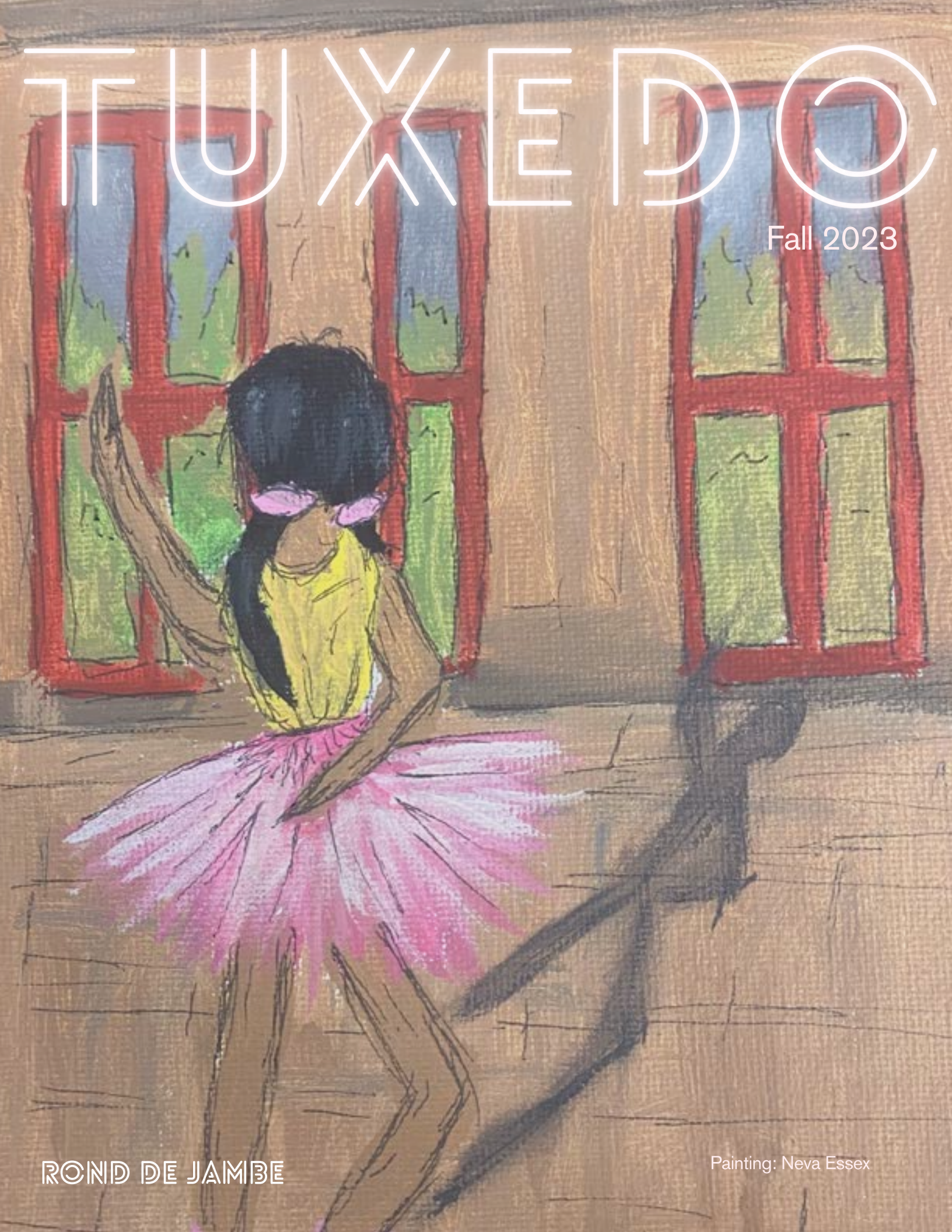


TUXEDO

Fall 2023



ROND DE JAMBE

Painting: Neva Essex



Are you a writer? We writers exist in many forms, we inhabit the world like any other being, but no matter what our major is, or what our day job looks like, we inhabit the world in search of beauty. We may seem like any other person, but we possess a unique skill to excavate stories and poetry in places others may overlook.

If this sounds like you, you might want to check out the Creative Writing Minor and MFA program at Dominican University. It could be the space where you could cultivate your talents and your creative being. These programs offer workshops, mentorship, and publishing opportunities. But most importantly we form a joyful artistic community, a safe place to nourish your creative being.

Whether you're just starting out or looking to take your writing to the next level, these programs can help you unravel your gift as a writer and storyteller.

THIS ISSUE



Photo: Caelyn Anderson

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

We are excited to share with you the latest edition of our Tuxedo journal, which explores the theme of Rond de jambe. The question "Where have you been? Where are you going?" is posed to encourage you to read our pages and explore the theme of movement, transit, and transformation.

As you delve into the pages of this edition, you'll find a diverse range of thought-provoking articles, poems, and fiction that revise themes such as disability, humor, family wounds, love, and heartbreak. These pieces are sure to inspire you to reflect on your own life experiences and challenge you to see the world as a kaleidoscopic movement.

At the heart of this edition is the idea that movement is an essential part of the human experience. Whether we are moving physically, emotionally, or intellectually, we are constantly adapting to new situations, breaking and healing. This edition encourages you to embrace this sense of movement and transformation and see it as a source of curiosity and inspiration.



Joints and Dashes and Rond de Jambes

Emily Dickinson famously punctuated her poems with dashes. These scratches seem to mean something, but honestly, they might be meaningless. For example, here's an excerpt from her coconut cake recipe:

1 Cup Cocoanut

2 Cups Flour –

1 Cup Sugar – (Lambert)

But Dickinson's dashes seem to take on meaning in her poem "There is a pain – so utter –":

[Pain] has no Future – but itself –

Its Infinite contain

Its Past – enlightened to perceive

New Periods – of Pain. (Franklin 650)

Dickinson knew pain well. Not just physical and mental pain, but also the pain of (mis)treatment. After she began undergoing eye treatments, she wrote in a bitter letter: "The physician has taken away my pen." (Letters 290). When Dickinson finally uses a period, it contrasts sharply with the breathy pauses that characterize her recipes and poems alike. There's a finality to her use of a period to conclude this short sentence, which tells us that her physician "sentenced" her to a life without writing. In graduate school, I researched the ways Dickinson and other women writers are represented as disabled, mentally ill, hysterical. I discovered that Dickinson and I have a lot in common. Both of us desperately need the medicine and resent medical bias. Though the word "ableism" emerged after her time, it's something she experienced, and hated.

That realization guided me to literary disability studies, a field that helps make sense of patterns of injustice that too few people in power bother to interrupt. Literary disability studies isn't just a field that vaguely interests me. It shaped me, giving me a rare freedom to explore stories of ableism and access that have too long been ignored.

I love when my interests in dance and literature combine. As I look again at Dickinson's dashes, I think of the *rond de jambe*, a "circle of the leg." It's a movement in which one leg moves in a straight, elongated line away from the body before performing a semi-circular or circular motion. As Dickinson's dashes invite breath, a *rond de jambe* challenges torpidity, demanding lifeless air to circulate. As Dickinson's dashes connect lines and words, a grand *rond de jambe* stitches together a *developé* and a *promenade*.

I've danced a lot of *rond de jambes*. I started dancing ballet when I was 2.5 years old and barely old enough to skip across the floor. Some highlights of my dance career include spending two summers training with my instructor in Novi-Sad, Serbia; performing as the Sugarplum Fairy in the *Nutcracker* and *Cinderella* in *Cinderella*; co-founding and directing the Claremont Colleges Ballet Company; and teaching for Berkeley City Ballet. I'm now an amateur Dancesport competitor in the International Standard Ballroom style (that's a fancy way of saying that I dance waltz, foxtrot, tango, and quickstep). Now that I teach English at Dominican University of California, I act like a superfan around students pursuing Dominican's incredible Dance BFA with Alonzo King's *LINES* Ballet. Alonzo King is a very big deal in the dance world; for me, his choreography has a poetic quality that defies simplicity and embraces paradox.

Dashes and circles and semicircles invite us to ponder infinity. Alonzo King explains his company's name: "Lines are in our fingerprints, the shapes of our bodies, constellations, geometry. A line of thought. A boundary or eternity" (Morris para. 2). King's language here is as beautiful as his choreography. Elsewhere he adds: "Expansion – that's the goal. Lines that don't stop, infinity, eternity...You see it in ripples when you dip your finger into water" (Glentzer para. 11). Just as Dickinson's poem explores pain as something infinite, King gestures towards the human struggle to perceive the world beyond boundaries. We can imagine our bodies stretching towards infinity, but somewhere along the line our capacity for envisioning eternity ends. Dance and poetry are both full of apparent contradictions, and sometimes moments of silence and pause convey the most powerful meanings. Literature and dance and disability studies have all conspired to help me understand externally-imposed limitations and my body's own seeming contradictions.

I've long been fascinated by my joints. Some are stiff while others goop out of place. At 13, I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. By that age, I had fortunately decided against pursuing a professional dance career (in part because I'm too tall), so I wasn't too concerned about how my pain would impact my dancing. I was more concerned about the attention I received when I was granted my first accommodation. I was allowed to take exams by computer since I couldn't hold a pen. Other students complained, thinking my laptop use was somehow unfair, or perhaps assuming that disabled people are fakers at heart. In other words, at 13, I learned what "ableism" is, though I did not have the vocabulary to describe it. Years later, I read Dickinson's letter stating, "The physician has taken away my pen." (Letters 290) and felt a rush of understanding towards a woman who has been dead for a century. Upon entering college, I was diagnosed with another rare genetic disorder, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS). EDS is rare and hard to diagnose. It affects perhaps 0.02 percent of people worldwide and can affect any connective tissues supporting the skin, bones, blood vessels, and other organs (Armstrong para. 8). Symptoms range from mildly loose joints to life-threatening complications.

To diagnose me, my physician performed a fascinating range of tests that twisted me into new curves and lines. She checked to see:
whether my neck and hand skin can stretch like I'm a freakshow performer from the nineteenth century (apparently my neck skin can pull past my ears)
how soft my skin is by petting my arms (my skin was declared "velvety")
whether I can touch my palms to the floor with straight legs (I have long been able to do this. Yet a total lack of muscle or joint resistance is a sign of EDS. This explains why I sometimes look like I'm dancing on a moving boat)
whether I have bruising or scarring (I do, all the time)
whether my limbs pull "out of joint" (this happens often—I don't feel pain until a few days later when pain emerges, seemingly out of nowhere. I once hurt one of my fingers while I was trying to give a handshake.)

This bizarre examination process led to a diagnosis that explains some of my chronic fatigue, pain, and injuries. I feel lucky to have been diagnosed at all; many people with similar symptoms search for answers for years. The joint mobility I experience isn't exactly identical to flexibility (which would be very convenient for my dancing). It sometimes causes my dance instructors to look at me in confusion, wondering what it is I'm doing "wrong." There's no cure for my conditions—to paraphrase Dickinson, they have no futures but themselves—but there are coping tools, and I make routine appointments to check up on my heart and eyes. One physical therapist was so confused as to why I felt pain in so many parts of my body that she nearly sent me off to other specialists. Another physical therapist once told me glibly: "even Superman needs to be able to move in a normal way."
I wonder what "normal" is. I ask my students to question that term, too.

My pain and injuries have never worried me as much as ableism does. My connective tissues are doing their best to hold me together. I want to help build a stretchier, more interconnected world, but it also needs to be a world that denounces ableism and sexism and racism—full stop. I firmly believe that people must learn to think critically about the stigmas that surround disability. We also need to collectively challenge the ways medicine is used to control and to dominate. To offer a shocking example of the abuse of medical power: from 2011 until 2018, Dr. Michael Holick, a so-called expert in studies of EDS, testified as an expert witness in over three hundred child-abuse cases around the world. The children had numerous bruises and broken bones. Their parents were suspected of physically abusing their children. Yet Holick never concluded that the parents might be abusers. Rather, he diagnosed the children with EDS, often without performing an examination, to try to liberate the parents. "I already know on the phone [that the children] have EDS" he said, adding, "I almost don't have to ask. I know the answer" (Armstrong para. 12). Maybe some of these children were not being abused; maybe they had conditions like mine. But Holick didn't question the parents. He wrote a period, not a question mark. I think about those children and wonder about diagnosers and the diagnosed, power and the abuse of power.

As dance gives me the freedom to explore movement, literary disability studies frees me from the notion that I am lazy when I need to rest, sit in silence, breathe, and think. I purposefully do not resent my conditions even when I get injured and exhausted.

My conditions give me something. They gave me letters to my name: I am Vivian Delchamps, B.A., M.A., Ph.D., RA, EDS (the list goes on). These terms changed my life and yet sometimes mean very little. They paved the way for me to acquire medications that help, that come with cruel side effects, that render me immunocompromised in a pandemic.

Most significantly, when I gained disability identity, I found incredible disability communities full of joy and support. In disability studies reading groups and advisory boards, I began to conceptualize new ways I could make a mark on the world. Finding community, I discovered, is a mode of resistance to medical abuses of power. A few years ago, I discovered that another literary disability scholar, Ellen Samuels, also has EDS and writes poems about her hypermobility. I felt a new surge of recognition: she is like me. I am not alone in experiencing chronic pain, in trying to express what dislocation feels like. Sometimes I do not think about my conditions at all. I think about the disability scholars and advocates who taught me to imagine possible futures where the funding that goes towards finding a "cure" for my body instead goes towards

access
and
justice
and
inclusion
and –

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Carly Torres

POETRY

Photo MARIANNE ROGOFF

i started dating again

he brought me roses
and i couldn't help but think
how little he knows me
and how could he?
when im still digging out pieces of you from within me
ourselves
always entangled
some weeds
parading
as wildflowers
pieces of us
too good or
too bad
to outgrow

six months of grief

i wish i could give advice on how to pick up the pieces how to move forward
i wish i had wise words tucked away in an envelope to teach you the right way
i wish i had better prepared you for bitter ends and that sick sinking
feeling
but i was just a girl, as you are now
and i had to learn,
as you are now, that;
although it is tough,
and you think you'll never feel like you again, you create the very love you grieve
a girl, bursting at the seams with
sweet solitude
can create such passion, such happiness
all on her own

James Gunshinan

Ten Mile Canyon

After hiking in we climbed a tower of rock
a phallic thing of compressed granite boulders
like the desert's cigarette
very hot at the top.

We were tired and ready for lunch
but chose to climb and eat our sandwiches on top.
Toes and fingers looked for places to hold.
I felt I could not fall.

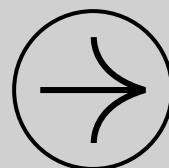
Or if I did, I would fall into her arms.
She was wearing those skimpy nylon
running shorts.

We did not fall then. We fell later
unconsummated
when I chose to be a priest and not to be with her.

It was like this:

Two biplanes on a flight of fancy
crash in mid-air
a single woman falls and lands
on the driveway of my friend's house
across the street from where I grew up.

She was broken
and giving birth to a new body.
I was broken and without a body.



And Yours

i slept in your bed last night
i knew it wasn't mine because of the way
my muscles recognized
a hot weight on my neck
i'm sure i have your smell now
your skin tasted warm and yours
a candle at its middle
the sun burns slow waxy and shrunk
a tamed, accepted flame
a light that danced in the still darkness
remains lit the littlest bit
early bright touches what it can
swallowing swallowing
i need to brush my teeth
your floor is cold and i feel like a barefoot child
new to this place of morning
the warmth follows my skin and is dissolved into the
tile
to be loved feels new every time
to be cold feels new every time
the soap with memory waits for new hands
my eyes in the mirror then yours too
sweet silence as we brush away each others pink on
our teeth
my mouth will have bits of yours for a while until i
wash it all away
we meet again with minty cold mouths
the mint melts to pink
i forgot about my feet
i'll never brush my teeth again

Home Without Borders

The first time I saw movement as an escape, I packed what I needed for a year into two suitcases and a backpack. I didn't need much else except my journal and my heartbeat.

I hated stuffing my backpack so full my zipper was forced to cling to one side more than the other, but too full of secrets and baggage to leave behind.

When I arrived, I felt displacement tying my hands behind my back with a fraying rope that burned my wrists the more I twisted towards freedom.

Everyone knew I didn't belong when my tongue flicked too slow or rolled around behind my teeth instead of staying still and compliant.

That stuffed backpack migrated from my back to the end of my name as I found myself repeating something I had never said before:

Je m'appelle Erika et je suis américaine.

Although I don't identify with my country's—

Violence,

War,

Rape,

And rage,

Even though I do not want to stay— My country will always identify me. Suddenly, je suis étranger.

Dealing with a visa expiration date creeping up my spine,

The betrayal from the country that carried me for nine months, then slowly let me slip through its blue, white, and blood red fingers.

Although I wasn't born here, this is where my roots began and this is where they have bloomed again.

Our choice to leave goes back generations.

I imagine a part of her wanted to return.

I am trying to collect everything she left behind before the wind blows me back west.

'Home' no longer feels or looks or even tastes the same. This place is bitter and plain upon my traveled tongue.

I have long since outgrown this tiny town.

My ears bleed from the slow, country language.

My eyes scan over heads of blonde hair and bleach, wondering where the hijabs or head scarfs have gone.

It was all stolen, or lost somewhere across the stormy sea.

Wondering where everyone is celebrating the end of the day.
Why the streets aren't filled with people kissing or smoking or sipping from a chilled glass. Has everyone gone home?
Où est chez moi?
My home is my back and whatever else it can carry along.
My home is in the soles of my feet and all the earth I cross.
My home is hiding beneath the river in my murky green eyes.
I was born on top of a river and the stream has brought me along ever since.
Sometimes we move fast, other times I am simply floating, content beneath the hot rays that seek out this glass stream.
Home is wherever the river runs.
The water has never belonged to anyone,
it never stays in one place long enough,
to be claimed or labeled.
The water never has a home, except for within more water.
I wish to fit everywhere as liquid does,
Life rushing into dry, empty space.
Water is always needed.
Water always belongs.
Water is always just water, no matter where it is in the world. If only humans could be simply human,
everywhere in this world.

Issues

Kidnapped at three months old,
got me back a day later.
Abandoned by him at five months old.
She remained
if remaining means leaving me with my sister
while she went out with friends
and had all sorts of fun.

Is it fair to say
I was neglected?

Seven when I was ripped away
from my home and friends.
Starting a new life.

Eight when her new boyfriend came.
I gave him a chance, I liked him a little,
until he tore me away from my life
again.

Problems.

He always caused
problems.
He didn't fix my issues
like mom thought he would.

And I'm glad I no longer
live a life he's in.

Now, who fixes the issues?
Permanent problems
that aren't just because I lack
a *him*.

So what am I?
A girl

with a sister
who raised her
to become

a woman.

Roads I Have

the marshall house
where my walls were lilac
where I wrote a list of things I loved
to sing
my mom said I couldn't
the palmwood house
where I had air conditioning for the first time
after 16 years
where I learned to be myself
my mom broke dining chairs
I drove away
the waterford house
where I learned the family secret
my mom said I was tearing the family apart
I moved out
mike arthur house
where I lived my boyfriend's life
full of violence and fear
I hustled
dropped out of school
fair oaks apartment
where I finished my degree
processed my trauma
I am happy

where I
the marshall house. where my walls were lilac. where I wrote a list of things I loved. to sing. my
mom said I couldn't.
the palmwood house. where I had air conditioning for the first time. after 16 years. where I
learned to be myself. my mom broke dining chairs. I drove away.
the waterford house. where I learned the family secret. my mom said I was tearing the family
apart. I moved out
mike arthur house. where I lived my boyfriend's life. full of violence and fear. I hustled. dropped
out of school.
fair oaks apartment. where I finished my degree. processed my trauma. I am happy.

We Will Write in a Future Tense
The stars have bled across the sky;
they left us heavy, dusty air—
and someday we will wonder why.
These landscapes filled with blackened sighs—
there's no more light to see and stare:
the stars have bled across the sky.
Flashes replay in our minds
of the day the sky ignored our prayers—
and someday we will wonder why.
Horizon, bring us hope!—don't die!
Without you, we have nothing spared:
the stars have bled across the sky.
We've waited for the sun's reply—
the sea, the land—but no one's there.
And someday we will wonder why.
Yes, someday, someday, we imply.
The end—we swear—is not this near.
The stars have bled across the sky,
and someday we will wonder why.

Alyssa Collaco

slow down

you don't need to always be running.
even race car drivers take pit stops.
they stop moving hundreds of miles at a time to
slow down,
and
allow themselves to take time.
do that every once in a while. breathe.
drop everything.
fall off the face of the earth for a second.
allow relaxation to blanket you in a whirlwind of comfort.
kick your shoes off.
feel the warmth of the earth below you.
let those risk impulses control you every once in a while.
you have one life.
an average of 79 years.
947.9 months.
28,835 days.
692,040 hours.
soak it all in.
the pain. the happiness. the beautiful. the ugly. the weird. the boring. all of it.
embrace it all.
it's okay to be broken. to be scarred. to be insecure.
it's okay to not be okay.
failure brings you growth.
you miss 100% of the chances you don't take. so why not? don't hold anything back if
you dare to discover the best parts of yourself from within. after all, when you don't fight
for what you desire, the only person you're hurting is yourself.

Silhouette

Crescent curled at the center
Revealing a rash like radiation
It penetrated, it burned

What was left was all but a haughty haze
I finally made it through this maze
Crafted by God or a god

Twenty cycles around the moon
My time and tithe are due soon
A soul never to assume

They're clouded by the perfume of pleasure
But soon will be robbed of all treasures

Cream speckled in a bowl of milk
I wrap myself in silk
And fold my body for stillness
My eyes stroke like a pendulum
Lacking effervescence
Protruding incessance



Painting: Abigail Uayan

A NOVEL INTERRUPTION

Joshua Star

You have to use the restroom, but you can't go now. You've been sitting in this chair for almost two hours, ignoring the needles in your feet and the pressure building in your bladder. It was the only way to get a front row seat for this event. If you left your chair for even a minute, one of the hundreds of others packed into this auditorium would claim it for themselves. So no, you can't use the restroom, but that's okay. You can endure the pain a little longer. This is your favorite author, after all, and he's about to read from his first new book in ten years.

You have a copy in your satchel, but you haven't read it yet. This author is a master storyteller, and you want to hear how he narrates the first chapter so that you can read the book with his lyrical voice in your head. It's the only way to consume quality literature. People have called you snobbish before, but if you actually listened to what people said about you, then you'd probably have a lot more friends. And why would you want something as annoying as friends?

The lights dim. The murmuring crowd quiets. A spotlight shines on the curtains and the author steps out. You at once feel vindicated for your numb legs and burgeoning bladder. But then the audience erupts in applause and ruins the moment. How dare they welcome such a fine, artistic genius with something as primitive as clapping? They wouldn't eat their caviar blini with their hands, would they? Or wear their cycling skinsuit to the San Francisco Philharmonic? Would they also indulge their barbaric passions by openly kissing their spouse in public? When you realize they probably would, you can't help but smirk at your refined and civilized behavior.

They finally stop clapping and you relish the silence. The author steps behind the podium and opens the hallowed book. You hold your breath. You've been waiting ten years for this very moment.

"Echoes from the Labyrinth of Eternity. Chapter 1." He pauses and takes a deep breath. "As the incandescent orb of day, the sun, languorously descended beneath the horizon, the sky was set ablaze with an opulent tapestry of colors and hues intertwining in a dance of celestial artistry."

Your chin falls to your chest. You've never heard prose as beautiful as this. No human has. You only wish that the uncouth heathen breathing your air could appreciate it.

"The zephyrs whispered secrets through the weeping willows," the author says, "their leaves quivering—"

At this moment, the author is abruptly interrupted by a series of short and detached cello notes, paired with the building beats of timpani drum. You're pleasantly surprised, because you recognize it as the opening notes to Ruggero Leoncavallo's "Vesti la giubba," an opera so beautiful you made it your ringtone. Your breath catches in your throat. Can it be that your favorite author is using your favorite opera in his reading of what will no doubt be your favorite novel? Could you be witnessing mankind's greatest artistic performance?

But then the next moment, you're slightly irritated, because it's playing on a cheap speaker. Music as great as this is best enjoyed with a live symphony, not what sounds like a cell phone speaker.

And the next moment, you're horrified, because you realize it is playing on a cell phone speaker. Your cell phone speaker.

You forgot to silence your phone.

The first line of the libretto shatters the silence. "Recitar!"

Your face feels as hot and bright as the spotlight shining on the author, who's now looking at you as though you're wearing a clown suit. You put on a sheepish smile and quickly pat your pockets. There's your wallet, your car keys, your mint case, and—there it is. You find your phone before you can embarrass yourself any further.

You give everyone a reassuring wave, indicating that you have it under control. But it's not your phone. It's your Peter Pauper datebook.

"Mentre preso dal delirio," the ringtone continues to shriek.

"Sorry," you mutter, but you can't hear yourself over the music.

At this point, the author stops reading. The patrons surrounding you lean away, isolating you in a deep crater of shame. You plunge your hands into your back pockets and pull out whatever you can. There's a receipt from The French Laundry, and a crumpled silk pocket square, but no phone.

The author clears his throat into the microphone, loud enough to let you know it's intentional. Someone nearby coughs, and you want to scream at them that it'll be just a moment, that they just need to be patient, but you don't dare waste any time. Every second the phone rings is another insult to the author you adore most.

Frustrated, you stand up to check your leather satchel, making sure to bend at the waist so as not to block the audience's view of the stage. You catch a glimpse of them and realize that you are the show now. They're all watching you, their dimly lit faces floating in the darkness like survivors of a shipwreck. A shipwreck that you caused.

"Eppur è d'uopo," the tenor howls, "sforzati!"

You're shocked at how impossibly loud they make cell phones these days. You don't remember this opera ever being this deafening.

As you pull your leather satchel out from under the chair, its shoulder strap catches one of the legs and knocks the chair over. The metal backrest hits the person behind you, whacking his kneecap, and he reluctantly grabs the chair to stand it upright. There's a collective gasp from the crowd, and you recognize the telltale inflection of absolute disgust.

"Tu se'," the phone cries, "Pagliaccio!"

Just before you can open your satchel, the phone finally stops ringing. The auditorium returns to complete silence, somehow more intense than before, and you briefly consider leaving. But it's over now, and even though you feel the weight of hundreds of scornful eyes, you safely ignore them because the show must go on.

You clear your throat, tuck your satchel back under your chair, and slump into your seat. With your shoulders heaving, you fold your hands in your lap and pretend that nothing happened.

Moments pass. The people sitting on either side of you scoot their chairs a little further away, as if you were the one who welcomed the author by clapping.

You gesture for him to continue.

“Okay,” the author says, rolling his eyes. He slides his finger down the page and pauses, as if he’s waiting for any further interruptions. You give him another friendly gesture and he continues. “The brook, meandering through the ancient, hallowed groves, sang a melody of liquid silver, its waters—”

A shrill, robotic voice interrupts him.

“Playing your new voicemail.”

It’s your phone’s digital assistant.

You spring to your feet so fast that your chair shoots back, sliding across the floor until it hits the same person as before, clipping both of his kneecaps. His groans are drowned out by the voicemail.

“Hey, sport!” You recognize the voice of your father. “You finish *Echoes from the Labyrinth of Eternity* yet? Just kidding, I know you have.”

As he laughs in that distinctly aggravating way that only over-the-hill fathers know how, the color drains from your cheeks. He’s about to discuss the book being read on stage at this very moment.

Panicking, you rip open the satchel with such force that the belt buckle pops off. The brass pin flies down the front row until it strikes a boy in the eye, who immediately buries his face in his hands. Sobbing, he flees the auditorium, his muffled screams trailing off as the voicemail keeps playing.

“What do you think about the ending? That’s one hell of a ride.”

The people around you stand up, but you ignore them. You start flinging the contents of your satchel across the auditorium. You toss the author’s book so hard that when its spine whacks against the stage’s apron, you feel the vibrations in your heels. You hurl your Montblanc fountain pen, which streaks through the air like a silent dart until it smacks the author’s mouth.

“I just can’t believe that twist ending, can you?”

Your hands are shaking so much that you just grab handfuls of whatever’s in your satchel to throw on the floor. There’s a loyalty card for your pet acupuncturist, the screw top for that luxury alkaline water from the other hemisphere, and a half-piece of single-origin, cruelty-free, consciousness-elevating chocolate.

“Seriously?” someone says in a tone of voice you don’t like.

You whip your head up and scan the crowd for whoever said that. Your fist is already curled up and you’re ready to start swinging, but your father’s voice brings you back.

“I did not see that coming.”

You give up. You flip the satchel upside down and shake it. You feel the weight of your phone in there somewhere, but nothing comes out. How did you manage to remove everything except your phone?

Wait! There it is! It’s in the front pocket. You unbutton the flap and your phone slips out. You swipe at it, but it falls through your fingers and bounces toward someone’s feet. You shove them out of the way, vaguely aware of the others who fall to the floor. You pick up your phone, but your vision is too blurred to read the buttons.

“Can you believe the best friend was dead the whole time? I can’t.” With the phone in your hand, the voicemail plays loud and clear enough for everyone to hear. “I’ve got to read it again, that changes the whole story. Anyway, see you at Thanksgiving.”

The voicemail stops just when you put your thumb on the screen. The auditorium lights turn on, giving you a full view of the carnage that was previously hidden in the darkness.

No one's sitting anymore. The chairs near you are completely empty, at least the ones that are still upright. There's a thin line of blood that leads toward an emergency exit, but it's marked by a variety of shoe prints, some small, some big, but all point away from you. A handful of people are climbing back to their feet. One of them rolls up his sleeves and squares his shoulders at you.

You glance at the podium, where your favorite author is dabbing at a bloody lip. You can't meet his eyes, but you know he's looking at you. At one point, you would've been delighted to have his attention. To maybe even get a personalized autograph. But now you don't dare to think about what kind of message he has for you.

With hunched shoulders, you pick up your satchel and gather your belongings. People back away when you approach, as if they thought you were actually okay with listening to "Vesti la giubba" on a cheap cell phone speaker. You walk to the stage, retrieve your book, and see your fountain pen laying near the podium. You reach out to grab it and flinch when the author switches hands to hold his bloody lip.

Standing in front of the auditorium, you hold your satchel up to your chest, desperate for any sort of protection. You give everyone a blank look.
"I have to pee," you say, and leave.

What if I could jump to the moon?

Que asked his friend el Pato.

El Pato responded: "Maybe not just by jumping"

The two looked at each other's gaze. This thought of an adventure of Que and El Pato. With joy in their eyes they thought about fame, they could see themselves as adventurers who challenge the *unknown*.

The next day El Pato was set to carry his friend to the skies' limits for him to reach the moon.

"What if I don't make it all the way?"

Que turned to his friend

"You will fall back and I will fly by and catch you"

This had calmed Que, he then climbed on El Pato. They flew to the skies.

Que jumped up one time reaching the first stars and came back down.

"Woah that was great, that was an easy jump the next one I will make it"

"Yes you will" said El Pato

Que jumped again and El Pato could see his friend drift off into the stars and then 'puff'

He landed on the moon.

The light of the moon was bright but still the moon is far.

El Pato could only see the outline of the rabbit.

El Pato waited and waited for his friend to fall down again, this never happened.

El Pato had no idea what to do.

His friend was on the moon and wasn't coming back.

Now all he could do is wait for the full moon to see his friend and wish that his friend is doing well.



Photo Credit: Marianne Rogoff

Reuleaux

What once lived in confidence;
the vivid and crisp green of trees bloomed,
emerging from winter's clutches.

As summer comes and goes,
these parcels of esse fade,
age pulling at their every cell.

One by one,
these leaves fall, turning to rot and filth.

-

What once lived in my every thought;
feelings of sentiment and regard made my mind drunk,
emerging from a belief that love is a myth.

As our days lessen,
I see you pulling away,
your distance breaking every cell in my being.

One by one,
My body forgets parts of you,
losing your warmth and scent.

-

I have given up my sun,

my happiness

you

Don't you see?

Amara Collins

moth to a flame
drawn to the warmth
temptations refusing to lay dormant
body betraying mind
fluttering towards the flame
bearing burns of conquest
ecstasy riddled desire
locked in the inferno of your lips
blessed on holy flesh
love ignited under scorching passion

TUXEDO