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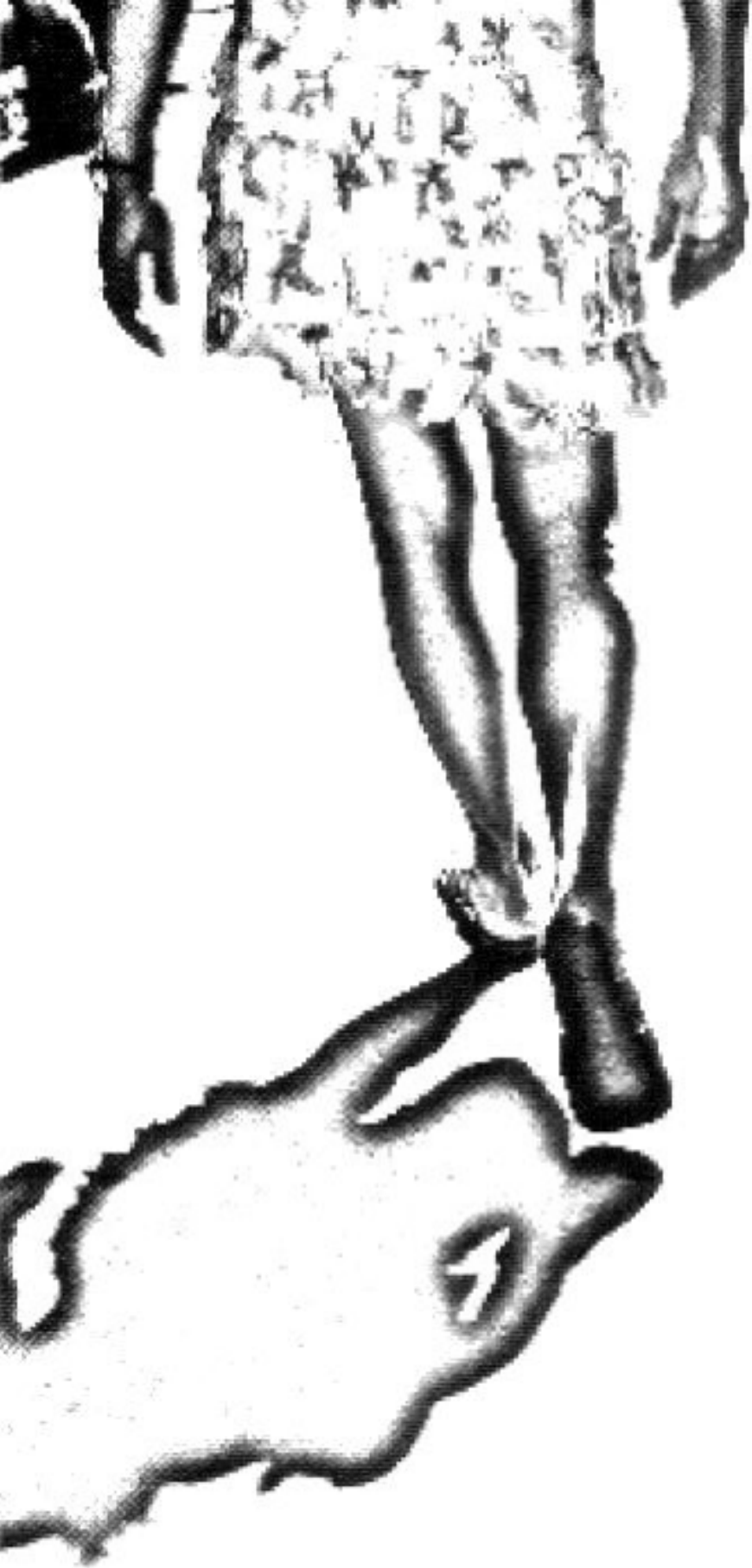
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# Passwords

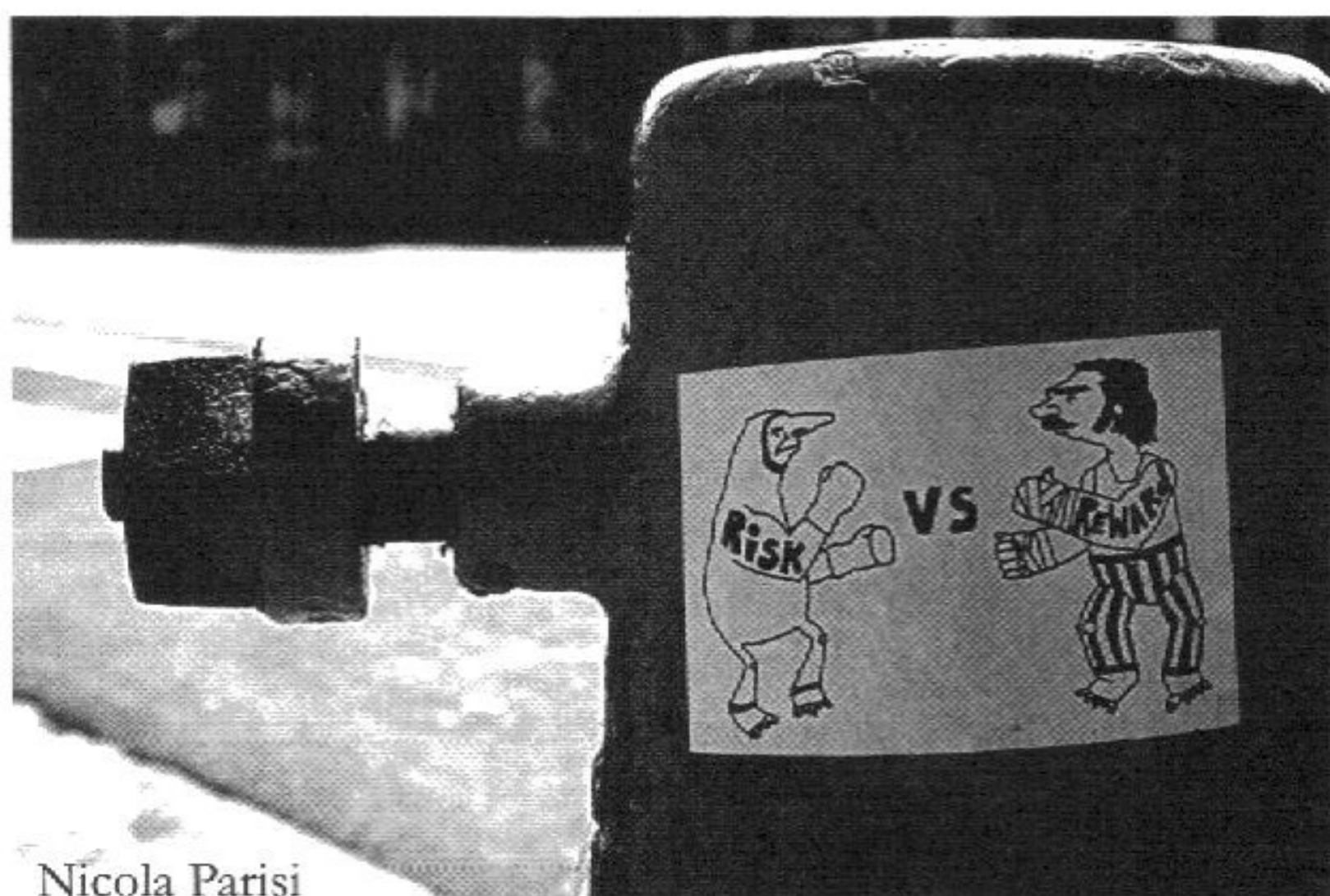
Volume 10 Issue 2  
Spring 2010

Passwords  
A Claremont Colleges Literary Magazine  
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Cover Art by Nicola Parisi

# Passwords

A Claremont Colleges Literary Magazine



Nicola Parisi

"Here is a package,  
a program of passwords.  
It is to bring strangers together."  
-William Stafford, "Passwords."



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## Editors' Note

*Passwords*, a five-college literary magazine of poetry, prose, and visual art, is published each semester. Our mission is to provide a literary forum for the Claremont College community, and our editorial board is open to all students.

A word about our selection process: writers' names are omitted from all submissions before the editorial board evaluates them, and final selections are made through deliberation by the editorial board. Although the process is necessarily subjective, we attempt to make it as fair and collaborative as possible.

We would like to thank the Associated Students of Pomona College, the Pitzer College Student Senate, the Associated Students of Harvey Mudd College, the Scripps Associated Students, the Associated Students of Claremont McKenna College, and Without a Box for their financial support.

*For more information about submitting to the magazine or joining the editorial board, please send a message to [passwords@pomona.edu](mailto:passwords@pomona.edu)*



## Table of Contents

*Writing Contest Winner*

### **April**

Mairead Small Staid.....8

*Writing Contest Winner*

### **Aftermath**

LM Ellzey.....9

### **Untitled**

Alexa Schlomo-Carrasco.....12

### **Untitled**

Scott Hunter.....13

### **She Who Was (Extra)Ordinary**

Heidi Hong.....14

### **Dreaming of Your Enumerations**

Matt Hedley.....16

### **This City**

Ashton Wesner.....20

### **Love Poem for My Sister**

Nandini Majumdar.....21

### **Shower Sounds**

Emily Miner.....22

### **Barça**

James Barraclough.....23

### **For the Good Women of Ho Municipal**

Anne Marie Tse.....26

<b>Untitled</b>	
Alexa Schlomo-Carrasco.....	30
<b>An Afternoon Spent Considering the Archetypal Implications of Trees</b>	
Renee Johnston.....	31
<b>The Outsider</b>	
Lisa Storck.....	32
<b>Little Things</b>	
Corin Hamilton.....	34
<b>Untitled</b>	
Scott Hunter.....	35
<b>Sonnet of 1000 Petals</b>	
Hunter Dukes.....	36
<b>Morning Air</b>	
Emily Miner.....	37

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Nicola Parisi

This semester, the *Passwords* writing contest featured a one-word theme as the prompt: "green." Contestants had forty-five minutes to write a poem or short story relating to this theme. Special thanks to the Motley for sponsoring the writing contest.

April  
Mairead Small Staid

The neon green of California spring  
cannot tempt me from this relished  
misery. Stagnant my days, sweat-soaked  
& blue. I miss Northern rain  
& the door it opens into sadness,  
allowing me in, as familiar as the long  
gravel driveway days away from here.  
Instead this landscape stubborn,  
unrelenting, holds no mirror up to me.  
We recognize in each other nothing  
of ourselves. I live inside, denying  
the sun its echo in my skin, the trees  
their bright reflection in my eyes.  
The betrayal of nature is hardest  
to take, hardest to live unloved  
by what surrounds me. There is no place  
in this perfect season, state,  
for a body flawed & fractured  
& its stormy discontent.



## Aftermath

LM Ellzey

The trees had been cleared for the fire station. I had not returned home for four years, remaining on campus during cold Northeastern winters and smog-filled summers, my feet burning on asphalt. There was little difference between winter and summer in New York. Besides the snow-drained streets from June to August, and most of autumn and spring for that matter, the city never changed. Always the steel, glass, and mortar buildings rising high with windows glaring down, observing the monotony. In the shifting streets, there was no transition.

But, finally, with graduation behind me and my bachelor's degree in hand, I shouldered my bags of belongings and stepped onto the plane that would carry me through air until I touched ground in California. The airport was downtown, and I still didn't feel at home. Even these skyscrapers watched—looming sentinels. My eyes were tired of cement. I needed green.

The freeways of San Diego are not as twisted and convoluted as in other major cities. The congestion was minuscule on that ride home, my mother at the wheel, smiling. For four years she had not seen me in person—internet connected web cameras paled in comparison to flesh and blood—but all those winters and summers past could not have been helped. A round trip plane ride from the two corners of the United States was a steep price to pay, and I could live easily enough in New York without vacation. After all there was no change. I had nothing new to adapt to.

Once off the freeway and into the suburbs, I glimpsed the tops of trees, standing tall in people's front yards. This teaser of green would hold my attention until we passed the field that would bring back all those high school memories. My friends and I, ducking for cover beneath lush canopies, lighting cigarettes, and perfecting our drags. Secrets had been spilled on the soil beneath our flip-flops—Sarah's parents were divorcing, Juliet was in love with another girl. Nostalgia graced me with its smoky fingers, ghost limbs reaching into me, clutching my sides with anticipation.

But they had cleared the trees for a fire station. The new building glistened in the setting sun, which was blood red, bathing the sidewalk in front of the station in scarlet. I did not cry. I did not feel sorrow.

I remembered when, at five years old, my family's house had burned to the ground in one of those wildfires that was set off by accident and blazed through all of San Diego. After the choking ash had found its resting place in the dead embers of our home, we were allowed to search through the wreckage for any remnants of our old lives—the lives that had drastically changed in one blisteringly hot night. I watched from the sidewalk as my father and mother rummaged through the broken bits of our past. My mother was the one who discovered it: Beneath the remainder of our living room's charred coffee table, a single potted tulip had survived, the last token of my mother's garden. The pale pink bulb seemed to tremble in the wind, but its emerald stem stood strong. The leaves that once surrounded the stem had been lost to the fire, but they were not needed. The tulip still had its foundation.

The car passed the fire station in less than five seconds, and in that brief moment I glimpsed my childhood and all it had become. In that blinking flash of time, I understood. The opposite of green was fire.





Nicola Parisi

## Untitled

Alexa Schlomo-Carrasco

I am one shedding sparkle. You are  
lime green technicolor pandemonium.  
I am sleepy eyes you are sleepy kisses  
take that styrofoam and crush it wear  
those turquoise tights and shred them bend  
them xerox cut and clip them until they.  
Your eyes bleed red. They scream leave  
leave leave the lights blare harder  
harder technicolor pandemonium firework  
of light head spinning head  
spinning let settle the ground, attempt to  
quell your confused chaos neon. There will  
be days(waves) she told me I asked the  
common question candid she told me that  
you can't just go(float) away. Once  
upon a time four band aids across the knee  
I took my mother's makeup and slapped on  
layer after layer until a thin film let only a few  
freckles shine through. You say that  
freckles are a sign of character but I can't  
believe you. My mother told me freckles  
are a product of the sun. I am cold naïve  
you are covered up confused but still,  
there's something beautiful about delving  
into the unknown blue of deep sea and finding  
your own way to breathe. Say fuck you  
to their calculated oxygen throw away the  
contraption breathe in five counts, hold,  
and release.  
They look at me sad now and wave hi  
a little more ferociously but my boots are laced  
up tightly and they stomp black suede and  
I will need no one not even you.



## Untitled

Scott Hunter

Mother,

*We wanted to ramble, as though they were hills.*

We followed the barefeet the curlyhead chomper of daylit cigars left behind. We brushed aside branches and burst through bush-thorns as though our red balloons could and should in fact be filled with anything in the world. We passed the peace pipe to a horse with no name. We shared a cab with Randy Newman. We stained the president's blazer with something akin to orange juice. We cracked your flowerpots underfoot and called in the coast guard.

*To be king for a day free of consequences.*

We screamed across the canyon and listened to echoes thunderback. It was in this way that we sang choruses, choruses upon choruses of row your boat along with ourselves.

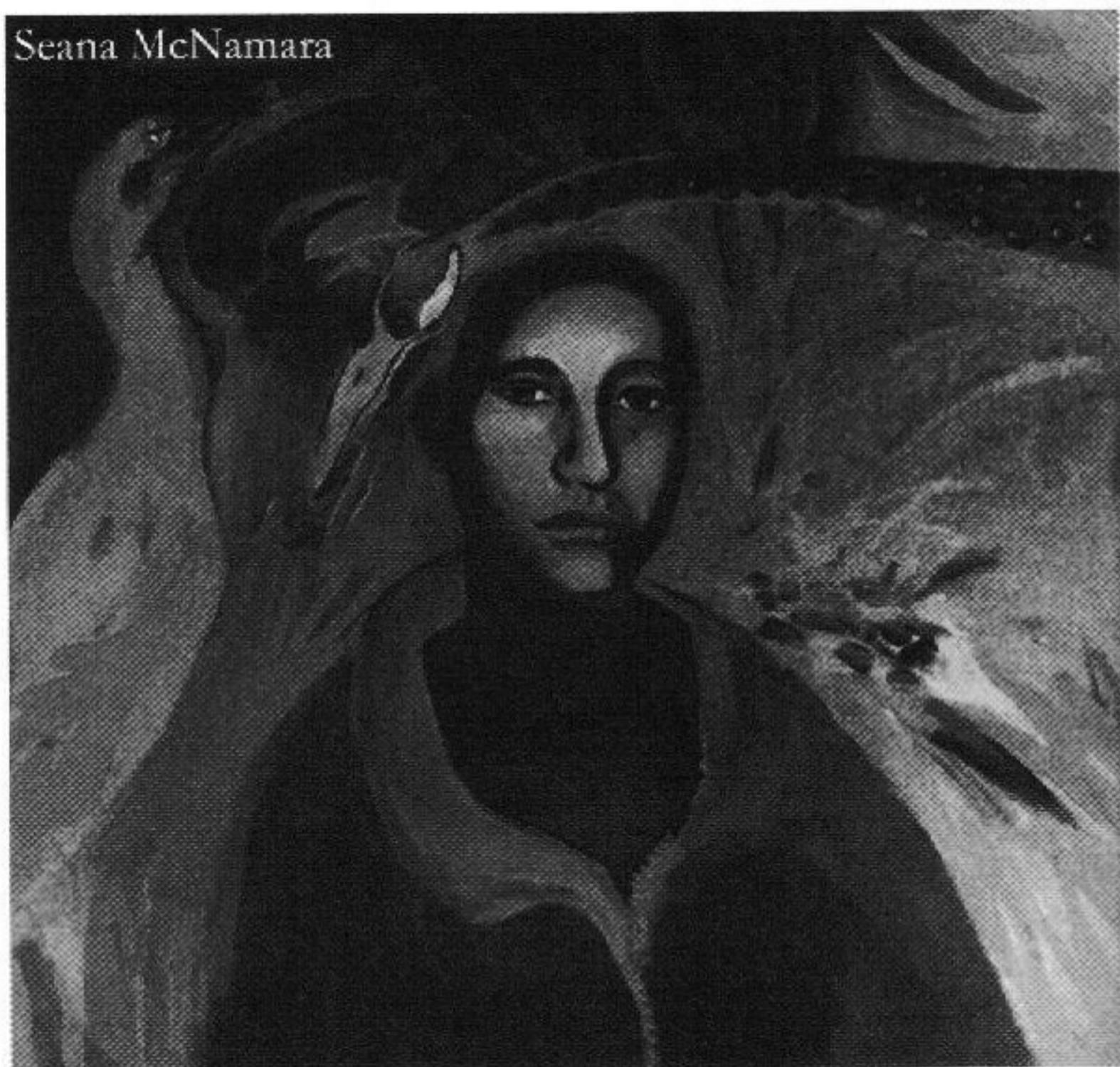
We dove into the caves and came back with rubies, we drank milkshakes and vomited gold in the form of foodpoisoned opportunity.

*We wanted to ramble.*

You told us we shouldn't but we ate the berries. We were told not to eat the berries but we did, we did and we dropped dead, we did and we died.

*We walked into the woods.*

We painted warstripes for the eyes of our enemies, we carved spears from the grand canyon and charged. Chalk it up to the "coulds" and the "could nots." *We are calling simply to say, listen to a song or two and get on with your day, your flowerpots are broken and the coastguard's on its way.*



She Who Was (Extra)Ordinary  
Heidi Hong

1.

After a lifetime of service you remain completely selfless. Perhaps selflessness became a habit for you, like breathing, folding the summer clothes that I let fall carelessly strewn about on the floor, or heating congee and eggs on the stove before anyone else wakes. That morning when you left for the market and returned, carrying a ripe watermelon in thin papery arms and a proud smile, mother scolded you gently, firmly. 都这么大年纪了,<sup>1</sup> *people will think we don't take care of you.* The dangers outweigh your love for us. And I said nothing, because I was supposed to rise before dawn and go with you, but I failed you. It would have been too heavy for me to carry anyway.

---

1      Think about how old you are.

2.

You raised me, that much I know, but did you ever mention those who came before me? My uncle and aunt you dragged to adulthood in 河南,<sup>2</sup> through the Cultural Revolution. Then came my mother, the youngest daughter to be lumped with the next generation of first grandchildren. Who had time for stories then, when the women warriors fought with butcher knives and sewing machines to feed and clothe the extra children who they never expected to come but took in anyway. Grown, they scatter to better things in the wide expanse of the great world—America, 美国, beautiful country. Back then, who had time to sit and rest, or think of anything but survival?

3.

You were at peace with the idea of dying, or so I believed. My answer to your rhetorical questions of 姥姥还能活几年?<sup>3</sup> was always 万岁, ten thousand years, a phrase I must have picked up from TV dramas featuring imperial China, with emperors who demanded eternal life and glory from their subjects and God, these warrior men who could not face their mortality. And I (foolish imaginative child I was) believed that you, with your wondrous stories and wise freckled skin that never grew more ancient than it already was, would defy time's passing. and the world would stop here with me, the youngest and last granddaughter of this generation.

---

2 Henan, a province in the middle of China.

3 How many more years can I live?



# Dreaming of Your Enumerations

Matt Hedley

The two men met every night in the room of ghosts and antiques to read the puzzles. Being dreams, they did not meet every night, but were unaware of their absences, and were always absent together. The room's furniture stayed fixed through the nights they awoke together, and both claimed agency for most of the objects. A grandfather clock perhaps from the older man's uncle's first house or perhaps the younger man's wife's family home; a thin coat of sawdust, both being carpenters, the dreams of carpenters, or men who dreamt of nothing but carpentry. The only object neither could place was the box on the table (from his childhood, from his kitchen) which held the puzzles. Neither remembered the other's name, but were close enough to not need names, just a nod and a smile when the room solidified enough to make out the other's shape.

"Well?" said the older man, with a nod and a smile. "Why don't you read the first one?"

Still trying to remember the pictures and places just lost on waking, the younger man walked to the box and opened it, withdrew the waiting paper and read,

"The leopard gardener's fifth floor contradiction was bleak, for it neglected the forms of desire that play quick sequined tricks in firelight." He paused. "That's a very good one, isn't it?"

He closed the box.

"Let's start at the beginning. The leopard gardener."

"A leopard cultivator, leopard trainer, breeder, or conversely a tame leopard, a zoo leopard, born in captivity, fed steaks its whole life and it pushes out spots like roses."

"A tamer of the wild. A zoo. Or flowers. Or leopards. Or what a flower is or what a leopard or zoo is. What's a flower?"

"Not sex. Maybe romance. I've never bought into the sex of flowers."

"Nor I."

"A woman, then, or an apology, or just a flower."

"The leopard."

"Captivity, exoticism, the wild, cages, children, eyes, feline femininity, the hunter, the hunt, death, or just the leopard."

"Sounds right. Let's move on. Fifth floor contradiction? A divide, argument, contrary forces. And something of the number five, or height, or actually the fifth floor."

"Symbolism of fives? Pentagrams, Masonic seals?"

"Fine. Is that enough?"

"For me. 'It neglected the forms of desire.' Seems clear. Let's move on."

"Quick sequined tricks in firelight."

A long silence, and when their eyes met they smiled.

"Nonsense?"

"Nonsense."

"Fine then. Let me think."

"Of course... Actually, I'm ready if you're not."

"Go ahead."

"When I was a child, my grandfather lived with us, and in the seven years of my life before he died, he lost his mind to dementia. He would wake up most nights and scream for my mother, yelling about the eyes that covered his walls, wide open and staring. During the day, when he sat in our living room pacified by the soft lights and sounds of daytime television, I would sneak into his room and play with my plastic animal figurines. And among them all, the leopard was king in that place, because the eyes were his spots, and he covered the room, one huge leopard built of a thousand, thousand leopards. And when I grew bored of my toys, I would stare at the wall and try to call out the leopards, to see the eyes, to be mad. I called it playing crazy. And I really wanted it too – to be crazy, to see the eyes, because all children want to be mad, to live in their own wonderland of magic leopards that coat the world. When I was seven, my grandfather threw himself out the living room window. And I could never understand how he could do that, just leave the leopards behind, who gave their secret only to him."

"Mmm. Wonderful. Hold on a moment. I was listening and not remembering."

"That's fine," said the younger man, feeling a vague stirring of hope, lost after a few minutes when the other man began



speaking.

“My first wife died of cancer. Of the stomach, that is. It took four years to come about. She was too frail to make love, and the hospital bills took all my money, and the constant scares and disappointments of one failed procedure after another broke my constitution and nerve. At some point along the way I decided I didn’t love her anymore, and I couldn’t separate my life enough to determine whether I never had, which would have been merciful, or if I was really just the worst selfish bastard around and couldn’t handle the burden. Either way, the guilt almost killed me.

I won’t lie – I considered killing her and myself many times. But instead, I dedicated myself to being as loving as I could, staying faithful, by her hospital bedside, every night, to absolve my guilt, which didn’t help me but only made her love me more. So when she died, I felt this enormous, crushing, drowning, weight of relief, a curtain, an ocean, descending over everything.

It wasn’t long before I got a date, and I took her to the zoo [a little laugh] and dinner. We walked around and flirted, enjoying ourselves. Zoos are perfect for watching your date, because in the time she takes looking at the different exhibits, you can look at her, and of course when you’re caught staring at a lover it’s always taken as romantic. As I watched her over the course of the day, the changing light and shadow seemed to play many different women on her face. Not my dead wife, don’t misunderstand, just different women, maybe lovers, maybe just other women, and I realized that love, or desire [a little laugh], might be nothing more than the ways we rearrange the articles of our attention until we run up against something real that defies recategorization, like death, or cancer. And I felt god-like, rearranging living people to fit inside the wormy, fleshy parts of my mind. And after realizing all that, I looked at her again, and realized I still wanted her. Two months later I married her. Married still.”

They sat in their draw a while, listless, until the older man said, “care to do another?”

“Of course.” Midway to the box, he stopped. “How long have we been doing this?”

“I don’t know.”

"I'm still very sure it's my dream, you know."

"As am I."

He remembered the first day they had met, when one had raised the question of who dreamt who, and the seemingly endless nights that had passed since, identifying metaphorical puzzles of memory for supremacy of existence. And when he slept and dreamt of his waking self, he had the sensation that he was swallowing himself slowly, mouth to tail, a circle closing upon itself, a bubble that would one day pop in the mind of some sleeping whalebird somewhere, with the smell of sawdust.





## This City

Ashton Wesner

< At the table outside the donut shop a woman sits beside me  
she's mexican she asks do you go to school here and I  
say no I mean not in this city, I just haven't seen this city. >

several finches stuff their beaks with donut crumbs. they tilt their heads to the side, so the beak is parallel with the ground, and scoop up each tiny puff of deep-fried bread one by one. their mouths become so full that eventually, with each new morsel they attempt to add, two or three already acquired pieces will tumble out. the process continues, until eventually they will fly away when startled by a foot or any other sudden movement and—in this case—because of a reflexive chirp of fright, usually end up dropping all of their food.

Sasha Bartashnik



## Love Poem for My Sister

Nandini Majumdar

a shoe and a bottle of water scattered  
on the grass, we talked  
but the sun followed  
so we moved, we left  
the other shoe and a pair of socks,  
we marked the spaces we had occupied;  
here the mud was slightly damp beneath  
the crisp blades, a rich deep brown  
and worms, we collected  
the long striped seeds, piled  
them in heaps, counted them  
and stuffed them in pockets to keep;  
but the light followed so we left  
an old sweater lying with one arm  
extended, restful and used,  
then it was time to go,  
do you remember

## Shower Sounds

Emily Miner

You are showering.

Water droplets  
map the contours of  
you:  
sliding down your length  
rolling past your curves  
bouncing off your angles.

Their voice  
shifts as do  
you:  
hiss when you bend for soap  
swoosh when you lather shampoo  
spatter when you suddenly turn.

I stand at the sink  
listening to the shape of your body.



# Barça

James Barraclough

It's a Saturday night at the Camp Nou, and FC Barcelona is playing. The huge stadium dominates the skyline from a hill in west Barcelona. Every street in the vicinity seems to lead to it. Dozens of busy tapas bars line the streets nearby. Thousands of people have come from various outlying parts of the city to stand in front of the fortress-like building, a silhouette against the dimming pink sky. Excitement rises with every passing minute, fueled by beer, the spring air, and the press of so many people. Then the gates finally open, and the crowd rushes inside. The excitement is contagious, even to a foreigner like me.

Inside the stadium, I follow the concrete spiral walkways to my gate. The brilliant overhead lights almost blind me as I walk out of the tunnel to my seat. From the upper decks, I can just see over the rim of the stadium on the other side. The lights of the city sparkle, and the sun is setting behind the hill that looms on the horizon. The crowd is a sea of blue and maroon surrounding an island of emerald green grass. 90,000 people are talking, shouting, breathing, and taking pictures. I can feel the weight of all these people that have come to see Barcelona play fútbol.

They have traveled from all over Catalonia to see the team that means so much to them. FC Barcelona is a symbol of the perseverance of their culture in the face of assimilation. After the Spanish Civil War, Franco used violence and persecution to force all of Spain to conform to his fascist ideal. Catalonia was the major hotbed of resistance, so Franco targeted their most treasured icon: FC Barcelona. The team itself survived his wrath, but he banned the Catalanian flag and language and changed the original English-influenced name to the Spanish name, Club de Fútbol Barcelona. Franco understood the political importance of soccer in both Spain and Europe, so he adopted Barcelona's rival team, Real Madrid, and used its success as a platform for his propaganda program. To this day, Barcelona fans identify their team with cultural freedom and the republican resistance. They still bring beautiful crimson and gold



Catalonian flags into the stadium, and the captain wears a copy of the same flag as his armband.

When the players emerge from the locker room, the crowd erupts as one. Team songs swell up from everywhere in the stadium, glorifying FC Barcelona. Sometimes the words are incomprehensible, but the voices fill the stadium with pride. There are ninety year-olds who have been coming since they were kids and there are toddlers seeing their first game. Some are just tourists who want to see a game while in Barcelona. Some are diehard hooligans, who sing themselves hoarse in the upper decks and set off flares or throw rolls of toilet paper. Anyone who cheers for Barcelona is welcomed; those who don't are taunted mercilessly.

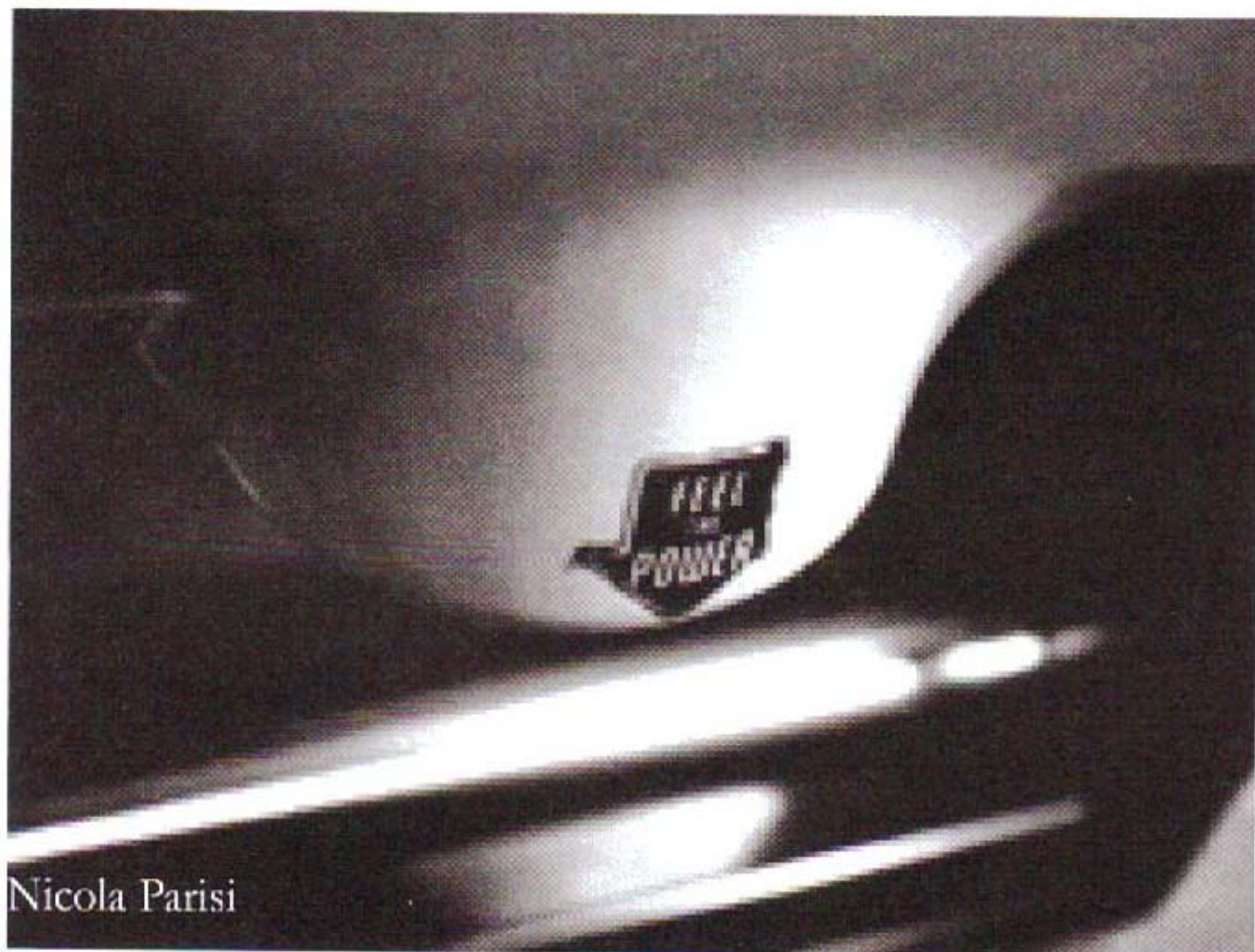
An older man sits next to me, listening to the game commentary on his portable radio. He does not speak much and leans forward intently to watch the game. I'm not very good at Spanish, but I venture a comment about a player I know. He looks surprised that a white boy from America knows anything about his beloved team, but as we talk in short, broken sentences about the game, I can tell he is pleased. He loves fútbol, and he loves Barcelona. Anyone of the same persuasion is worth his time. His face glows with pleasure while he watches the beautiful style of soccer that Barcelona plays.

The noise at a fútbol match far exceeds even the loudest American sports. Fans whistle derisively when the other team has possession, creating an almost unbearable whine throughout the stadium. When the home side has the ball, wild anticipation envelops the stadium. The stadium explodes when Barcelona scores a goal. Fans leap from their seats and wave their arms in the air. Flags unfurl and shake vigorously as the stadium thunders around us. Fans give me hugs and sing joyously. The old man smiles boyishly, pumping his fist. As the celebration subsides, the crowd leans forward even more intently than before. Goals make the game interesting and exciting, and they always leave the crowd hungry for more. The game is over before I want it to be. But Barça has won by several goals, and everyone is smiling. The old man remains for a time, while the rest of the fans filter out of the stadium to get on the metro. He looks down at the brilliant green pitch, where the tiny players are making a circuit to applaud their faithful fans. I say that I



had a good time. He nods in agreement and shakes my hand. It was a good game, and we are content.

I walk slowly through the concrete tunnel out onto the street. Huge crowds push through the streets toward the nearest metro stops. Some duck into the tapas bars to grab late dinner or some celebratory beers. I'm headed home, back to my hostel. In the morning, I will leave for southern Spain. As I walk, I listen happily to the songs that still float through the streets. It is a sound deep, rich, and proud.



Nicola Parisi



# For the Good Women of Ho Municipal

Anne Marie Tse

Kyle and I are in Ho going around the market getting things that we don't really need but will want to eat, like mangos and cabbage. Heavy things like that. We're trying to get our errands done here, then go back home, and then abruptly leave again for Ho, because Mama's birthday celebration is happening up there today. My shoulders are aching and weighed down by four mangoes and our water and clothes and *Catch 22*, and I demand that we stop walking around and find the Avee station now. Kyle, being a gentleman, complies.

Except that there is no Avee station. We ask around and are directed to a lot that would be empty if not for the tree whose shade has attracted some food vendors. We haven't even crossed the street before someone from the lot runs over to try and take our bags and asks us which bus we want to get on.

"Avee, Avee Gborgame," we say a few times before someone knows where we want to be. In Ho it always takes a little time to explain that you with your fair skin want to go to one of the Nordu villages, because the person that asked you which bus you needed will have been expecting the answer to be Accra, or at least Hohoe. But Avee is home, and home is where we want to lie down for five minutes before going to Ho. So eventually we settle for one man's offer of Tokokoe, which is close enough and where we know we can get a motorcycle. How much?

"Fifteen thousand," he says. Ghana just changed up their currency. They chopped off a couple zeros or something, it makes it difficult to tell what people mean sometimes. So this figure means jackshit to me. But I can tell it's a lot. Kyle does the math and looks hesitant, but this old blue tro-tro in which four women are sitting and watching us seems to be our best bet, so we get in.

As usual it takes half an hour for the tro-tro to fill up. When it's halfway full, the man comes around taking the passengers' fares. "Fifteen thousand" is, apparently, fifteen cedis, and the cedi is almost one-to-one with the U.S. dollar, so that's expensive. We know that a cab, though, would cost thirty. The thing is that Ghanaians have a



tricky little habit of saying "fifteen cedis for you" and not specifying whether by "you" they meant "you two" or "just you, your friend pays another fifteen."

So when the man comes to our window and whispers that we owe him thirty cedis, I am not surprised. I am, however, fed up, and so is Kyle. We're ok with being ripped off a little bit. But we're not stupid. And we may have just pulled a lot of money from our respective bank accounts, but we are not going to pay thirty cedis for another bumpy ride in a crowded tro-tro. If we wanted to spend that money, we would've hired a cab. Kyle is counting our money, because as he points out, it's getting dark, and it looks like it could rain. We don't really have an alternative.

"Too much," comes a whisper from the seat in front of us. She looks just like any other village schoolgirl: bright, confident and strong. She's talking to the woman sitting next to her, a village woman with colorful fabric around her waist and shopping bags at her feet. The woman murmurs her agreement, and a second village woman turns around, too.

"It's too much?" asks Kyle, like we didn't know, and they start talking to him.

"Yes, too much," says the woman sitting next to the girl.

"How much should it be?" I ask. "Five cedis?"

"No, no," says the second woman, and the first woman opens her palm and holds out a fifty-pesuwees coin, a twenty-pesuwees and a ten: eighty pesuwees. "Like this. All the Tokokoe people pay like this."

One cedi and sixty pesuwees for us altogether. If cedis are the dollars, pesuwees are the cents. That man would have gotten a lot of money out of us—thirty cedis for something that shouldn't even have been one and a half. He comes round and the women start giving him crap; they all gang up on him and tell him off for trying to cheat us. He takes it for a little while, trying to argue back, but there's really nothing to fight over and he backs away sheepishly. When he comes around again, we give him two one-cedi bills and the women make sure we get our change.

The girl turns to us again. "When you come to Tokokoe, you take motor to Avee Gborgame. Do not pay so much," she instructs



us.

"We know," I say. "One cedi."

"Yes," she smiles and turns back, proud of me for knowing. When she gets off the bus at the first village on the route, she looks at us one more time and says, "Safe journey."

Before they get off, I think everyone on that tro-tro has gathered some vague idea about what had happened, because the women who helped us kept talking about it. The whole way back, there is at least one woman eyeing the man who tried to cheat us, because he's sitting by the door, letting people in and out. One of those women stays on until Tokokoe, where she gives him one final telling-off and then steps off with us. I thank the guy as I get off anyway, because he could have made a much bigger, angrier deal of it all. He dealt with the embarrassment pretty well. It's not a fun thing to be ganged up on by so many women.

And those women didn't have to do that—a lot of Ghanaians, even those in secluded villages, believe that foreigners have lots of money, and most have no scruples about making them spend it. I have no reason to believe that these women thought any different. They probably suspected that we could afford the thirty cedis if we had to, and it would have made no difference to their day to let the man go ahead and ask it of us. But even though they knew we had the money, and it wouldn't have been the end of the world, they stepped in and stopped something unfair from happening.





Alicia Hendrix

## Untitled

Alexa Schlomo-Carrasco

I rode my bicycle up foothill that's a lie I walked my  
bicycle up foothill and my eyes played a desperate  
dance of avoiding the lure of red hot morning kisses  
waiting, to burn my logic away waiting, to twist these  
calculations until the numbers make no sense at all  
waiting, to shift them contradict them waiting to stop  
them, waiting. Sleep days until morning until night  
wake no rise stay immersed beneath, nothing we  
painted the sidewalk a color unknown that color  
shifted slowly but it did not change I repeat it did not  
change *are you listening* a red balloon painted across  
the complimentary treeside (how sweet) lifted me up  
(sans bicycle) and took me higher higher until I didn't  
know home left hanging behind find the answer sleep  
days calculate this breathing into don't leave no leave  
it's a complicated concept waiting to stop waiting//  
we left the cans of color at each corner but no one  
paid attention no one cared to pay attention that's a lie  
we all tried.



Nicola Parisi



# An Afternoon Spent Considering the Archetypal Implications of Trees

Renee Johnston

The professors are *al fresco* today.  
The tenured drift under archways  
and squint sunlight  
out irises that would opt for the shaded interior of the eyeball, ideally.  
Lives lost in ideally.

I'm watching from the library  
and the April glare on old glass makes their world a forest.  
For a while, it's fruitful:  
apples, plums, cherries  
but finally the leaves,

ancient and tattered across the ground are  
undeniable. The theorists say  
the water, the wind, the stars are not universal  
expressions of the human condition,  
just social constructs covering leaves

so historically Crunched  
by the gathering of rosebuds and manifesting of destinies,  
that any future crunching should be kept  
to a minimum, which is True but Unhelpful when everyone is Stuck  
in piled-up days that the forward-irised keep mulching, leaving

the rest shouting  
treatises between trees  
to other leaf-locked, Crunch Experts,  
who can deconstruct "Exodus" for 300 pages,  
but won't ever leave.



# The Outsider

Lisa Storc

Sam's first cigarette was a Marlborough, because the red-and-white package looked almost like a candy cane and she wanted to curse it for not being a Kool. She had been just outside her house and it tasted like standing too close to a camp fire. Years of school had taught her all about cigarettes, but she had learned about smoking from Ponyboy Curtis. He had taught her to stay gold and to smoke Kool or curse.

"Curse you, Marlborough," she said with a cough. There was no one to see her lose her breath this late at night. The cigarette was held boldly between her fingers like in the old movies. Sam watched the tight white wrapper fade to crumbling grey and was reminded of her mother. The edge of grey turned into a border that pushed inward as if the brown filter was a line of gold. Stay gold, one boy had said to another, but the books that Sam read did not tell her to flick the ash. This she had seen behind the bleachers, where the upperclassmen smoked neither Kools nor Marlboroughs and talked about things Sam could not see.

Her thumb flicked the end held between her fingers, but too hard a touch sent the burning edge down against her knuckles. "Shit," she cursed as the cigarette fell to the ground. The box was still full minus one, but dropping a member of the pack seemed sacrilegious.

Sam's foot came out and stomped on the failed experiment, so that she could prevent a forest fire in the middle of the city. Immediately she regretted this, as if someone would see the half-gone cigarette and connect it to the ashes on her shoes and the smug satisfaction in her eyes. "I can't deal with this. You talk to her," her mother would say, and another argument would begin to drain the life out of Life.

The cigarette had fallen on dirt, and as Sam crouched down she poked at it. Moist, almost mud. Her fingers prodded and jabbed until a small hole had been made, and in this she nudged the cigarette. She was burying the body, hiding the evidence, and Sam took

care to smear dirt over the place her lips had touched. A clump of dirt was placed on top of the small mound, and a piece of leaf relocated to the edge of the covered hole. When she stood she could only see the displaced mud if she squinted.

A yell sounded inside her house, and she started. Was it a television show, or a person? Sam shrugged and looked for a starry, starry night she could not find. The city lights glowed and bled orange into the dark blue sky. The stars must have left until the battle of hot and cool was over. When the sun rose Sam knew it would bring an army of red and pink and purple, and the street lights would win.

"Ah," she sighed, and thought that the sound of her own voice fit perfectly between the crickets and far off hum of tires. She looked at the sky one last time, wondering if she would remember this for years to come. Sam tried to memorize the cracks on the curb, the smell of asphalt, so that tomorrow she could write a paper on it, maybe, or in half a century she could recall this moment to a protégé.

The house was quiet again. A slam of the door had echoed, and then there was nothing. No one came to point to the clump of dirt and carefully placed leaf or ask her what she was thinking about. Sam hid the pack in the bush by the porch and went inside.



Nicola Parisi

## Little Things

Corin Hamilton

You were pretty  
I suppose  
or pretty enough  
you followed me  
even though  
you shouldn't have  
and I smelled  
like cheap tequila  
my roommate's out  
I said  
my roommate's out  
but here,  
we'll put a scrunchie  
on the handle  
I wish I knew  
your middle name  
but all I have  
are little things  
your flesh  
and sighs  
and motion  
in the morning  
you want  
to watch the sunset  
but I say  
I'm sorry,  
I'm sorry but  
not this time  
I'm tired  
and besides  
I have class today at nine  
later you tell me  
thanks



thanks for making it not scary  
and for a few days  
my pillowcase  
smells like you  
and then it doesn't.

## Untitled

Scott Hunter

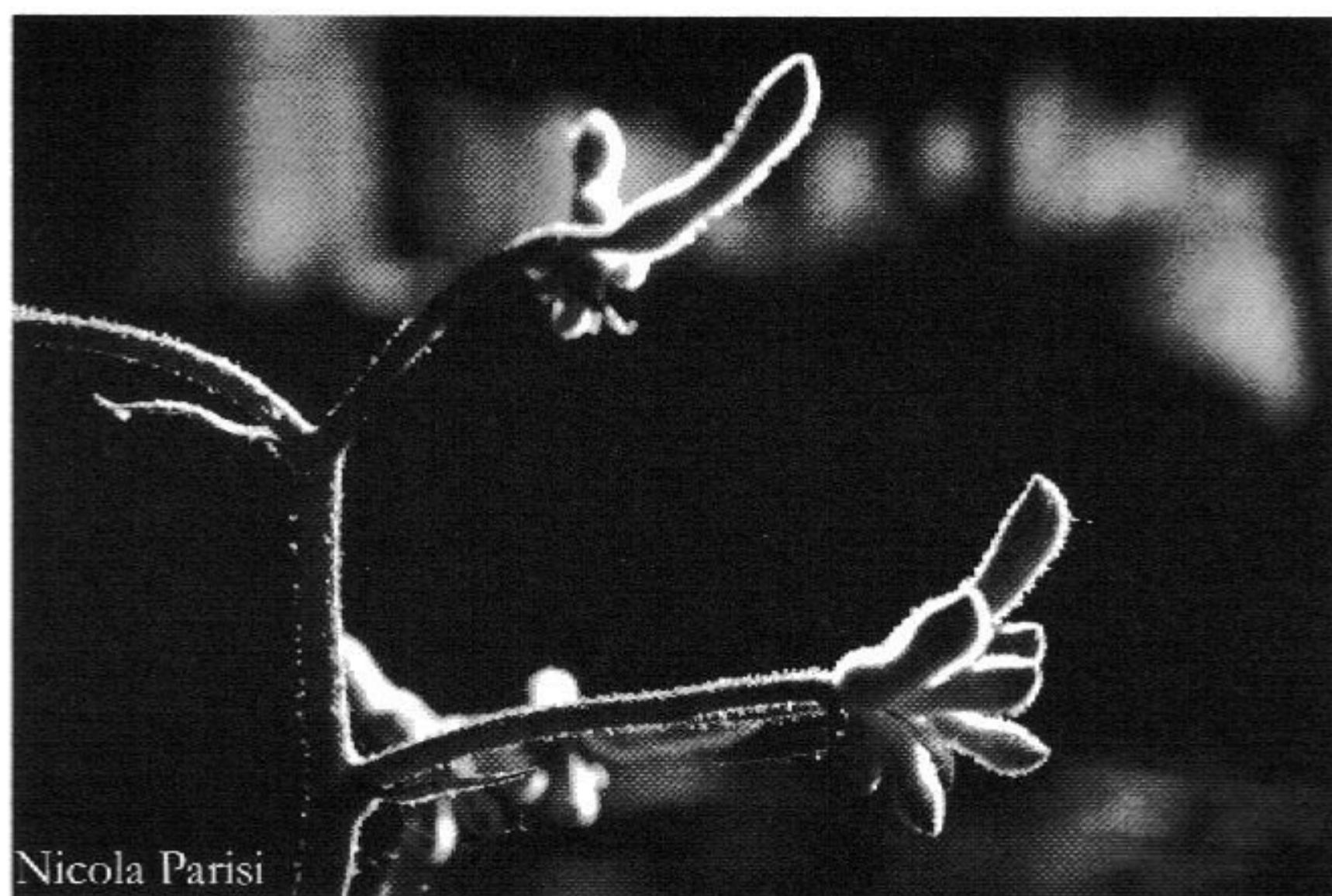
This whole valley is peeling and cracking like the worst chapped lips I ever saw. Though the land's too dry to bleed the same way. The leaves swish on the ground and off the skeletons, swish I've missed my chance.

In Grandpa's stories it was *the greenest valley you'd ever laid eyes on, the softest grass you'd ever buried your back in, the sweetest berries you'd ever put on your tongue. The warmest sun that ever beat your neck.* "Is this it?"

"The lay of the land's the same, but this here's not the time of year for picking berries," daddy fuzzes into my ear like a sweat-shirt against the wind. Whistling along, blood bleeding, building up on his bottom lip until he tongues it off. "Wrong time of year for berries, but who knows, maybe you'll be back." And a bird off there goes whooeeewoo, who, who; who'd come back to land like this, that's peeling and cracking like daddy's lips? Most certainly I won't.

(And I start crying, the kind of cry that comes to replace your breathing for a minute or two, 'til you gasp and realize there's more to it than sadness, there's also some kind of permanence *most certainly I won't*, not real enough to put your finger on. Permanence, so I guess I'd best start breathing again.)

Grandpa said it was green, that you could bury your back in the grass and get lost for hours, that you could pick berries for days and the sun wouldn't burn you anything past a nice shade of pink. But this place is peeling and cracking like daddy's chapped lips.



## Sonnet of 1000 Petals

Hunter Dukes

Driving Highway One through harvest moonlight  
You and I saw Buddha beneath a rose  
Shining sallow sunflower of the night  
Sipping milky coffee in lotus pose.  
Drunk off youth and high on truth we walked  
Three abreast along the diamond sea  
Of this and that and myth and fact we talked  
And saw the world with utter certainty.  
And yet, you gripped a pistol in your dress  
And shot the buddha thrice through the third eye  
On bier of driftwood sticks it came to rest;  
We burnt the corpse and mourned the truth with cries.  
By empty stars and hollow body's glow  
We search the sky for something still unknown.

## Morning Air

Emily Miner

air in the early morning —  
is colder  
quieter  
sharper

(other beds yet cradle  
warm, curled bodies  
with tucked-in limbs)

— is my sole companion  
on empty sidewalks  
pinching  
chilling  
pushing  
into the day



## Passwords

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