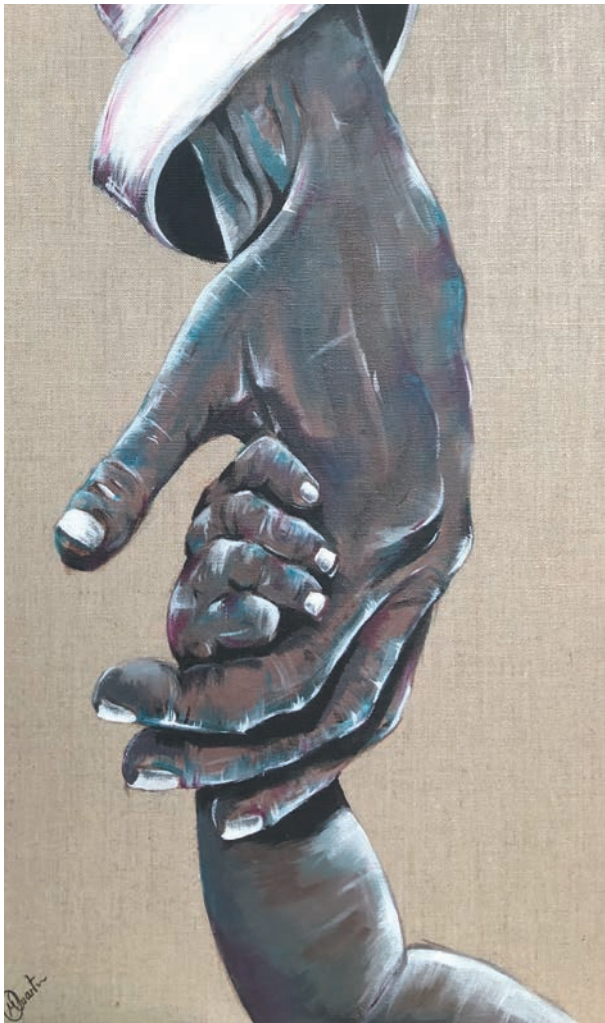




The Song Between Our Stars

Volume 1 Number 1: Firsthand Accounts of Twenty-twenty



Hold On Marisa Quartin



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The Song Between Our Stars was founded in 2020 as a way of documenting creative reactions to contemporary issues.

We seek diverse, divergent, and atypical voices, and to showcase work from emerging and established writers and artists. We prefer literature and art that is focused on divisions: within our selves, within and between communities, and the various ways that individuals and groups nevertheless overwhelm their separateness. On the converse, we are fascinated with the definitions, and refining of preferences which articulate individuality and subcultural and countercultural identity.

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firsthand accounts of

*from artists, poets
and writers worldwide*

twenty-twenty

Volume 1 Number 1
Spring 2021

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The Sunday Sports Page

Mark Tulin

“Here’s the paper,” said my mother, and passed me a tightly-folded Sunday edition just delivered at our front door. She did this at the beginning of every visit. The paper was a family ritual that was passed on to me by my father.

Mom knew that a Sunday newspaper in my hands was soothing. I quickly snapped off the rubber band, unfolded the thick Sunday edition, and leafed through the sections of Entertainment, Home and Garden, Business, and Automobiles to make sure that everything was there. Sometimes, people swiped the Employment or Sports instead of spending the five bucks at the newsstand.

“It’s nice to see you so relaxed,” she said, in a pleasant but annoying tone. “Mom, please let me read the paper. I’ll talk to you when I’m finished.”

My mother didn’t answer. She often denied that I wanted privacy, and thought that I came to visit because I wanted her nurturing, but that wasn’t the case. I felt responsible for my father’s death, and I thought that I owed her something.

When my father was alive, we scrambled to get the

sports pages while eating Philly Cream Cheese on onion bagels with the coffee pot percolating in the kitchen. My mother was always in the background, observing us quietly, pleased by our common bond, as she often leafed through the style section to see what the latest trends were.

Dad and I were on the same wavelength. Our sports conversations were always intense and in agreement, most times, like the Eagles would play awful against the Dallas Cowboys, and the Flyers had a solid team but only a goaltender away from making it to the Stanley Cup. We would read a sports column and discuss the finer points.

“How could he say that Bryce Harper was not a clutch hitter?” Dad said. “No way that’s true.”

Our Sunday morning ritual was my family’s church, and the Sunday paper the bible. We were not a religious family, but we approached the Inquirer’s sports section with the religiosity of a zealot. We believed with religious fervor in our Phillies, Sixers, Flyers, and Eagles—and our superstar athletes—Harper, Wentz, and Simmons.

When my father was lying on Einstein's hospital bed during his final days, I brought him the Sunday Inquirer. It was a thrill for us to continue to share this ritual that we found so sacred and watch sporting events on his hospital TV.

"Didi is still hitting over 300," he said, hooked up to a morphine drip with his back propped up by four pillows. He would dip his bagel into the coffee with extra cream and peruse a box score. He was dying because of my negligence. I passed Covid-19 to him, unaware that I was a carrier, thinking that wearing a mask was only needed around strangers. But I should have known better because my father had chronic lung disease.

I sat on the hospital bed while Dad reeled off the names of the hitters with the most home runs and RBIs. He loved the power guys, and he could tell you what town they came from, where they played college ball, and how many years they were in the majors. Even in the ICU, his sports mind was fully functional.

"Can you believe how well Mookie Betts is playing center field?" he said with quivering blue lips and rheumy eyes.

"Yeah, Dad, he can snag anything. I wish we had him on our team."

"Yeah," he said, "wouldn't that be something."

Dad's hands shook as he held the sports pages but refused to put it down, even when the nurse came in and did his vital signs or scolded him for taking out the oxygen tube from his nose. He was always so determined to maintain a normal routine, especially during Sunday mornings, when we shared our love for sports.

Near the end of his life, I cut his onion bagel into tiny pieces. His gums had shrunk so badly that he couldn't wear his dentures anymore. I spoon-fed him slowly between sips of warm coffee. He could not hold the newspaper or talk very well, often gasping for air after each word. His eyes were too blurry to read the small print, and so I read the sports pages loud enough for him to hear. I made sure not to tell him how awful the Phillies.

The day before going into a coma, Dad reminisced about being poor, growing up in Pottsville, and selling Hershey bars on street corners during cold, snowy

winters. He recounted all the friends he had met during the many years of selling produce off the back end of a truck. My father spoke about all the countries he visited when stationed in Italy as an Army soldier. The pictures he took of the iconic European spots like the Tower of Pisa and The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He didn't speak about how painful his body felt, but I kept seeing it in his eyes." "I'm sorry, Dad," was all I could say.

"I would have gotten it anyway. I'm high risk, and you know I hate wearing a mask."

"I should have been more careful, and kept you safe."

Dad wasn't supposed to die at fifty-seven. He should have been around to see the Phillies win another world championship and attend the parade down Broad Street in all of its South Philly glory.

In the months that followed my father's death, I spent Sunday mornings with my mother. She was more of a comfort than I deserved. I was irritable when I visited my mother; seeing all the pictures of my father on the walls and his favorite sports memorabilia on the shelves made me even more guilty.

She didn't mind my attitude and brought me a coffee and a sliced onion bagel on a tray. I read the Sunday Inquirer as usual and sat on my father's brown leather

recliner as if the world hadn't really changed. Mom sometimes called me Mort, my father's name, because I talked in the same Philly accent and had about the same amount of bare skin showing on my scalp.

When I talked about my father, my mother would listen with great interest. We'd look over our photo album and watch home movies where my Dad's smile would almost feel too real. I'd laugh at his funny baseball caps that were always too small for his oversized head, and the Kelly green Eagle Jersey that he wore whenever there was a game on Sunday. Mom would spread the cream cheese over my bagel and watch me read the sports section with her normal periodic interruptions. I'd drink coffee with four teaspoons of sugar like my Dad, and Mom would often surprise me with how much baseball she knew.



Yersenia Tracy Whiteside

Sacredness of Common Things (in 5 Haiku)

Hunter Liguore

1. Teatime

Mountain peak emeralds
Picked by hand
Fragrant pearls
Steeped
Steam carries the Way

2. New Year's Day

Geese preen beside lake
Glistening white sun moving
the surface
Life happens

3. World Balcony

prayer flags, like stories
hang in temple
bell rings
carried on wind
stillness

4. Wu Wei

Birch trees lean
Mighty oak bends
Acorns sway
Night crickets knit a melody

5. Mirror on the Wall

Look outside the window
 Life
Outside
 Looking inside the window
Real Life

Borne of Pandemic 42 Paul Koskinen



Snake, Pray for Us

Louis Faber

In a time set aside for mourning
we easily remember those, loved
or despised, taken by age, disease,
war or poverty and neglect.
But trapped in our isolation
we should also pause and recall
the snake, condemned for offering
knowledge for which we were ill-equipped.
Let us not forget the ram,
whose only sin was to be
in the wrong place at the wrong time,
traded for Isaac without remorse.
And let us share a moment's silence
for those left behind as God's waters rose,
wondering as they drowned, how Noah decided,
God hearing no appeals in His pique.
Who will mourn for us, when we
make our departure, or will we
be like the snake, ram and Noah's overlooked,
awaiting for eternity.

The Best Part

Maryn Brown

It's the way I still stay up into the weak hours of
morning, pallid and frosty, a bracelet of fingers
around my arm for warmth
because they belong to me
and not to our phone,
and not to those fingers that took
both my hands to hold
And my ownership over 11, 3, 5 am is a heftier
gift than crystal balls, horoscopes
papered skin or leaden gold books of truth
will ever be.

It's the way everything is different,
changed in a way only November can accomplish
but it's also the way that shift in the earth
has realigned the mountains, setting them like bones
in a cast.

The best part is how it's healing straighter than it was
before.

Election
Dove and Statue
Ann Marie Sekeres



Summer 2020 Ann Marie Sekeres



Embogint

Xavier Panadès i Blas

El cru matí em desperta
del somni que mutila la raó.
Com pot ser que un miratge
em far foll en el dormir?

Les meves mans no aplaudeixen, ni
miracles, ni ombres orfes.
Aplaudeixen els monarques
vençuts, obrint l'abisme de la
llibertat.

Somnis, on planto vinyes
estèrils a cims pelats sense
dreceres; on pesco peixos
sense esquer en llacs sagnants
per la vida.

Quins oratges maleïts
han atapeït el meu seny?
Quins pecats mortals
m'han castigat a patir cruelment?

Potser els cants absurds als estels
han trastornat la meva ment ...
Potser he ignorat el poder de
l'oració, i abusat dels déus dels
sentits...

En la nit més freda de l'estiu,
agenollat, balb, i desesperat,
prego com un monjo
pecaminós, per tornar a ser
minyó, i estimat.

... Ningú em respon...
amb els ulls clucs...
... La follia em posseeix
perpètuament...

Going Crazy

Xavier Panadès i Blas

Translation by Xavier Panadès i Blas

The raw morning wakes me up of
the dream that mutilates reason.
How can a mirage
drive me crazy in my sleep?

My hands do not applaud,
neither miracles nor orphaned
shadows.
Applaud the defeated monarchs,
opening the abyss of
freedom.

Dreams, where I plant sterile vines
on bare tops with no shortcuts;
where do I fish without
bait
in lakes bloodied by life.

What damn thunderstorms
have blinded my sanity?
What mortal sins
have punished me so cruelly?

Maybe the absurd songs to the stars
have upset my mind ...
Maybe I have ignored the power of
prayers,
and abused the gods of the senses ...

On the coldest night of summer,
kneeling, senseless, and desperate, I
pray like a sinful monk,
to be a kid again, and loved.

... Nobody answers me...
with closed eyes ...
... Madness possesses me.

Vince & Gretchen in Black & White — for Mo at 5 and at 50

Jane McPhetres Johnson

Your Seattle “grandmother” had no children and no parents since her biracial marriage engendered no offspring, only endings to be borne in sterile words wielded like forceps and delivered by her father’s sharp pen: “Gretchen, you are no longer a member of my family.” Signed his full name. Sealed and sent it to Red Chicago where she was at home among jobless workers forming unions and other Humans looking for Rights and Light in the darkness between world wars, uniting reds and blacks. Disowned in a life sentence for loving her dark sweet Vincent, she migrated with him to Seattle’s welcoming “Red Gulch” and years later adopted our flower-child family –left adrift, if not elderless, by war—as her own.

Vince was your Mr. Rogers. You took to him anything broken, needed, mixed-up, careened down our steep hill on your Big Wheel to crash where it met Power Avenue at their gray house always painted gray, smog gray, Vince liked to say, so it always looked right, trimmed in white for tall, fair, and gracious Gretchen. Vince loved to fish and took you in his boat to catch Chinook Sockeye, Coho, to cook or sometimes smoke, but when salmon numbers shrank, he quit, instead helped them climb ladders to spawn to survive came home to rest in his self-made cellar den where he mixed milky drinks over ice, chocolate for you, dark liquor for us, turned up the stereo told stories, repaired toys, maybe daydreamed of a time, half a century on, when you would find yourself full-grown at home in a sweet savory mix of humans you’d choose to love without thought of colors being wrong, only that what’s left is right.

LIKE A MATCH IN A
MATCHBOX



MARIA KARAMETOU

Excerpt from the chapbook
Like a Match in a Matchbox Maria Karametou

I am cooped up in my condo

Locked down

Isolated

Separated

Quarantined

Constricted

Limited

Enclosed

Caged in

Restrained

There is a pandemic called Corona. And I
have to stay in my condo...



imagining things



playing stupid games



standing guard behind the door

Go Set a Watchman

Nancy L Cook

1.

For three days people have been sitting peacefully on the street watching the lovely suburban house where the killer-cop lives.

There's been a lot of rain this week. Someone soon will need to cut the grass. I wonder if anyone inside the house is thinking about that.

I wonder if there is silence at the dinner table. Or are there jokes, small talk, are they trying to keep things light, and is she, the wife, sympathetic.

2.

Do you want to know what it's like to watch an unarmed black man die in America at the hands of whites?

There are so many variations to choose from.

Lynching.
The shot in the back.
Lethal injection.
Apparent suicide.

A waiting game turned ugly. Rental unit, job promotion, organ transplant. Et cetera.
A burning cross. White hoods.
One hundred rounds of bullets in the memorial to Emmitt Till.

Locked up for life for trespassing, crack possession, bad check, failure to pay a fine.
This a thousand times.
Tens of thousands of times.

Remember that scene in Roots, the miniseries, where Kunte Kinte gives up his name?

A father trying to explain the value of obsequiousness to his teen-age son.

The gnawing suspicion that joining the police force is how passing for white is done now.

3.

For three days, burly men in riot gear have stood like exclamation points on the lawn, their backs turned to the curtained windows. I do not think this is meant to be symbolic.

The man of the house has lost his job. It was not an easy job. And not an easy job to lose.

He's certain to be charged with murder. I could almost

feel sorry for him,
this white man.
Until I read
that complaints alleging
excessive force
had been lodged against him
eighteen times before.

Eighteen times.
The wife, the kids,
the other cops, maybe
they've always been afraid of him.

4.

An unjust end is not a certainty.
(Is it?) Sometimes
a black man is heard.

Sometimes a white man
will try to intervene.
Sometimes that white man will offer
more than strong words
doused in liberal guilt.

5.

The watch goes on.
The wait is excruciating.

Do you see John Brown
on the scaffold, nine
long minutes noosed
before his final breath?

Do you see Nat Turner,
his young man's body
hanged and chopped to pieces by out-
raged enslavers?

Look again.
Look hard.
They are not dead.
It's all there in black and white. Hand in
hand
they rise.



Aqua Regia & the Screaming Fingerprints of Gold Martina Vossou

Fatalism and the Less Than Famous

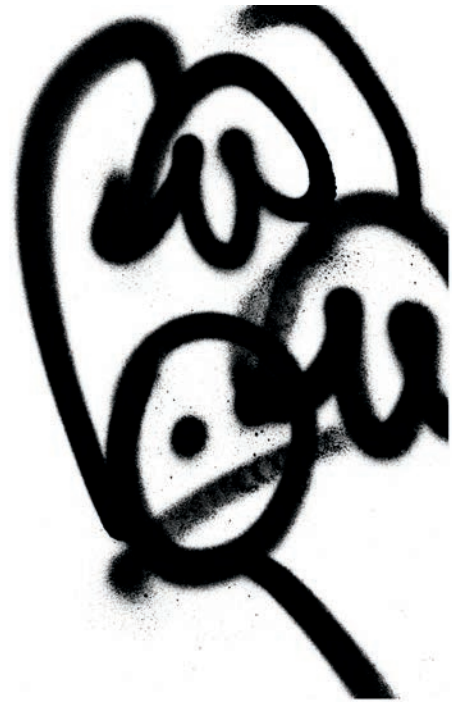
Colin James

Lying in a drainage ditch
about to fuck
then the sound of retching
from up above.
On the bridge an old freight line
someone spewing into the slick water,
coughing at the dark
singing like an autistic savior.
My date is not at all surprised,
obliging in her burlap sack
formally from Idaho,
with writing on all three sides
advertising
temperate seasons.

No Escape Routes

Darry Landberg

extended, enduring, prolonged corridors, serpentine in the building, like long half-life drugs creeping inside and through a blood stream. a row of cheap chairs at the waiting area, make yourself uncomfortable, i pick one and perch myself onto its edge, the chair is trendy, it's dressed in faux leather, for the sake of this fiction i'd love to say that my sweaty hands were glueing to the sleeky texture, but i don't get sweaty hands, so they weren't. i'm trying to disappear between cool white led lights, temperature: 7000k, and yet, trying to stay alerted, to be ready to flee any moment. endless doors, doors, doors, doors, i can't tell one from another, the doors are copy pasted into the walls of some uncertain pale colour, i can't say if it's 2330 C, or 427 C, or 441 C, or 7401 C, or 607 C, or 579 C, or 5875 C, or 7541 C, all those bleached bloodless paints are supposed to calm us down, or perhaps, they are just low-cost, but instead of soothing my eyes, they make me jumpy. the doors are being opened are being closed, opened and closed, closed and opened, clopened, or opesed, and each time a shadow passes by my seat, i shiver, hoping that no one pays attention to my presence. it seems no one does. why should they? i guess, the folks who gather in such places have a lot issues to resolve, much worse than mine. i glance at the wristwatch, and the closer



Darry Landberg

my scheduled time is, the more blurry the reality gets.

'come in please,' - my door is being cracked opened. i come-in-please. when my father enters a new room, he's always searching for emergency exits and escape routes. unlike him, i just wish to become invisible. i reckon i've already missed all the escaped routes on my way, since i'm here.



Darry Landberg

'please, take a seat.'

round dark walnut solid wood chair legs, 17 inches long, coordinating adjectives, coordinating myself, i force myself to raise my eyes from the floor at least to the desk surface. what a banality, a pen, a hand taking notes, some papers, folders, it could have been a really badly directed scene from a film. but it's not, though i

can see myself from a bird-eye perspective.

'are you nervous?'

'not at all.' i just need to take a leak, the 5th one in the last 20 minutes. 'we don't use invasive procedures here, so nothing to worry about.'

he must have smiled while saying this. non-invasive, seriously? you're messing up with my already fucked up head, how is it non-invasive? my shrink is so bog-standard, i believe i wouldn't have even noticed if he were replaced to his spare copy. he keeps a box of cereals in his office, high of fibre, each serving contains at least 8g of whole grain, ever since, when i spot this particular brand of cereals at a supermarket, i avoid looking at it, and tend to leave the area asap. the cereals don't make him look human, this small detail doesn't shorten a distance between us, and should it really? it's just a box of fast breakfasts. tell-me-about-your-family-tell-me-about-your-childhood-tell-me-about-the-relationships-with-your father-would-you-mind-to-take-a-survey-for-me-please-fill-in-the-blanks-have-you-ever had-hallucinations-i-haven't-connecting-some-dots

forgot

a-bad-shot

a-ski-resort

a-kilowatt.

'how often do you have hallucinations? once a day, twice, a few times a week?' he asks as if he hasn't heard me. He has, but these evaluations assume that people with mental issues are all idiots and have short memory.

1

'i don't have hallucinations.'

somewhat smiling, he nods and takes down a note.

'usually patients respond well to this therapy.' he informs me with satisfaction. I think that nowadays patients are called clients, some studies suggest that it makes us feel less... feel less what? scared? stigmatised? makes us feel less. period. or maybe, it makes others, the so-called normal side of society, to feel less frightened. the problem is no matter how you call your concern, if it does concern you, synonyms ain't much of a help to stop concerning you.

FORCING myself not to avoid eye contact, i focus my gaze on the thin metal frame of my glasses.

'have you ever tried any substances?'

'i haven't.'

'are you sure? we've agreed to be completely honest with each other.'

i'd love to crinkle my nose, or raise my eyebrow, or to curl my lips in a painful smile, but i only repeat 'i haven't'. when you walk into this office, you're all covered in labels already, even before you open your mouth, even before you nod or give a shake of your head, he glances at the inner sides of my elbows, clean skin, and i feel as if i've disappointed him. a tall dark bridge, inky water. the picture that is lying on the desk in front of me is so underexposed, that i can hardly spot a tiny blackish figure on that bridge, staring down into the abyss. i wonder if highlights and shadows were so misbalanced on purpose, or the image was just badly printed due to some cost-effectiveness reasons.

'would you please describe the picture for me?'

'i beg my pardon?'

'describe the picture, please, what do you see on it. you had surely done such kind of exercises at primary school.'

er, and the reason why i should do it again is? i don't say it aloud.

'This is the exercise to check if you're still suicidal.'
The shrink explains. He can't read my thoughts, can he?

oh, now it makes total sense. Do you really think I'm so stupid? What would he say if i tell him I'm seeing dead bodies underwater being eaten alive by a zombie shark holding a chainsaw with its pectoral fin? i don't see any of these, and he wouldn't believe me, i guess, i don't look that insane. yet.

Damn, dead bodies can't be eaten alive anyway.

'i don't know, a man, er, is taking a stroll along er a beautiful bridge, and enjoying himself, and er... this delightful scenery with er... a calm, peaceful, tranquil river...' Now i can't resist shrugging my shoulders.

'Very well. I'm very pleased that you're not suicidal.'

I try not to laugh.

'But you know what.'

'What?'

'if you cut yourself again.' With his eyes, he points at an indistinct, yet fresh scar on my arm. 'I'll get you institutionalised.'

Yeah, got you, man, you'll kill me if i commit a suicide.

'Okay.' fight fire with fire. your very own psych experiments at home, no psychology degree required. no result guarantee.

2

it happened 10 years ago, so it seems the shrink was right, i wasn't suicidal, no doubt he has switched his small office to a suit with large windows with a view perhaps, i wonder if he still keeps a box of cereals, if yes, is it the same box?



Darry Landberg

A Family Portrait

Tracy Rose Stamper

An unquiet mind
undercurrents
the dance of fear.

Hard times
spark
the art of extreme self-care.

Feeling at home,
finding gratitude...
because of you.

Becoming
in my heart
the art of I love you.



A Family Portrait Tracy Rose Stamper



Children Bury the Beetle Olena Kayinska

The Tiny Window

Kurt Newton

When the pandemic struck,
we told the children they couldn't
sit with Grandma anymore.
There was something in the air
so small we couldn't see it,
but if she breathed it in
it could make her very sick.

The children seemed to understand
Grandma's room was now off limits,
but still they missed her crinkly voice
and her sweet powdery smell.
So we cut a hole in the wall
and put in a tiny window,
sealed, of course.
It was the best we could do.

The children would peek in on Grandma,
they'd wave and Grandma would wave back,
bound to her big, soft bed,
always in her flower print night gown.
Most times Grandma was asleep,
even during the day.
And when the unseen finally did
find its way into her lungs,
we didn't know how to tell the children,
so much had been taken already.

So we took a picture of Grandma
from the tiny window, and taped it
to the other side of hole in the wall.
The children complained that Grandma
was always sleeping when they came to visit,
but she looked happy, peaceful,
so that was okay.



Coterie Amanda M Brown

Born out of the pandemic and the several relocations of my family, these forms show nature, memories, and process creating sanctuary and returning a sense of equanimity.

Nature marks time as barnacles grow on surroundings. They are the witness to the milestones within my family offering comfort.

Making loose simple forms, process allows one to get lost within it. The piece becomes a coterie as I arrange the slightly anthropomorphic barnacles so that they communicate with each other.

Memories of place are the origins of the barnacles. Growing up next to the sea, climbing on rocks in the salt pond, I can smell the salt water and hear the sound of my grandmother's voice. Sharp edges of barnacles contrast with the slippery submerged rocks.



Coterie Amanda M Brown



Coterie Amanda M Brown

Grief

Winston Plowes

In these unwhole days
we keep counting backwards into the past
and it feels like trying to read a map in the wind
knowing someone else has given up their seat
has parted company with their shadow.
We keep pulling the cord
but the trains don't stop,
and we're kept busy
hiding our scars with butterfly wings
screwing down lids too tight
making excuses for being out of step
for forgetting our lines
And we're wishing,
wishing we could be gardeners again
making things grow in this dust
filling banana boxes with a life
and raffling off the coordinates of our world.



Quarantine Self Portrait Thomas Valianatos

The Weekend

Yash Seyedbagheri

It's the weekend.

You're spared calls from credit card companies. You don't have to teach chuckleheads dialogue in *Hills Like White Elephants*.

You can chug Merlot, even though rent's due. Or watch *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. Cheer Larry's efforts to dissect arbitrary norms.

You could also lie on your bed and admire the fan whirling, coolness whispering.

But Monday will come creeping into your consciousness by Saturday. You'll have to make up more excuses for card companies. Something that doesn't belie lack of frugality. Another dead sister?

What about Hemingway?

They still don't get it's about abortion.

Does a week end?



Celestial Jeff Mann

“Fatti non foste...”

Lucilla Trapazzo

Dove si rivela l’Uomo ancora in questo
andare scomposto e circolare.
Nelle fughe di formica al di là
della ragione e del rispetto.

Dove trovi l’Uomo ancora nella rabbia
senza senso. Nelle porte chiuse
nel livore, nei crepuscoli griffati
nel dominio.

Lo ritrovo nel tempo lento di una fiaba di
notte raccontata. Nel gesto di un vicino
nella spesa fatta. In un pasto caldo. Lo ritrovo
nell’intimo segreto di cellule che pulsano
assetate
d’universo.

E poi lo trovo ancora nell’azzurro
che esplose nonostante il grigio della neve
calpestata, nonostante il pensiero nullo.

Torneremo nelle piazze nei giardini
lungo i fiumi a contare lucciole in estate
più grandi delle stelle
e le stelle lontane sono lucciole.

Sugli alberi a grappoli le case degli uccelli
e becchi implumi che s’aprono al canto
della vita.

“You Were not Made (to Live as Brutes)”

Lucilla Trapazzo

Translation by Lucilla Trapazzo

How is the Man revealed
in this broken circular movement in this
endless escape of ants, beyond
any reason and respect?

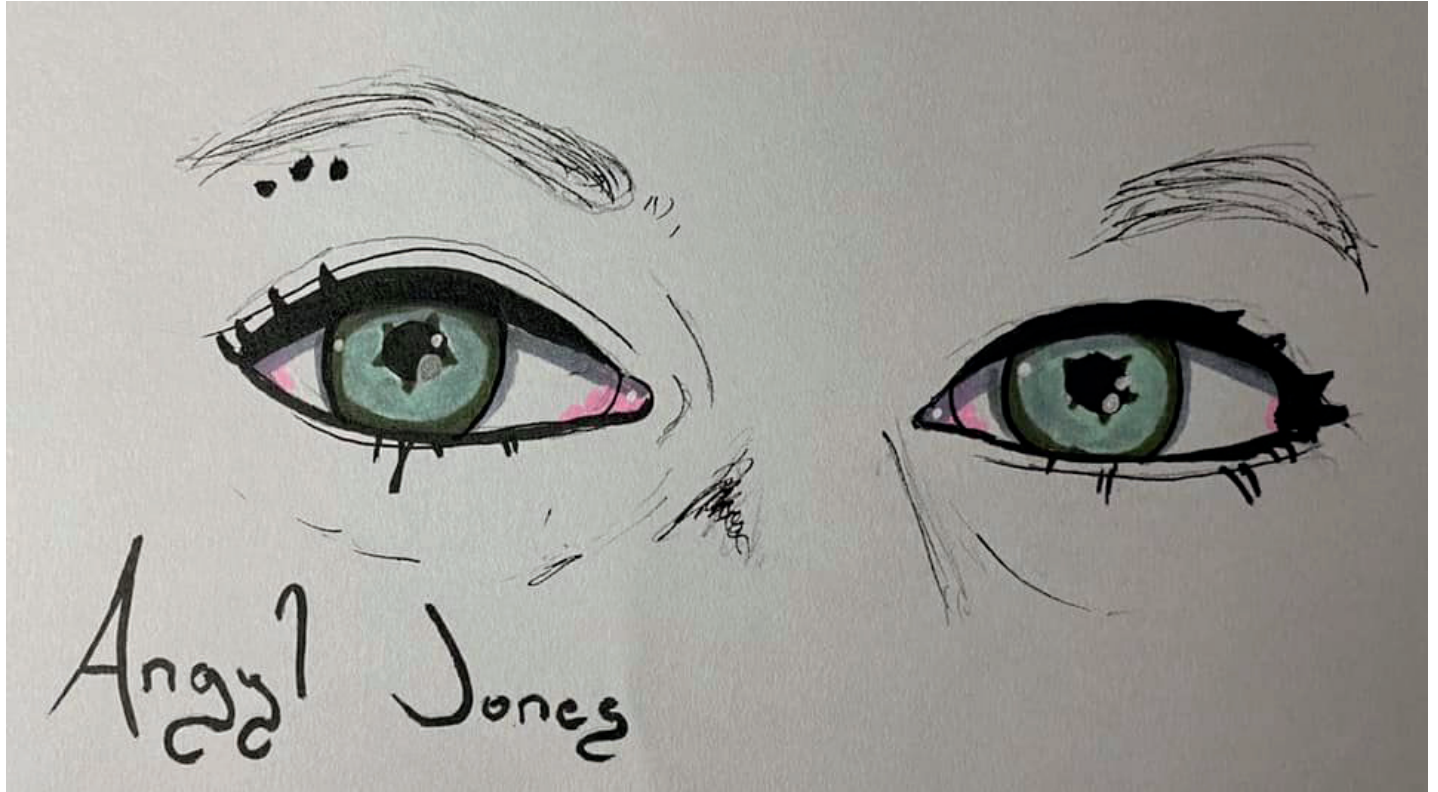
How do you still find the Man
in senseless anger, behind the closed
doors, in hatred, in branded twilights,
in supremacy?

You still uncover him in a fairy tale
at night. In the gesture of a neighbor: the
groceries done, a hot meal shared. You
can catch him in the secret of the cells
pulsating thirsty for the universe.

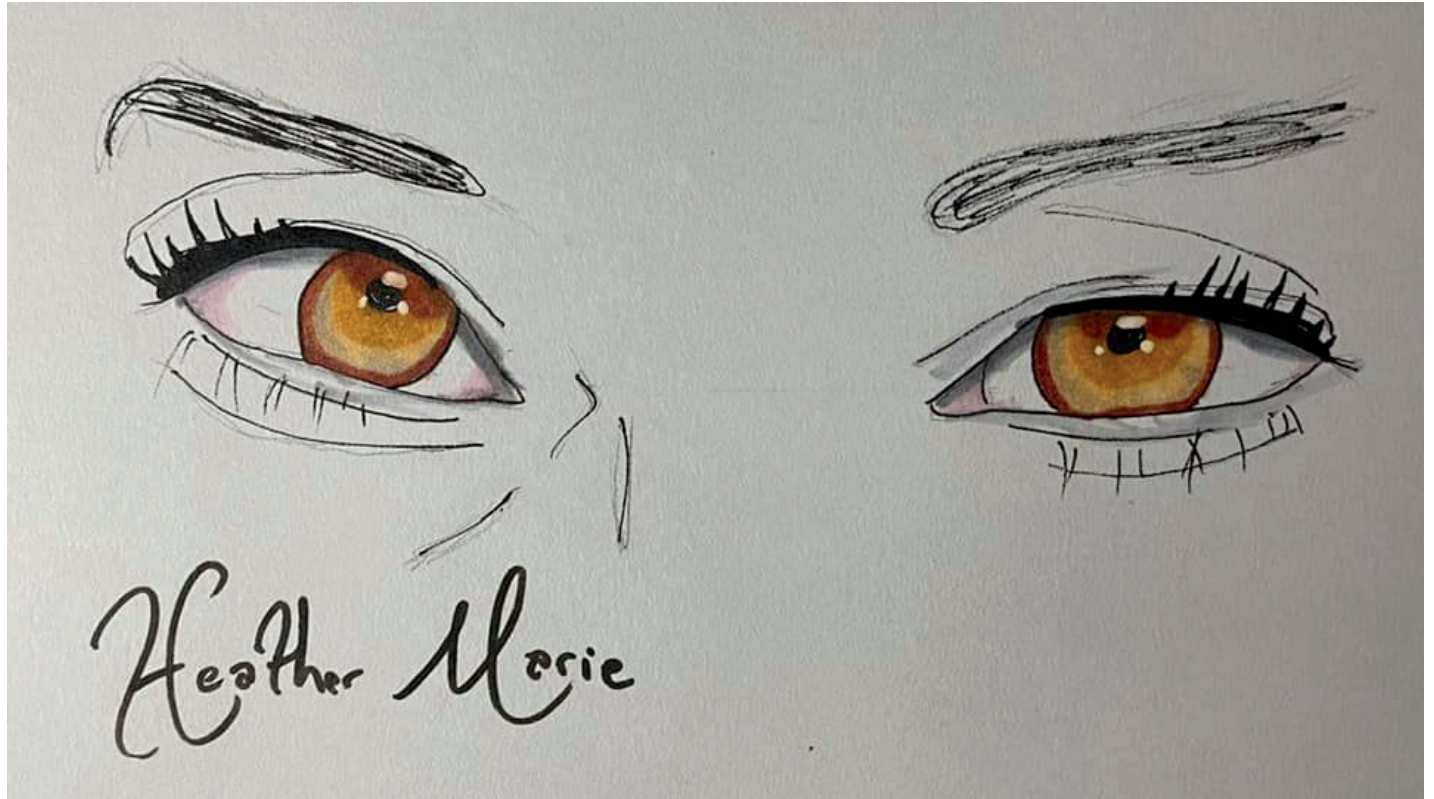
And I still see him in the expanding blue,
despite the gray of the trampled snow,
despite the void of the hollow mind.

We will walk again the squares
the gardens, along the rivers. We will count
again fireflies in summer
(oh, bigger than the stars)
and the distant stars become
fireflies.

Look, the bird's houses are clusters
on the trees. Listen, the little birds
unfold their beaks to claim the
song of Life.



Selection from **The Eye Project** Joseph Castelli



Just Shutting My Eyes

Janet McCann

Shutting my eyes at the dog park
I hear barks, high and low,
happy yips, an argument of growls
and then a magnanimous yowl
and a grunt of acquiescence.

Shutting my eyes at the dog park
I hear background noises of masked humans
exchanging blurred pro forma greetings,
praising the weather. They do not engage
as their dogs do, their voices are air.

Shutting my eyes at the dog park
I reach my hand out earthward and
something furry passes beneath it
and rubs against my leg.

A whine. An insistent nose. I do not
open my eyes, but I caress at random.

Shutting my eyes at the dog park
I feel the wind on my face, and I smell
poop and roses.



Untitled Frankie Gao

Author and Artist Info

Amanda M Brown

www.amandambrown.com

Amanda Brown is a sculptor and video artist originally from Narragansett, Rhode Island. By using found objects such as household furniture, she creates personal and intimate experiences in public spaces. Movement and time transform the raw surfaces of unglazed clay with shadows and light. Nature is the constant witness, marking time and giving a sense of equanimity to the fragile and ephemeral essence of human experience. Amanda has shown her work in galleries and museums in the US, Canada, Denmark, and China.

Maryn Brown

Maryn Brown is a 20 year old janitor and creative living in Midland, Michigan (just left of the thumb on the mitten). A queer Mormon raised by English teachers who generally isn't the best at talking turned to any form of creative outlet she could find, including poetry, visual arts, and music. Brown is currently working as a custodian for a local elementary, plans on pursuing a career in illustration, and spends literally all of her free time with her two fat dogs.

Sam Lea Brown

vimeo.com/user99739783

Sam Lea Brown is a student and artist from Easton, Connecticut. Her work is primarily in experimental animation, though it often cross pollinates with film and painting. Through the concept of motion, she explores the preservation of otherwise fleeting moments and feelings.

Joseph Castelli

www.everafterdance.com

Originally born in the Brox, Joseph Castelli grew up in New Jersey and was exposed to art and music at an early age—first with his Cuban mother's love of painting and original stories. Later on, seeing his fathers passion for music and photography Joseph followed in his footsteps. He started playing guitar at age 16 and joined his first band at age 18. Recording and writing original music at an early age, he is a sought-after artist and performer. His music is about bringing people together and he loves to sculpt a mood for his audience.

Nancy L Cook

NancyLCook.com

Nancy Cook runs “The Witness Project,” a program of free community writing workshops in Minneapolis designed to enable creative work by underrepresented voices. She also serves as flash fiction editor for Kallisto Gaia Press. In March 2020, she organized the Pandemic PenPal Poets Project to provide residents in congregate housing with poems, prompts, postcards, chalk poems, and poetry serenades. She has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has been awarded grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board, the National Parks Arts Foundation, the Mayo Clinic, and Integrity Arts and Culture, among others. Some of her newest work can be found in Channel Magazine, decomp journal, and the Michigan Quarterly Review.

Louis Faber

anoldwriter.com

Louis Faber is a poet, a retired corporate attorney, and college English literature instructor living in Port St. Lucie Florida, with his wife and cat (editor). His work has previously appeared in *The Poet* (UK), *Dreich* (Scotland), *The Alchemy Spoon* (UK), *Atlanta Review*, *Arena Magazine* (Australia), *Exquisite Corpse*, *Rattle*, *Eureka Literary Magazine*, *Borderlands: the Texas Poetry Review*, *Midnight Mind*, *Pearl*, *Midstream*, *European Judaism*, *Greens Magazine*, *Afterthoughts*, *The South Carolina Review* and *Worcester Review*, among many others, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Frankie Gao

www.frankiegaovisual.com · Instagram: @frankieeeeeen

Frankie Gao is a Hamburg-based, international visual artist. Her works are composed around themes of astronomy, scientific research, nature, and philosophy.

Colin James

Colin James has a couple of chapbooks of poetry published. *Dreams Of The Really Annoying* from Writing Knights Press and *A Thoroughness Not Deprived of Absurdity* from Piski's Porch Press and a book of poems, *Resisting Probability*, from Sagging Meniscus Press.

Maria Karametou

www.mariakarametou.com

Maria Karametou was born and grew up in Athens, Greece. She is a mixed media artist, writer, and professor with an

international exhibition record. Her work is in permanent collections worldwide. Karametou is the recipient of many awards such as a Fulbright Senior Research Scholar Award, the First Prize in the Maryland Biennial, and Individual Artist Grants from the Maryland State Arts Council. She holds the BA from the University of Maryland (cum laude), and the MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, where she studied with Grace Hartigan and Salvatore Scarpitta. Karametou is a professor at the School of Art, George Mason University.

Olena Kayinska

en.olenakayinska.com

Olena Kayinska is an artist based in Lviv, Ukraine. She works with naïve or pure art techniques, paired together with deep philosophical and psychological senses. Her fields of research are finding of inner peace, post-trauma recovery, human inborn kindness, and love as the driving force of Universe. She has participated in over 30 exhibitions, contemporary art festivals and art residencies, and has exhibited 3 personal projects. Her paintings are kept in museum funds and private collections in Ukraine, Germany, the United States, and Turkey. Her paintings show the endlessness of obvious and unobvious relationships in this world with the help of mysterious storylines featuring the metaphysical sense.



The Oracle of In Between Lisa Oakes

Paul Koskinen

Instagram: @paulkoskinen/

Initially inspired as a young teen by the works of Dali and Picasso, Toronto based painter Paul Koskinen began his art training at home in front of an easel, experimenting with oils. Over the years, he has exhibited his works in and around the Toronto area. With recent success through international exhibits and appearances in publication, his work has caught the imagination of many. Largely self-taught, Koskinen's early influences, and many others, propelled him on a journey towards the field of abstract art which he continues to this day.

Darry Landberg

darrylandberg.com

Darry Landberg is a graphic designer, illustrator, and fiction writer. He was born in London in 1988 and received a Master's Degree in linguistics and literature in 2012. For a few years after graduation, Landberg worked as an editor, mostly dealing with creative non-fiction. At the moment he's interested in visual arts, typography, and genre blending. He writes and paints experimental narratives, and in 2020 he wrote two absurdist plays. Now he's working on a semi-fiction absurdist novel with elements of theatre play and poster design.

Hunter Liguore

www.hunterliguore.org · Twitter: @skytale_writer

Hunter Liguore is a gentle advocate for living in harmony with the natural world and with one another. An award-winning author, professor, and historian, when you support Liguore's work, you're partaking in an equal exchange that supports compassion and peace in the world. Her book, *The Whole World in Nan's Soup* is now available.

Jeff Mann

www.jeffmannart.com

Jeff Mann works mostly with car parts: masks and layered sculptures. He works by response rather than pre-imagined representation or narrative—he lets the parts give him direction. He believes there are too many cars in the world, so he makes benign things from malignant.

Jane McPhetres Johnson

Twitter: @parakeetz · Instagram: @mavenreachesmars

Jane McPhetres Johnson's first poetry collection, *Maven Reaches Mars: Home Poems and Space Probes in Four Fascicles*, was published in November 2020 and is available in both print and digital editions at www.levelpress.com. She now lives in Amherst, Massachusetts, a few steps from the Robert Frost Trail, and is reminded often of her mother and grandmother who knew Emily Dickinson's hometown through her poems, by heart.

Janet McCann

Janet McCann taught creative writing at Texas A&M from 1969 until 2015, is now Professor Emerita there. Journals publishing her work include *Kansas Quarterly*, *Parnassus*, *Nimrod*, *Sou'wester*, *Christian Century*, *Christianity and Literature*, *New York Quarterly*, *Tendrils*, *Poetry Australia*, etc. Her most recent book-length poetry collection: *The Crone at the Casino*, Lamar University Press, 2015.

Kurt Newton

Twitter: @KurtDNewton · Instagram: @KurtDNewton

Kurt Newton grew up in rural Connecticut. His interest in art and music at an early age laid the foundation for what would become his first love: writing. He is the author of two novels, two short story collections, and eight collections of poetry. His third short story collection, BRUISES, is due to be published in 2021 by Lycan Valley Press. He currently lives in Connecticut and is working on his fourth novel. Kurt Newton's poetry has appeared in *The Wild Word*, *Penumbra*, *Eye to the Telescope* and *Hobo Camp Review*.

Lisa Oakes

Instagram: @lisaoakesart

Lisa Oakes is a painter (primarily acrylics), specializing in figurative expressions and narrative contextual depictions of the beauty in contemplative tragedy. The focus is within the eyes of a painted figure. Oakes use facial expressions to move the viewer through the work in a personal, emotional experience. Her work often explores themes such as loss, loneliness, or sorrow and aims to evoke a semblance of empathy among viewers. She attended the University of Texas at San Antonio, studying psychology rather than art. Her academic route sparked a fascination in the psychological human condition that appears in much of her work.

Xavier Panadès i Blas

www.xpan.bandcamp.com

Xavier, "The Catalan", has been instrumental in the internationalisation of Catalan music. he is very sensitive to injustice and has an imperious need to express himself.

Xavier pushes the boundaries between music, meditation and poetry. His performances are passionate and of such intensity that they will shake the entrails of your existence. Xavier's collection of poetry 'The Ear of Eternity,' (Francis Boutle:2019) is the first book in the pentalogy series, 'The Emptiness of the Senses,' and explores love, identity and injustice.

Winston Plowes

www.winstonplowes.co.uk

Winston Plowes shares his floating home in Calderdale UK with his seventeen-year-old cat, Sausage. He teaches creative writing in schools, universities and to local groups while Sausage dreams of Mouseland. His latest collection, *Tales from the Tachograph* was published jointly with Gaia Holmes in 2018 by Calder Valley Poetry.

Marisa Quartin

www.mlqart.squarespace.com · Instagram: @mlqart

Marisa Luana Quartin, is a mixed race British artist. With ancestry in Angola, Portugal, and Trinidad, she focuses heavily on showing the beauty of black faces and bodies in her art. A portrait and figurative painter, she creates artwork that is designed to convey emotion, utilising earthy base tones. A media specialist by day, she re-discovered a passion for painting as a way to express her identity and activism.

Shark People Astian Rey



Astian Rey

astianrey.com · www.facebook.com/astianrey

Astian Rey is the winner of the world's first BlockChain Art-Hackathon. The works are in private collections in Ukraine and the United States. In his work he use the language of symbols, often creating his own. He calls his own style "Sacred Minimalism". His works reflect the themes of philosophy, mysticism, and self-exploration. In his artistic practice, he works with materials such as metal, concrete and wood.

Ann Marie Sekeres

www.annmarieprojects.com · Instagram: @annmarieprojects

Ann Marie Sekeres' work has appeared in numerous publications worldwide. Her first book cover, for *the samurai* by Linda M. Crate, has just been published by Yellow Arrow Press of Baltimore, MD.

Yash Seyedbagheri

Yash Seyedbagheri is a graduate of Colorado State University's MFA program in fiction. His stories, "Soon" and "How To Be A Good Episcopalian," have been nominated for Pushcarts. He has also had work nominated for The Best of the Net and The Best Small Fictions. A native of Idaho, Yash's work is forthcoming or has been published in The Journal of Compressed Creative Arts, Write City Magazine, and Ariel Chart, among others.

Tracy Rose Stamper

www.facebook.com/DancingPenTracyStamper

Tracy Rose Stamper dances with words. Her recently acquired middle name is the most significant word she has written

lately during these days asking us to rise. She lives in a home on a hill in St. Louis with two beloved humans, two rescue beagle boys, and two whimsical wind sculptures. She is a contributing author of Anna Linder's 'The Book of Emotions,' and has had work appear in Dime Show Review, Drunk Monkeys, Feels, borrowed solace, and Six Sentences, among others.

Lucilla Trapazzo

www.lucillatrapazzo.com

Lucilla Trapazzo studied German Literature (Rome, Italy), Film & Video (Washington, D.C.), and theater. She collaborates with several art and cultural association in the organization of events and festivals. Her activities range among poetry, theater, installations, translations, and literary critiques. In her works she longs for a synthesis of the different artistic languages. Her poems, translated in 11 languages, have been published in international anthologies and literary magazines, and awarded numerous prizes.

Mark Tulin

<https://crowonthewire.com> · IG: @crowonthewire.poetry

Mark Tulin is a retired psychotherapist who lives in California. Besides his work as a therapist, Mark has been employed as a comedy writer, a busboy, and a produce man. His books include, *Magical Yogis*, *Awkward Grace*, and *The Asthmatic Kid and Other Stories*. Mark has been featured in *Amethyst Review*, *Strands Publishers*, *Fiction on the Web*, *Terror House Magazine*, *Beatnik Cowboy*, *Trembling with Fear*, *Still Point Journal*, *The Writing Disorder*, as well as anthologies and podcasts. His stories have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

Thomas Valianatos

wordpress: <https://tomvallianatos.wordpress.com/>

IG: @thomasvalianatos/

Thomas Valianatos was born in Athens and attended Athens School of Fine Arts, receiving a B.A. in Painting and a M.A. in Digital Arts. Since 2010 he has been teaching as Lecturer at the Department of Audio & Visual Arts of Ionian University. His artworks, in the form of original comic book art, digital prints, live electronic music, videos, and live audio & visual performances, have been exhibited both nationally and internationally at various festivals and art exhibitions.

Matina Vossou

Instagram: @matinavossou

Every face is a journey. Probably looking at faces is going to be the longest trip we will ever make. Every color is an emotion. What we feel is the only present we know and by this we define our lives. Matina Vossou paints faces, shuttered in tiny pieces of colors, without the protection of their socially accepted skin; frozen in a moment of truth which is necessary for us to be introduced to ourselves. She loves being the mirror of others; the eyes that a simple and bare light possesses in order to avoid its shadow.

Tracy Whiteside

www.tracywhiteside.com · Instagram: @whitesidetracy

Tracy Whiteside is a Chicago-area photographer specializing in Conceptual Art for your fantasies and waking nightmares. A photographer for over 16 years, she is self-taught and is always developing new techniques. With her current work, Tracy wants to awaken your imagination with images of beautiful women

in their secret times of turmoil. She often uses Photoshop to achieve the effect she envisions. Inspiration is everywhere, so she is always busy creating. Her work has been seen in over 15 exhibitions and 80 publications in the last two years.



The Song Between Our Stars

