’t she have the courage to do what Milena had done six months ago. She reaches over and took her mother’s hand in hers making Fe drop the dish towel.

“Mima, I would have wished you had done it to me. It would have given me a great excuse.”

Fe stared at her youngest daughter as dry tears spilled from her years. Anne let her go and grabbed her keys making her way to the front door.



Isabel Ruiz - *The Birds Amass*

Sunrise Agony

Sindy Villar

Hit snooze button. Shut eye
for ten seconds. Hit snooze
button. Sleep another ten seconds.
Turn off alarm. Sit up. Rub
eyes. Remember errands. Close
eyes. Lie back down. Fall
asleep. Wake up frantic. Check
clock for time. Rub eyes.
Jump off lightheaded. Make
bed. Make coffee. Smoke a
square. Remember to quit.
Walk dog. Feed
dog. Brush teeth. Get
dressed. Pledge to fall
asleep earlier. Open door.
Squint again.

Staff Page

Rosendo DeVicente
Photographer



Leslie Alfonso
Copy Editor



Jorge Cura
Photographer



Bianca Rodriguez
Editor



Hellen Rivas
Editor



Frank Pellegrino
Managing Editor



Elizabeth Fernandez
Editor in Chief



Sadler "Speedy" Ruiz
Lead Designer



Ivonne Lamazares
Adviser



Victor Calderin
Adviser



Elizabeth Fernandez/ Editor in Chief

Sadler "Speedy" Ruiz/ Lead Designer

Frank Pellegrino/Managing Editor

Leslie Alfonso/Copy Editor

Bianca Rodriguez/ Editor

Hellen Rivas/ Editor

Rosendo de Vicente/Photographer

Jorge Cura/Photographer

Special Thanks

Heysel Bastidas

Neylin Castillo

Ashleen Gutierrez

Barbra Oses

Maria Oveda

Alex Veliz

Faculty Advisers

Victor Calderin

Ivonne Lamazares

National Awards

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Gold Crown Award 2013

Gold Medalist Certificate

2nd Place: Cartoon; Michael Sanchez, “Picaresque”

3rd Place: Closed (traditional) form poetry; Mac Dinneen, “Winter’s Echoes”

Certificate of Merit: Experimental Poetry; M. Nerys Torralbas, “27 Hours before Nathaniel Baker became 620315”

Certificate of Merit: Overall Design: Literary Magazine; Elizabeth Fernandez and Nerys Torralbas

Certificate of Merit: General use of typography throughout magazine; Elizabeth Fernandez

Certificate of Merit: Literary single spread; Elizabeth Fernandez, “Nostoi”

Certificate of Merit: Literary Multi-page presentation; Elizabeth Fernandez

Reginal Awards

Community College Humanities Association

2nd Place: Southern Division; Nerys Torralbas

State Awards

Florida College System Press Association

General Excellence: Magazine, Division A

1st Place: Cover, Elizabeth Fernandez

1st Place: Design, Elizabeth Fernandez

1st place: Illustrations with text, Devora Perez, Nerys Torralbas, Jorge Cura, Rosendo De Vicente, Frank Pellegrino

1st Place: Art works: Ani Gonzalez, Devora Perez,

2nd Place: Staff Page, Sadiel “Speedy” Ruiz

2nd Place: Contents Page, Elizabeth Fernandez

2nd Place: Editing, Nerys Torralbas

3rd Place: Photography, George Calonge, Sadiel “Speedy” Ruiz, Alejandro Veliz

3rd Place: Poem, Mac Dinneen

Inner Circle of Excellence (3 or more awards): Elizabeth Fernandez

Awards
Volume V

Colophon

Production Notes

Created on Apple iMac10.7.4 OS X with InDesign CS6 and Photoshop CS6.

The fonts used were Calluna, Neuton, and Charcoal CY.

Printed by AC Graphics on PEFC certified paper from well-managed forests and with vegetable-based inks.

Editorial Policy

Café Cultura is produced once a year by students enrolled at Miami Dade College - Hialeah Campus. Students submit their work to cafecultura@mdc.edu. Magazine staff members remove names and identifiers and then select the pieces for the publication.

Café Cultura’s mission is to provide Miami Dade College Hialeah Campus students with an outlet for their creative output in the literary, visual, and musical arts.

Opinions and views expressed by the artists or authors do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, the advisers, or Miami Dade College.

Thank You

Administration

Dr. Ana Maria Bradley-Hess, Dean of Academic and Student Services

Dr. Caridad Castro, Chairperson of Liberal Arts and Sciences Department

Priscilla M. Suarez, Assistant Dean, Academic and Student Affairs

Special Thanks To

Student Government Association 2012-2013

Prof. Sherri Sinkoff and her Speech Communication students

Student Life Manager Crystel Lewis

Student Services Director Nelson Magaña

Campus Administration Director Andrea Forero

Director of Learning Resources Glenda Phipps

Hispanic Heritage Committee

Media Services

AC Graphics



Miami Dade College
Hialeah Campus
1776 W. 49th St.
Hialeah, FL 33012-2918

Miami Dade College
District Board of Trustees
Helen Aguirre Ferré, Chair
Armando J. Buccelo Jr.
Marielena A. Villamil
Benjamin León III
Marili Cancio
Jose K. Fuentes
Armando J. Olivera

Eduardo J. Padrón, President, Miami Dade College
Cindy L. Miles, Campus President, Hialeah Campus

Miami Dade College is an equal access/equal opportunity institution which does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, color, disability, national origin, marital status, religion, age or veteran's status. Contact the office of employee relations/equal opportunity programs/ADA coordinator at 305-237-2051 for information.



The Miami Dade College Foundation supports the mission and values of Miami Dade College by encouraging gifts from a wide variety of sources, particularly in the areas of scholarship and program support. For more information on how you can contribute to the College, please call MDC at 305-237-3240.



Certified Green Partners confirms that paper used contains fibers from sustainable and well-managed forests, printed with vegetable-based inks by AC Graphics #CGP-EGC/PR-1001

