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FALL 2021

**“TO LIVE A CREATIVE
LIFE, WE MUST LOSE
OUR FEAR OF BEING
WRONG.”**

- Joseph Chilton Pearce

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EDITOR'S NOTE

We made it, everybody. This semester has been both tiring and invigorating as we all begin to recover from our time in quarantine and piece together what our new normal is going forward. However, as our semester's campus activities, athletic events, and classes rev back up into full swing, so too does the creativity and expression of our student body.

Our team has worked tirelessly over the course of this semester to present an issue filled with relatable and inspired pieces. As we moved through submissions, I noted a collective outpouring of emotion and creativity. We received more than 1.5 times as many pieces as we did last semester and I saw the whole spectrum of emotion from contentment to grief to anger to happiness.

I had the pleasure of leading our team this semester and can say that this edition was crafted with great respect and humor. Our staff brought an incredible enthusiasm for the journal and worked with great teamwork and perseverance through a busy semester. Our advisor, Dr. Rode, was a lot of help and the discussions the staff had in class were very productive as well as a lot of fun. The artistic sense that I saw grow among our staff was amazing to see as we created this issue of the journal together over the course of the semester.

This issue has some of the most honest and genuine pieces that the journal has ever seen. This includes our first two pieces published in Spanish, though English translations have been provided by their authors for those of us who do not speak the language. To all creators, I encourage you to continue working on your craft. Keep writing, keep drawing, keep creating, and just keep going. And when you're ready for the world to see your work, we'll be here. But for now, we hope you enjoy this semester's issue and join us in celebrating both the pieces that made it to print and those published online.

Sincerely,

Theron Abell

Editor-in-Chief, Fall 2021

Ashtrey

Duc Pham



Double Eyelid Stickers

Chengjin Tian

Double eyelid stickers have always been objects of wonder for me, but I've never talked to anyone about these objects before. I do not want anyone know I have them. As an Asian girl, my double eyelid stickers are always in the back of my makeup bag, and these are the most important things I use every day. However, the average person from the west has probably never heard about this accessory.

How would I describe Double Eyelid Stickers? Well, a single eyelid sticker is like a little, transparent, unremarkable sticker. In other words, it is a thin, clear strip, which you place on your eye to create a temporary crease. These products are super popular in Asia, where having "double eyelids" is ridiculously desirable. People like me who come from Asian countries, such as China, Japan, and Korea, are born without naturally creased lids. The goal of double eyelid stickers would be to remain invisible to everyone, with only the user feeling the stickers on her skin to know of their existence. I have come to think of wearing double eyelid stickers as a habit, similar to people who need glasses. I sometimes cannot feel my double eyelid stickers because I have integrated them into my eyes and body. When did this habit start?

I still remember the second week of high school when the music teacher asked us to bring our instrument for a concert. My best friend walked up to me mysteriously after class and said, "I want to show you something that can change your eyes like magic; you will look like a different person and be more beautiful on the stage." When she showed me a small bag of double eyelid stickers, I was amazed that these little things could make such a big change for me. My friend also said, "these stickers are designed for the single fold eyelid person like you to have a naturally double eyelid." Wow, I had always wanted to have double eyelids as they make eyes look bigger, which I believe is a sign of beauty. Bigger eyes mean beauty. I took this "precious gift" and could not wait to run back home. The moment I put the double eyelid stickers on my eyelids, I felt a sharp pain. The sticker made my eyelids feel uncomfortable, and tears began to flow because of the irritation. Because of my inexperience, I tore the double eyelid stickers off my eyelids and put them back on from my eyelids, feeling a twinge of pain every time when I lifted the glue, but I saw the pain as "the price of beauty." Finally, I got my eyelids to look naturally double-lidded by using these magic stickers. My slender eyes, due to my

single eyelids, now seemed to double in size. After my concert, my friends came to hug me and said that my eyes now looked amazing, thanks to the double eyelid sticker!

Ever since I first used double eyelid stickers, it has become my daily routine. Not just myself, but millions of Chinese girls like me cannot live without double eyelid stickers. I usually buy them for a dollar in the beauty shop three minutes away from my home in Shanghai. I shop like a wholesaler and try different brands of double eyelid stickers as much as I can find the most comfortable one. I even force myself to get up 15 minutes early to put on my double eyelid stickers in order to keep my eyes looking good every day. I cannot live without this accessory.

Artificial beauty has a “cost,” and not just in money. Double eyelid stickers have some after-effects, both physical and psychological. The physical effects happen when I use the glue or tape for a long time. They irritate the thin skin of the eyelid, making the skin sag. In serious cases, the sagging skin will cover the part where there should be the crease of double eyelid. Because of this horrible after-effect, a lot of Chinese girls (including my best friend) nowadays have double eyelid surgery, also called blepharoplasty. In this case, they could have double eyelids for their lifetimes. Blepharoplasty will cost more money, cause stronger pain, and take a long time for recovery and looking more natural. Psychologically, the “cost” of double eyelid stickers is even worse. Sometimes, when I have a concert coming up and my home does not have enough double eyelid stickers, I become anxious and cannot sleep. I need to have my best double eyelid stickers with the most comfortable feeling and good “natural” double eyelids when I go on the stage. If I do not have them, even a thought of that will drive me crazy. Sometimes in my daily life, I do not use the stickers. I start to worry about that: is there someone who feels my eye are smaller today. I try to hide the fact that I have single eyelids by blinking unnaturally or walking with my head down.

I went to the United States in 2015 as an international student, which is the first time I realize that the United States does not have beauty shops where I could easily buy the double eyelid stickers. Americans do not need them! When I started packing my luggage before I came to the United States, I believed I must bring double eyelid stickers with me. I bought all the double eyelid stickers from the beauty store downstairs and put these stickers directly into the safest corner of my luggage.

The biggest paradox is that I don't want anyone to know when I make such a big sacrifice and effort. I want no one to realize I am using double eyelid stickers to make my eyes bigger. I want people to think I have naturally double eyelids, just like all the white girls who were born with them. I thought about going to the biggest hospital in Shanghai to do double eyelid surgery during my summer vacation, just like some of my Chinese friends did. But I was hesitant to have the surgery even if would permanently double my eyelids. To have this surgery in the hospital would mean I am admitting that my single-fold eyelid is a disability. In that moment, I started to question why I needed to be a double-eyelid person. In this world, ugliness is a disability that a woman needs to correct. But why? Why do I and the whole Asian community think double eyelids are beautiful, but single-fold eyelids are not? Why can't we Asian girls accept ourselves as who we are? Why are we so anxious about how we look? Yes, the answer is that we, as the Asian community only accept our aesthetic of appearance based on white supremacy in the way we do not even realize. We want to be more "white," have a bigger eye, whiter skin just like them. What I knew was that I wanted to be something that I wasn't. I've come to realize that I did not want to deceive anyone, but I did want to become someone else—the white version of me.

Right now, my double eyelid stickers are in my make-up bag in the United States. I have less time to use them than before. I began to understand that beauty is different and diverse. When I went to the museum, I was surprised to find that all the beautiful women in the traditional Chinese paintings had single eyelids. They looked me in the eye through history, and they were so beautiful, with the same single fold eyelids as me. Suddenly enlightened, I accepted who I was, I understood where I came from, and discovered who I wanted to be.

Dinka Tribal Women

Grace Bobo



3021 MOTION

Davion Mack



Holding Love

Wafa Shaikh

Love, ammi says, is cooked in her rotis & new recipes she tries for me until

we find one I like. Baba doesn't compliment her food but it's okay. She knows.

He loves her, she knows.

I can't cook, but I can learn—

My boyfriend looks at me, confused. *No, honey. Love me some other way.*

He loosely explores my fingers and smiles. His favorite thing to cook for me is gajar ka halwa.

I compliment his food. *I love this. I love you.*

He does the dishes & cooks my grief away when I cannot do it myself.

Often, I cannot do it myself. I write our love poems and

condense his sweetness into a box I hold with

delicacy.

He holds me like I am everything and precious. I hold him

like he is water in my hands, like the world

will strip him from me the way honey is from

a hive. Sometimes, when we are quiet, my head

continued, no stanza break

screams the sounds of ravens cawing my thoughts,
that I am not enough, no, I am enough—
I do not give, I do not love enough, not like he does. No,
no, I do, I love him.
That he will leave me like the rest did. Then

he places dinner for me, his soft lips touching
my cheeks, & he begins:
you wanna hear something funny? and tells me
a story, something about an annoying customer at work.
He adds a spoon of honey in his chai.
honey? I ask. He chuckles as I question his choices.

Let me cherish him, then. Let me love, let me.
Let me love him while he's here.

Printmaking - Burning
Kayla Sobyak



Borrowing Time

Abigail Newlund



Waiting for His Brother's Arrival

Summer Holt

Helen Hamilton Award Winner

Tuesday, September 11th, 2001

The normal chaos of New York City existed perfectly on this Tuesday morning. People paced on their way to work as others flew by them on their bikes, saying, "On your left!" or "On your right!" maneuvering through the crowd. There were pigeons scavenging the sidewalks and taxis flooding the streets, honking their way through the madness like pieces of a puzzle. James sat in a coffee shop, looking through the window and observing the morning with the brewing of coffee filling the noise behind him. It's known that only certain people can handle the New York City lifestyle as this morning would appear stressful to some, but to others, it's the only way of life in which they can function.

James was one of those people. So was his brother, Owen. The two grew up in San Francisco, California, thriving as typical "city boys." Only this city was across the country. While James was two years older than Owen, the two were inseparable. Their childhood consisted of walking to school together, playing on the same athletic teams, working in their family's local corner coffee shop, and taking the subway home for dinner each night. Life was a movie for the two of them, and they lived each day knowing how good they had it.

The movie continued when James got a job at public relations firm, and Owen was offered an internship for a brokerage, both in New York City. Together, the two made the move, ready to conquer their next city.

James forced himself to stop admiring the life outside the window and fix his stare on the computer screen in front of him instead. He was waiting for Owen to meet him for breakfast but came early so he could get work done before his arrival. It was their typical Tuesday morning routine. James waited there, peacefully working. He reached for his coffee cup, and then the world changed.

An explosion. That's the only way James could describe the sound he just heard. It was so loud, so powerful that he thought it had to be a car accident right outside the coffee shop. He jumped at the sound and looked out the window for an answer. Cars were

stopped, and peoples' faces were staring up into the New York sky, their hands covering their mouths in complete shock. Customers in the shop began looking around, nothing but confusion filling the environment.

James got out of his seat to see what the rest of the civilians were looking at, no clue what it could possibly be. "Excuse me, sorry. Sorry. Excuse me. Excuse me," he said as he pushed his way through the doors. As he got out, he looked up, his heart instantly dropping.

The North Tower of the World Trade Center appeared to have had an explosion. "Oh no. Owen," he said under breath, the words escaping without him even knowing. Owen worked on the one-hundredth floor. Instantly, James dialed his number as he began running through the crowd of people pouring through the streets. The phone rang, and rang, and rang, and rang. Each ring seemed like a hundred years, James holding his breath for each one. Owen didn't pick up. The fear began to consume him.

The sound of sirens began to erupt throughout the city. Each block had a new fire engine or law enforcement vehicle racing towards the tower, but still, no one knew what had truly occurred. Some civilians began crying, several looking down at their phones dialing their loved ones or looking up at the tower, still in shock. Eventually, James got close enough to the base of the tower, only six blocks away. Barricades blocked him from being able to get any closer, though. Civilians were flooding out of the tower, their eyes full of sadness, confusion, and disbelief, yet their vision blurred by the tears.

James scanned each face that passed by him, but still no sign of his little brother. The streets felt chaotic, yet more abandoned than ever. Ten minutes passed, and then the world shattered again – a roar came rushing through the city, and the sight of another plane crashing into the South tower pierced the civilians' eyes.

Screams now filled the block, and everyone began running away from the towers. James, however, stood there stunned, unable to get his body to move in any direction. Tears began running down his face without him even knowing. This is not what was supposed to happen in the world. Cops began pushing the people further away, the moment drowned out by the whistles, sirens, screams, honking, and crying.

Nothing changed for almost an hour. James paced back and forth, scanning each person still in the hope of seeing his brother, but still, he stood there alone. He had almost given up hope until, finally, a ring. He instantly looked down at his phone to see a message from Owen. His heart stopped, but he held the phone up to his ear.

“James. It’s me. Uh, I’m sure you know what’s going on. I hope you’re safe, I hope you’re okay, and I hope you get this message. I’m okay right now. I’m up top, but uh – we, we can’t get down. People are jumping, but I’m – I’m not gonna. I’m just gonna stay up here, and I’m gonna pray. I want you to know I love you. You’re the best brother ever, and you’re my best friend. Please, uh – please tell mom and dad I love them, too. You guys are the best. I hope you see you soon, James. Alright, I love you. Bye.”

Life stopped right then, and any light that was left in James’ life was consumed by the smoke that came rushing through the streets, engulfing him as the towers came crashing down.

Friday, September 21st, 2001

James stood there, staring at his brother’s casket. Friends and family came up behind him, resting their hands on his shoulder, probably expressing their condolences, but James was too shocked at what was occurring that any noise was drowned out. People piled out of the church doors one by one, leaving just James staring at a picture of his little brothers’ glowing smile and blue eyes, the only sense of light in this dark moment of time.

James eventually left the church, finding his way back to his favorite coffee shop. He sat down at a table, staring at his hands as they held onto each other in desperation. He remained in his suit, but the tie was undone, and the collar unbuttoned. While his mental state was obvious because of his outward appearance, it didn’t stand out from the people around him. Everyone in New York City this week was grieving alongside him. The sound of coffee brewing filled the noise around him, almost identical to his morning last Tuesday as he waited for his brother to meet him for breakfast. Regardless of the events that occurred between now and then, James sat there in a trance, unable to face reality, a sense of him still waiting for his brother’s arrival.

Saturday, October 15th, 2011

“Right there, bud,” James said as he brought his son closer to Owen’s name on the memorial. James observed this indescribable moment with so much love as his two-year-old son placed a white rose on his uncle’s name. The memorial built in the exact locations of the towers was truly remarkable – dark marble stone lined the perimeters of the buildings with the names of those who lost their lives that day pasted on it. Water fell calmly down into the center of the memorials, and its mist rose back up into the open air. It was tradition for a white rose to be placed on a name on that person’s birthday, and that is exactly what James was doing for his brother today.

When James pulled his son back up on the side of his hip, they both looked at the rose as it glistened in the cold sunlight of an October morning in New York City. “Happy birthday,” said James’ son in the most genuine voice a two-year-old could express.

James turned to look at his wife, standing behind them, gripping her purse strap in both her hands. He gave her a grin as they admired the love that their son felt for his uncle, whom he never got the chance to meet. There was an unexplainable connection between the two, and James knew they would have been best friends.

Multiple people walked around the memorial, admiring and honoring the names in silence. It seemed as if this spot was the only peaceful place in the whole city. After the young family spent some time there and found as much peace as they could, given the circumstances of the day, James looked at his son and adjusted his beanie with his other arm to keep his ears warm. The two-year-old’s blue eyes that resembled those of his uncle stared directly back into his father’s. “Are you okay, Daddy?” he asked with concerning curiosity.

James took a deep breath, tears of sadness, relief, and gratitude forming in his eyes. He took another look at his brother’s name, shared a silent moment with him, and then returned his gaze back to his son. “I am, bud.” He grinned, his wife leaning into him as he wrapped his arm around her while the other still held up his son on his hip.

Summer Holt

His wife leaned forward, making eye contact with her son. “You ready to go, Owen?” she asked in a peaceful voice, matching the environment around them. With a little nod given by Owen, James gave him a kiss on the head and pulled his wife in closer as the young family left the memorial.

Something was wrong

Julie Papaj

It was heavy —
like a wave washing over me,
a sudden lifeless silence amongst the trees
as if I were being engulfed
by a passing shadow in the cloudless sky.

I remember being afraid it was Him.
like a cackling hyena
stalking His prey —
just as He had before
day after day after day.

and so I called out,
my hand suddenly clenched
gripping, to a dusty rock.
My blood pounding against the silence.
leave me alone — you damned bastard!

but it was You,
wasn't it?

continued, no stanza break

Julie Papaj

You were trying to reach me.

Trying to tell me,

trying to stay

as You died on your motorcycle

hundreds of miles away.

It is so clear in my mind,

that moment — that lifelessness.

I think about it everyday

and I knew something was wrong.

And I was right, but He wasn't there

You were gone.

Back to Black - Black

Laura Brayshaw



Hesitation Blues

Alexa Kratochvil

Hesitation Blues
or
Oh! Baby Must I Hesitate

SCOTT MIDDLETON
and
BILLY SMYTHE
VAMP

Not too fast

Some-thing's sure-ly writ-ten In to-day With you 'round me, no one ev-er

sim-ply got to say, "I'm

blue. That's what!" I'm You knew I would

grieve All I do is cry for you; I just miss you so. Why did you go?

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YouTube Emotions Unboxing

Carter Bedward

Hey what's up

guys? It's Sad Boy Poetry.

Back to teach you

all about the rivers

of darkness in your soul.

Got a lot of comments from y'all asking

where my lightning struck, mad

genius advice comes from.

There's a lot to unpack there:

It wells up blood red.

Fire from within, boiling.

Down to the cold dark core screaming

for y'all to hear some rad ideas!

So if you want to get to

that deep dark place

like me,

continued

you've gotta dig
circuitously through the childhood
you couldn't have.

Drift whimsically through
the baseballs you threw, with
no one to catch them.

The poorly played piano,
echoing through
the empty halls until

the slamming door echoing
over the stumbling, shambling
feet marching unsteadily.

To where you can no longer be.

So that's about it guys!
The shadows of my past were
sponsored by Raid Shadow Legends.

continued

Carter Bedward

It's free, has great graphics, and make sure you

Use promo code SADBOYPOETRY so

They know who sent you.

Don't forget to like and subscribe so you don't miss

my next video where I talk about my mom's affair.

Las Mariposas

Sergio Gonzalez



Titin: pasado, presente y futuro

Robert Molina

Mi nombre es terco. Es un recordatorio constante del hecho de que las personas no cambian, ni pueden cambiar. Cuando pienso en mi nombre, me imagino atrapado en un rincón solitario sin nada más que cadenas para hacerme compañía. Si mi nombre fuera un espejo, no mostraría nada más que un reflejo sucio y agrietado. Si fuera un cielo, mostraría nubes inquietas aferrándose a la lluvia como un alcohólico a una botella de cerveza. Si fuera una boca, y me decía “te daré algo por lo que llorar”. Si fuera un fantasma, sería el alma inquieta de un hombre que dejó a su esposa y sus dos hijos solos en el mundo. Y si mi nombre fuera una persona, sería mi padre. Soy una alarma viva de la historia que no me importa repetir y un legado que no puedo dejar. Sin embargo, desde ese rincón solitario donde mi nombre y yo nos sentamos, puedo escuchar una voz llamándome. La palabra “Titin” baila por mi oído y calienta mi corazón. Es el apodo que me crió, me consoló y me apoyó durante toda mi infancia. Este nombre nació a través del espacio de los dientes de mi hermana menor cuando no podía pronunciar “Robertin”. Su voz metamorfoseó mi nombre y reescribió los capítulos predestinados de mi historia – convirtiendo mis grilletes en armaduras. Y aunque el mundo exterior solo me conocerá como “Robert Jr.” - el hijo de Robert Sr., los más cercanos a mí me llaman Titin. Mi nombre es de mi padre, pero no soy el hijo de mi padre.

English translation:

My name is stubborn. It's a constant reminder of the fact that people do not change, nor can they change. When I think of my name, I imagine myself imbedded in a lonely corner with nothing but chains to keep me company. If my name were a mirror, it would show nothing but a dirty, cracked reflection. If it were a sky, it would show restless clouds clinging to the rain like an alcoholic to a beer bottle. If it were a mouth, and it would tell me “ill give you something to cry about”. If it were a ghost, it would be the restless soul of a man who left his wife and two children alone in the world. And if my name were a person, it would be my father. I am a living alarm of history that I do not care to repeat and a legacy that I cannot leave behind. Yet from that lonely corner where my name and I sit, I can hear a voice calling out to me. The word “Titin” dances down my ear and warms my heart. It's the nickname that raised me, comforted me, and supported me throughout my childhood. This name was born through the gap of my younger sister's teeth when she couldn't pronounce “Robertin”. Her voice metamorphosed my name and rewrote the predestined chapters of my story – turning my shackles into armor. And although the outside world will only know me as “Robert Jr.” – the son of Robert Sr., those closest to me call me Titin. My name is my father's - but I am not my father's son.

Are You “Mexican Enough”

Jazmin Gonzalez



Yo también soy un hijo

Rafael do Valle

El cuento “El Hijo” es una forma importante de entender la vida personal de Horacio Quiroga a través de la forma en que se expresa, ya que a su vez reflexiona sobre sus historias y personajes. Quiroga sufrió tremendos traumas en su vida, los cuales sus familiares fueron asesinados a tiros o de otras formas espantosas. Es posible percibir el trauma del autor al leer el cuento “El Hijo”, el cual a lo largo de la historia acaba muriendo tras caerse en un alambre de púas y dispararse accidentalmente. De manera similar a Quiroga, mis traumas pasados también se ven reflejados en mi personalidad actual, aunque de una manera menos intensa que en Horacio Quiroga. Cuando era más mi familia descubrió que era homosexual, y me impactó tan intensamente que ahora tengo miedo de decir quién soy realmente cuando trato con personas de un nivel religioso compatible como el de mis padres. En la historia, el hijo y el padre tienen una relación de confianza pero fría, por lo que la muerte violenta y lúgubre del hijo retrata las experiencias vividas por el autor; así como la forma en que pienso y actúo a menudo, es un reflejo de mis experiencias del pasado. La razón por la que la historia “El hijo” es tan sorprendente, es porque retrata el impacto de los traumas durante la infancia, así como demuestra cómo el subconsciente expresa estas cicatrices residuales de una forma inusual, como una simple historia ficticia. Mi nombre es Rafael, tengo 21 años y soy hijo de padres brasileños provenientes de una familia extremadamente tradicional. Mi familia siempre me ha educado basándose en las enseñanzas católicas; como ir a la iglesia con frecuencia, ayunar en los días santos y respetar los deseos de los padres por encima de todo. Yo era como el pegamento que mantenía unida a mi familia. Siempre fui hablador como mi madre, pero intelectual como mi padre. Me gustaba nuestra relación, era de risas, amor, pero nada era más importante que nuestra confianza, así como la relación entre padre e hijo en la historia. Un día mis padres descubrieron algo personal mío, algo que no cambiaría mi personalidad desde mi punto de vista, pero algo que me convirtió en la oveja negra de la familia. Descubrieron que era homosexual. Solíamos pasar todo el fin de semana juntos, comiendo, viajando, comprando juntos, y siempre estábamos muy unidos. No morí literalmente como el hijo de la historia que yacía en el frío suelo, pero el ángel Rafael, el hijo perfecto, había muerto de forma permanente para mis padres. Curiosamente, hasta este día mi madre tiene sueños y cree que todavía soy quien creían que era, de manera similar a como el padre alucinó al ver a su hijo con vida. En la historia, él padre era frío como una piedra, pero con un corazón puro como el oro. El también tiene problemas de visión, problemas de estómago y parece no estar sano. El hijo es raro, lleno de energía, de piel suave porque todavía es muy joven, pero por dentro era un adulto. El hijo busca a su padre porque tiene problemas de visión, pero creo que les gustaba cazar animales deslumbrantes a través del denso y verde bosque cuando todavía podía ver bien, y siempre almorzaban juntos

después de que el hijo regresaba a casa. Creo que en algún momento el hijo se ganó la confianza y el respeto del padre (pasó por el rito de paso) cuando empezó a salir a cazar solo, es posible que el padre lo hubiera entrenado desde que el momento que supo que estaba perdiendo la vista. Su padre confiaba tanto en su hijo como si él fuese un adulto. El no temía que su hijo vaya a cazar solo, ya que sabe que siempre regresará sano y salvo. El cuento transmite una sensación de tensión e inquietud, como una enfermedad contagiosa. El bosque parece estar nublado y frío el día que el hijo sale a cazar y termina muriendo. Él hijo lo era todo para el padre, y cuando murió el padre estaba tan disgustado que su propia imaginación le hizo alucinar para no desesperarse, así como mi madre todavía cree que me casaré con una mujer y tendré varios nietos con ella. Los traumas en la vida de alguien son una mano que esculpe la tierra, ya que terminan modificando por completo a la persona de una manera que no se puede controlar. El padre perdió a su hijo y mis padres me perdieron a mí en realidad. La realidad son los ojos de la vida, no sirve de nada querer ver con los ojos cerrados.

English translation:

The manner one perceives the world can be understood by examining how they express themselves in literature. This event is especially seen in extreme cases such as the one of Horacio Quiroga, one of Latin America's most renowned writers, who had his life marked by a cascade of traumatic events. He witnessed his stepfather's gruesome suicide while he was still very young, and unfortunately this would not be the last time he would encounter violent death up close. In his short story "El Hijo" it is possible to observe remnants of Quiroga's personal life through the way he expresses himself, as he reflects on his stories and characters. The "hijo," the son in the story, died in a barbaric way by falling into barbed wire and accidentally shooting himself. Concordantly, my past traumas are also reflected in my personality, and although this takes place in a less intense way than in Horacio Quiroga, the process of expressing past experiences in subtle ways remains conserved. During my junior year in high school my conservative family found out I was gay, this event was so traumatic to me that in present day I am still frightened to announce whom I love in the presence of others who exhibit beliefs akin to those of my parents. In Quiroga's story, the son and father have a trusting but cold relationship, thus the son's violent and grim death portrays the author's own experiences with his stepfather. Likewise, the way I often think and act is a reflection of my past experiences. The reason why the story "El Hijo" is so striking to me is because it specifically portrays the impact of trauma during a set period, childhood, as well as demonstrates how the subconscious expresses residual scars in unusual ways, such as a fictional story. My name is Rafael, I am 21 years old and I am the son of Brazilian

parents who originated from an extremely traditional family. They have raised me based on their views on Catholic teachings; such as going to church frequently, fasting on holy days, and respecting the wishes of the parents above all else. Before the catastrophic event of them getting acquainted with my reality, I was like the glue that held my entire family together. Always talkative like my mother, but intellectual like my father. I valued our relationship more than the vast majority of men my age, one of laughter, love, but nothing was more valuable than our trust, this all being similar to the relationship of the father and son in Quiroga's story. My parents' new discovery about my true self should not have been impactful since after all I was still their loving son, but in their perspective I became the black sheep of the family. Previously we used to spend every weekend together: eating, traveling, shopping, and we were always very happy. I didn't literally die like the son in the story who laid on the cold ground, but the angel Rafael, the perfect son, had died forever in the heart of my parents. Oddly enough, to this day my mother has dreams and believes I am still who they thought I was, similar to how the father hallucinated seeing his son alive. In Quiroga's story, the father was stone cold, but with a heart as pure as gold. He also was visually impaired, had stomach issues, and appeared to be unhealthy. The son was somewhat odd, full of energy, having flawless skin since he was still very young and pure, but on the inside he was an adult. The son was looking after his father because of his impairments, but I truly believe that in the past they enjoyed hunting dazzling animals through the dense green forest back when the father could still see properly. I think at some point the son gained the father's trust and respect after going through some rite of passage they had between themselves, but the child eventually started going out hunting alone, possibly trained by the father who knew was losing his sight. His father trusted his son as if he was an adult. He did not fear that his son would go hunting alone, as he knew he would always return safely. Stories and events like these convey a sense of tension and unease, like that of a contagious disease. The forest seemed to be cloudy and cold on the day the son went out hunting and didn't return, foreshadowing a melancholic yet foreseeable future. The son meant everything to his father, and when he departed from life forever, his father was so distressed that his own imagination mangled with his reality by making him hallucinate that he was still alive and well. Just as my mother still believes that I will marry a woman and have several grandchildren with her. Trauma in someone's life is a hand that sculpts the earth, as it ends up completely modifying one's perspective in ways not fully understood. The father lost his son to death, and my parents lost me to my own self. Perhaps an essay will help them better understand who I am. Perhaps they one day will read this confession. My only fear is, will it be too late?

Odiando Pero Rodiando (Hatin but Skatin)

Jazmin Gonzalez



[content warning: sexual assault and incest.]

LOVE STORY

Wafa Shaikh

Listen: A man's

unfamiliar hands rest

on your waist, unhinged by your beauty.

How did I find you? he asks.

His hand reaches your cheek & he plays

with your nose until you can't

breathe—he is choking you.

You sit on the edge

of a balcony after he leaves.

You're a mother of three. The daughter, eleven, watches

you as the air tingles your feet,

telling you to jump.

Your mother is dead. At thirteen, you yell,

why am I alive? Nobody

gives you an answer.

Your father pinches your cheeks, the way

Sara's dad pinches her nose—

continued, no stanza break

with love. As your teacher talks,

Sara passes a note.

my dad touched my vagina.

You hold her hand & remember

your mother watching you

before her fall.

Your teacher allows it.

She remembers the time a woman

allowed love for her:

You sit with your brother, happy,

accomplished: Teacher Of The Year. You smile

at him & he smiles back—his hands

squeeze your thigh under the table. Your dress

is a pretty blue,

& when he's gone:

Maybe I shouldn't have worn it.

Wafa Shaikh

Your sister, remembering the time a woman
allowed love for her:

& so on.

Memories of Passage

Becca Lang



Cyberpunk Siren

Nathan Little



A Really Heartfelt Apology to my Younger Self

Jake Westerman

Damn, bro

I'm sorry

about that duct taped heart.

But hopefully,

this girl has made us smart.

That blonde hair

and those emerald eyes—

not to mention, her beautiful lies

like

I only want you

and

I love you.

I am really sorry

continued

that I let you fall,
but –honestly—you were kind of a dumbass.

Her love was a contagious disease,
we caught it from Cooper who got it from Duke,
only for us to inevitably pass it on to Sheldon

after her heart's virus had run its course on us.
And so on and so forth.

Like a fantasy-fooled toddler
stumbling perilously along the kitchen's cold, yet beautiful, marble
floors
only to end up carelessly slapping his grubby little meat sausages
onto a scalding hot stove
and screaming as the most cynical cynics looked on and thought,
What an idiot.

Well, bro, even the cynics
have scars and burns. It's only fitting
for a hopefully wiser veteran to emerge.

continued

Jake Westerman

I know that earlier I said I was really sorry,
but, really, I'm not.

Light Diptych
Abigail Newlund



Ode to Raising My Blinds

Leah Marut

I squint for the creeping
night to slow down
but morning comes
too soon.

Slipping a finger
through my window,
curling to caress
the sleep from my eyes
and I know defeat
is routine. But when
I shove off my blanket
half asleep
and my skin meets
shivering air,
my feet shuffle
to that struggling light
where I face
a hesitant sun
still determined
to make progress

continued, no stanza break

and I open the blinds.

A whirl of racing string

that lets bright slivers

swim past

and I reach for

the other side,

the other string,

and pull.

clack-clack-clack

melting rushed syllables

running up the pane

chasing the cord

upstream

lengthening stripes into

one patch

swallowing stubborn

shadows on my floor.

And I invite the dawn

to wash over me

like a newborn bird

who can't see

continued, no stanza break

the golden rays yet,
but knows there is something
warm and patient reaching
for them returning
for them and maybe
that softness
is how unshakeable
love feels. And maybe
I'm not a morning
person but I can give
her sun, to my cats
weaving at my ankles
who discover the bliss
of basking every day.
And when they chirp
their content I smile
and think maybe this
is all we can do
to wrap each other in
a quiet *I love you*.

My Peers Through My Eyes

Chinirah Brown



Like Pulling Teeth

Dashiva Francois

The only thing that wards off witches
from your room at night,
are the precious metals hanging
along your curve of Spee.

The day you find that out,
you'll lose your innocence.

You'll find out that the tooth fairy
is fake; you'll find out that fairies
don't fly at night because the witches
cut their wings to stitch sails.

Fairytale-beauty weaved to steer
pirate ships mapped on a course,
ships that raise their cannon,
blasting your dreamland voyager,
scavenging for the innocence
you burrowed under
your pillow—the only thing
you'll lose, your innocence.

It won't be easy when you find out
the tooth fairy is fake

continued, no stanza break

& fathers take the gold,
weaving them into necklaces of old.
You'll lose your innocence
when the quarter no longer comes,
but the Ashmen still do, demanding
their fees. You hear them under your door,
your anxious tongue grazing
your dry socket, a permanent reminder
that in the morning the only thing
decaying is your innocence burrowed
in your mattress—getting it back
will be like pulling teeth.

Masculine Beauty - Euphoria
Amaris Gonzales



[content warning: sexual assault, anxiety, self-harm.]

Cheerleader (“Girl” - Jamaica Kincaid)

Raegan Lane

Wake up on Saturday at a good time and eat a healthy breakfast; make sure you have your white shoes, no-show socks, uniform top and skirt, and hair cuffs; braid your hair so tight your face takes a different shape; super glue those hairs to your head – not actually super glue even if it feels like it; no stray pieces, the team will look bad if you have stray pieces; cake your face and follow the EXACT instructions from the coach; this is how you put on foundation to make sure your face looks nice in those arena lights, this is how to do your eyeshadow and pile on the sparkles to make your eyes extra bright; this is how you put on false eyelashes because you look like a child without them and with the hair you already look like a child; Do I look like a child?; this is how you put the lipstick on perfectly with no smudges (do the x on the top lip); make sure you over line them though you have to pop on stage; this is how to put the sticker on the right side of your face (parallel to your eye, right below your eyebrow); don’t forget to Velcro your cuffs into your hair so they don’t fall out and look bad – I know it hurts but you can deal with the pain when you are done competing; this is how to preform even though you just got hit in the head again and you feel like you are going to pass out; this is how to smile into the blinding lights like your life depends on it – don’t you dare take a second to breathe and drop your smile, we can get points taken off if you drop your smile; this is how to stop crying because nothing hit in warmups and you really want to hit zero on the mat; this is how you show up to practice with makeup covering your neck from his thumb because you couldn’t defend yourself; this is how to say you got kicked last practice to the curious seventh grader because she is too young to hear about how you got raped last night; this is how to focus only on the routine and the stunts hitting and not your anxiety creeping up your neck; this is how to clean the blood off your practice wear when your fingernails dug too far into your hips during your last panic attack during practice; this is how to be a good role model; this is how to show up to practice well rested; this is how to show up to practice on one hour of sleep because you were stupid and living your life as a college student; this is how to balance school work and practice and sorority life and boys and anxiety and rape and trauma and disappointment and...; this is how to perform on the mats with a concussion, this is how to walk off the mats and sit down because your head is hurting;

continued, no stanza break

Raegan Lane

this is how to go to practice crying and hugging your teammates because your health is more important and you have to quit the team because your grades are suffering on only the third week of school; this is how to hate cheer; this is how to love cheer; this is how to be obsessed with a sport that kills you but you kill yourself because you love it.

Harper

Victor Torres



Buried Blossoms

Leah Marut

On the eve of my rebirth I wander
on the heels of twilight and wonder,
if the memory has been overrun
by shadows yet. There must be enough moonlight

for details to dissolve between palm lines— maybe it is too
much to hope for night to pass
over closed eyelids, to be in the distance
by daybreak. My toe traces the edge

and shakes loose the question:
would I remember the hands that dug me out to the sound
of midnight bells? Or would I remember
coughing up dirt to the sound of a tolling farewell?

Chimes marked the hour and I caught them; let them run
across my beaten knuckles and sink
into the dried blood beneath my fingernails. A reminder
or a warning? What they won't tell you

continued

is that once you plant roots in the darkness, your mole eyes
forget there's a sky overhead. My spine folded
under splintered words until breathing
meant choking on ashes, yet they won't tell you

how I chewed on the stories inscribed on buried
bone. Rough skin scrabbled against
caked mud and suddenly there was indigo air
poking through; a silhouette reaching against a backdrop

of hushed stars. My lungs ran clear. Soil was still melted
to limbs but a pile of dust gathered
at my feet, stretching for the sky like a reflection
of my grave. When I turned to gaze at my imprint, would I
remember

how easy it was to let the earth wrap around me?
Or is it only now, looking down, that I realize I can't find
myself in those depths anymore? We wait for night to pass
over wretched bones, but they won't tell you that you could
have blossoms, that you could be beautiful.

Natalia's Colombia

Holly Harris



Soft Day

Emily DuBose

I like the soft parts of the day.

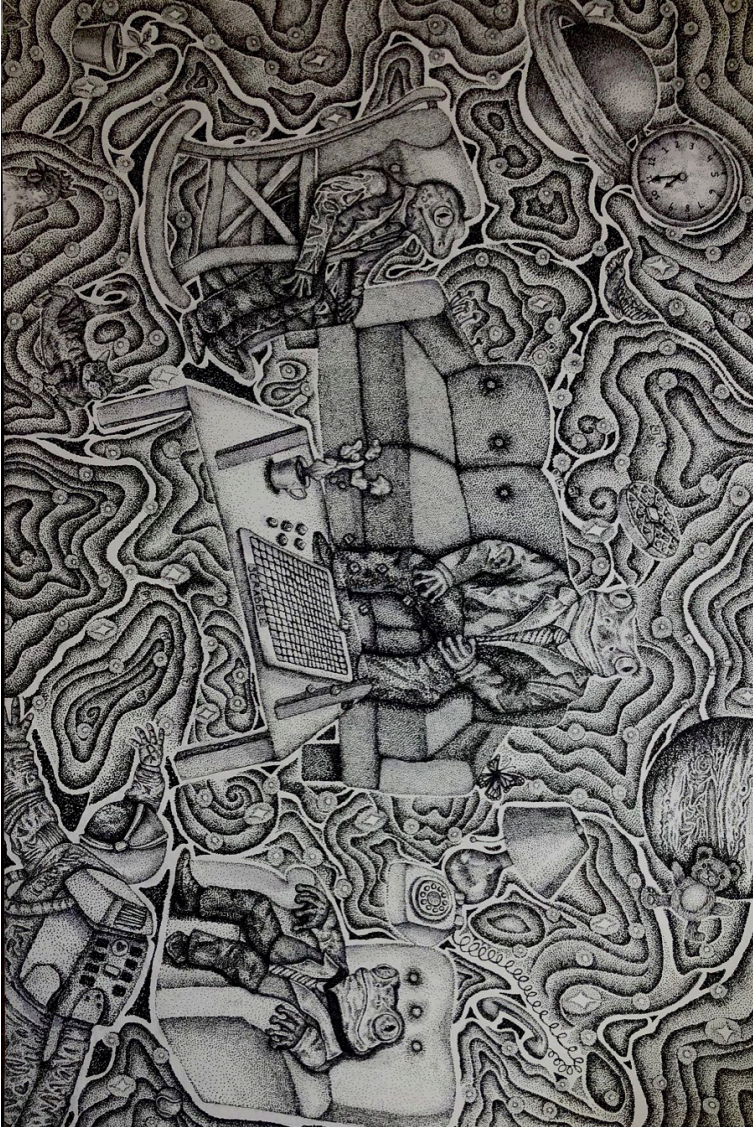
When the sun doesn't burn,
the wind doesn't whip,
and the rain doesn't freeze.

I like a gentle evening breeze,
cool air in my hair.

I like the warm hues
of a brilliant sunset sky,
glowing golden clouds,
softening the harsh heat of July.

The Great Society

Kaylee Meyer



Getting High On Thanksgiving

Lucy Kane

People never seem surprised to learn that my brother has become a passionate user of marijuana. Over the years, he's stuck close to the middle child stereotype projected onto him by the world; social butterfly, peaceful, pleasant. We had a close bond as children, and since he's only eighteen months younger than me, we always went to the same school, had the same friends. During his first week at school, Thomas and I would sit on a shiny wooden bench in the hallway that connected our classrooms, where I would read to him until he could stop crying and return to preschool. When our parents' yelling would echo through the walls of the house, he would lay on the floor of my room with his face glued to the floor, peering through the crack beneath the door. I promised him that Santa was real, even though I knew the truth. I just wanted him to stay my baby brother forever.

I was born one year after my parents tied the knot. To me, that seems like a pretty quick turnaround, but what do I know? My siblings and I wore coordinating Halloween costumes and ate Eggo waffles like normal, happy kids. My dad used to get up on his tall work ladder every November and hang strings of Christmas lights on our house. My parents were good people. They voted and read novels and kissed in public. They taught me to say grace before dinner. My artwork would hang on the fridge until it got too wrinkled, stained by water droplets. They held it all together, but, eventually, it fell apart. Now my mom pays someone to hang the lights.

The term "broken family" never described us. Although, yes, our traditional family unit was shattered, I always thought of us as perfectly functional nonetheless. I considered my basic needs to be met; I had clothes on my back and food in my lunchbox. The most profound argument I ever had with my siblings was over who would ride shotgun. I saw my dad on weekends and then less and less. He did nothing wrong, but I refused to sleep outside of the baby pink walls of my childhood room. My parents wanted us to be happy, normal, and whole, but my siblings and I grew more distant as the years went on. We were often spread out at different houses, playing different sports and fighting hard for the attention of our parents.

The day after my parents announced their divorce to us, I walked into my third-grade class unbothered. I allowed myself

only to think about the amazing benefits of my new situation (a behavior I've come to understand as "toxic positivity," that still bleeds into the way I see the world) two Christmases, two bedrooms, two birthdays. I hoped that my parent's divorce meant more stuff and attention for me. I was so excited that I even considered it appropriate to approach my teacher and tell her the good news first thing in the morning. Her name was Ms. Miranda; she was a warm and sweet teacher who wore her hair in long tiny braids. I remember she would drink earl grey tea all day long, and, sometimes, she would let me turn on the tea kettle and watch the water slowly come to a boil.

As soon as I overshared with her the fact that my dad was moving out, my throat bubbled up, and I started to cry. I felt the whole class staring at me, blubbing, as she pulled me into a hug. Ms. Miranda held me tightly against her chest, and I remember feeling so embarrassed and heartbroken and confused. I wanted so desperately to be happy, but I was angry. My mom tells me all the time that I used to be such a sweet little girl, and I genuinely believe that I was, up until this moment. Something inside me switched or maybe broke. I began to push my brother, Thomas, away, wishing only for him to be as upset and angry as I was. I would get infuriated over nothing and scream at him, unable to manage my emotions. I was hateful towards my family and the world, and my hostility and general unpleasantness continued for years, even into high school.

Somewhere during high school, someone mentioned I was a strong leader. Disgustingly overly confident in my abilities, I decided to run for Student Body President my senior year. Thomas and I hung massive posters around our high school. Every floor, I told him. Every staircase. I won, but I didn't thank him. Eventually, he got caught vaping, which didn't surprise me; he used to get into my car after school smelling so fruity. Plus, he was on the hockey team, and they were all up to no good. Thomas was good at hockey, but he used to be an excellent reader, and I remember when he would read Harry Potter through the night instead of going out with his friends.

My mom was busy with work, so I would make my siblings lunch, and Thomas liked extra mustard. I cared deeply about my siblings, but we weren't close like we were as children. I was focused on other things. Focused on getting a 33 on my ACT, focused on dating a football player, focused on being the best. I stayed up late studying topics that are irrelevant to me now, door

shut and locked. I ignored my mother's calls that dinner was ready, separating myself from my family. I hugged my brother when I left for college, but he didn't cry.

As college students, the two of us remained stuck in our birth order stereotypes. Me, getting a 4.0 my first semester and joining four different clubs on campus. Thomas, failing statistics and working as a busboy at a local restaurant for money to smoke weed. Our phone calls were often but brief, mostly just checking if the other was alive. He knew if we stayed on the phone for too long, I would tell him to get a haircut. The only thing we had in common during those days was that we didn't want to go home for the holidays. Our mom's flavor of the week, according to our sister, was a dick. But home we went.

The flavor's name was Bill, or "Phil," as we chose to call him. Because a common enemy can very quickly unite a group, my brother and I stood shoulder to shoulder at the arrivals terminal. Phil drove our mom's car and didn't have much to say. Our mom asked us about school, grades, friends, and all the surfacey questions typically asked by people who do not care. We drove through our hometown, the mountains are always west, but I kept my eyes on my phone.

On Thanksgiving, my mom explained her plan to make all of the foods that used to have meaning to us. I stared at her and admired how beautiful she was, too afraid to tell her that she was wasting her time. Phil talked loudly and to no one about politics. I scrubbed my hands raw in the sink before helping my mom with the potatoes. She wore an apron I had never seen before and knew all the recipes without referencing the internet once. She asked me to play music and, after a while, she asked me to play a song that she knew. I couldn't think of one.

My mom's house, the house I was born in, has a lofted ceiling in the living room. One singular marshmallow is stuck on the ceiling from Easter years ago when my siblings and I got marshmallow guns. Our chalk still covers the walls of our unfinished basement, the carpet in my room is stained with purple nail polish. Each mark of adolescence, a gravestone. I would have loved to cry, to release some of the tension in my stomach, but I felt nothing.

That's why, when my brother offered me an edible, I didn't hesitate to accept. My normal deliberate, intentional, goal-based decision-making had somehow abandoned me, maybe off for the holiday. Thomas looked at me for a minute after I ate it, like, for the first time ever, I had surprised him. He didn't seem nearly as excited about eating his own. It made my breath smell weird, and I couldn't get the taste to go away no matter how much water I drank, but I didn't care because my little brother thought I was cool. I was suddenly giddy with excitement, this feeling of being someone else, a rebel, a mystery. Physical relief rushed through my veins after hopping off my oldest sibling pedestal and down to Paul's level. I smiled at the notion that no one would ever expect this from me.

Suddenly and all at once, the world was spinning towards me. It took all of my effort to not let gravity take me to the floor. I walked as normally as possible to the bathroom and stared deeply into my own eyes for what felt like an hour, my heartbeat echoing in my ears. The oven beeped, and I ran, in slow motion, to pull out my meaningful potatoes and transfer them into a meaningful shiny green bowl. I decided I had never seen a shinier, greener bowl in my life, which was hilarious to me. Everything became hilarious. Phil, the marshmallow, the five placemats lined up on the table we never eat on. Even thinking of my dad eating dinner alone, under the single light hanging above his kitchen table, was hilarious to me. Thomas laughed too, understanding the joke.

Once my mom decided that all of her meaningful dishes were ready to be meaningfully eaten, we gathered around the table. I couldn't help but laugh when she asked me to say grace. A standard oldest-child practice, but I had just released that role. A lump formed in my throat, and I felt my mouth get too dry to speak. My baby sister, unaffected by substances or by my mother's ignorance, said the prayer instead.

Blue Boats Morocco

Holly Harris



3021 BLUE RESIDUE
Davion Mack



Ode to watering my plant

Dashiva Francois

I am a man

who has fallen

in love with

the soil of time.

Sometimes passive

but the awareness

of watering one's plant

is aroused.

Enough joy

manifests

to look forward

to the next watering.

Sometimes I water

in the morning,

sometimes I water

in the evenings.

Each bringing

distinct feelings

of happiness and calm,

today I am watering

continued, no stanza break

as a mother
nursing
a baby
that once was
a pebble
in my belly,
an embryo
of possibilities.

Today I am a surgeon,
tending to long strands
of unwanted weeds
and runaway branches
inspecting every stem,
leaf, and flower.

Abundant bliss
envelops me in safety,
hearing the water trickle
through the soil
like a cascade
washing away my deepest
stains and nourishing me.

continued, no stanza break

Today, I am a seed
ready to germinate.

My own leaves
prepared to give and take,
breathing in
the bad
breathing out
the good.

Sometimes I feel like a plant
rooted in one spot,
listening to the wind.

The enchanting secrets
of the window-winged moths
that, my friend,
is a hidden joy.

One day I shall be the water,
and I shall have
a son or daughter.

My new plants
that I shall bathe
with the purest waters

until they grow
their leaves forever,
reaching the light.
Ultimately,
I will be the plant again.
My son or daughter
will tend to my leaves
until they fall.
A life cycle born anew.

Black and White

Paul D Bastidas



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