

UR
BANA
LITERARY & ARTS



UR
BANA

XI

LITERARY & ARTS

2018

INTERAMERICAN CAMPUS
MIAMI DADE COLLEGE

EDITORS' NOTE

Dear Urbanities—

Our eleventh volume intends to reveal the many faces of addictive, self-destructive, and obsessive habits. Whether you binge-watched that last Netflix original while taking smoke breaks after every episode, you fell head over heels for that person and couldn't think of anything else, or perhaps you felt anxious and depressed. But you know how those things go - keep it inside, no matter how difficult, don't talk about your struggle, you think you're playing victim, and people couldn't care less about your insecurities.

We've been there, and somehow art is a common place for us. *Urbana Vol. XI* believes art has a contract with its audience. As artists, our duty is to heal, lend a hand, say me too. We created this magazine hoping to empower and to deal with our own nightmares and yours. The pieces that live inside these pages were carefully selected to do your time justice. If you've read this far, turn the page and focus on what's important. Enjoy!

With love,
Luis E. Prieto and Anto Chavez
Co-Editors-in-Chief
Urbana Vol. XI

CONTENTS

LITERARY

9	BLUE CHERRY FABIO OLAYA	36	CONNOTATIVE ETYMOLOGY NICOLAI CARDONA
10	ROOM 07 PEDRO MARIO ALFONSO	39	VICTIMS LUIS E. PRIETO
14	YOU ARE NOT INVITED JUDITH MATAMOROS	44	RED RIVER JUDITH MATAMOROS
17	THE TRUTH SAMMIE ZENOZ	45	DEADLY CAMELOS JUDITH MATAMOROS
33	EL MONSTRUO PEDRO MARIO ALFONSO	46	VORTEX OF HEAVEN A'SHUNTI ZANDERS
34	CEASELESS ALEXANDRA HERNANDEZ	48	RIDE ALONG THE STARRY SKYLINE LUKA BILBAO

51	ARZU SINGH LUIS E. PRIETO	70	LIABILITY ANTO CHAVEZ
62	MY DADDY'S ISSUES MARIA PAULA GUERRA-CHAVEZ	78	BLUE PADDED WALLS ANA CHAO
63	OUT OF HER MIND LAURA RODRIGUEZ		
64	DIARY OF A TRANSFER STUDENT LUIS E. PRIETO		
67	ARCHITECTURE OF AGRESSION EDWARD MALONE		
68	MEMORIAS REFLEJADAS ALEXANDRA HERNANDEZ		

CONTENTS

ARTS

8	BROKEN SELF PORTRAIT A'SHUNTI ZANDERS	31	BUBBLES LUIS E. PRIETO
12	RAGE CESAR SARMIENTO	32	WITHIN THE SEA A'SHUNTI ZANDERS
15	CIGARETTE DAYDREAMS ALEJANDRA JIMENEZ	37	LOST IN THE SAUCE ANONYMOUS
16	LOCKED TEARS ALEJANDRA JIMENEZ	38	LOST A'SHUNTI ZANDERS
20	CHATARRA CESAR SARMIENTO	43	CERRO NEGRO LUIS E. PRIETO
25	MEDUSA ANA CHAO	44	THE ISLAND OF OOO A'SHUNTI ZANDERS
28	MOTHER OF OOO A'SHUNTI ZANDERS	47	THE LONELY ISLAND OF OOO A'SHUNTI ZANDERS

49	THE START OF OOO A'SHUNTI ZANDERS	69	A LOST BEACH A'SHUNTI ZANDERS
52	SECOND MOTHER OF OOO A'SHUNTI ZANDERS	72	NO NOS MOVERAN ANTO CHAVEZ
55	TRASH ANTO CHAVEZ	75	DYNAMITE ANTO CHAVEZ
59	MARIONETTE ANA CHAO	76	EYES OF A'SHUNTI A'SHUNTI ZANDERS
62	PUZZLE ANTO CHAVEZ	79	THE LOST BROTHER A'SHUNTI ZANDERS
65	NOSTALGIA CESAR SARMIENTO		
66	LINES CESAR SARMIENTO		



BLUE CHERRY

Fabio Olaya

A blue cherry drops and makes its way down yonder
A single plop and then none
In the distance, a lonely songbird begins to wonder
What has this garden become?

A pair of golden honey squirrels
Drop their belongings and quickly gather
A third, halts, no longer burrows
To join the commotion he much rather

Clouds pace the sky hoping to find
A reason for all the madness
Trees themselves look to hide
Away from all the shame and sadness

Never again, we will let it occur
Cherries are red, and we all concur

ROOM 07

Pedro Mario Alfonso

Mom:

Asking for pen and paper, looking at the very white antithesis of my soul, and holding this letter crafter in my hands is way too hard. It's killing me to start. I don't know if I'll be able to finish it. Regardless, I want you to hear everything from your son. Yes, your son. Proudly your son. I woke up at about four in the afternoon the day that it happened. You know I can't have anything other than a café con leche with a tostada when I wake up, no matter the time, so I went for it. The lady at the bakery looked at me with the same confused face that she always did whenever I had breakfast that late in the day. I looked at her with the same "you don't give a fuck" face. It was so sweet. Too sweet for such a sour day. I went back home and played on the PlayStation for a while; it was the only thing that entertained me. I had been doing this for the last seven months, day in and day out. At about 9:10 P.M. I opened the shoe box where I had all of our pictures, especially yours and abuela's. I cried, realizing what I had become, and said I love you, looking at your eyes. You probably felt a pungent stab in your heart at that moment and don't recall it, but that doesn't really matter right now. I closed the box and listened to Freddie Mercury's voice as loud as my soul is screaming right now. His voice was the only thing that gave me joy on a daily basis. That day I listened to Bohemian Rhapsody. He was the absolute best of all times. I was the absolute worst crap of all times. Actually, I am. I wished I could stay home, playing PlayStation and listening to Freddie, living off illusions. But reality woke me up like you did back when I wore a pañoleta, so I headed out to the streets of Miami. You didn't

raise me like this, Mom; it's not your fault. Miami is beautiful. I wish you would have gotten to come with me. Actually, I don't. I wouldn't be able to look you in the eyes right now. Getting back to what I was telling you, I headed out, like I did daily late at night. It's crazy out here at night; you can't see people's eyes. I hate that. Too many lights, too many dark souls. I usually went out to the clubs and sold some things that would be nonsense to tell you about because you have never seen it in your life. Cuba is hungry, Mom, but drug-free. So that's what I did that night: went out, sold my soul, made my money. On my way back home, I got a text from a friend. She was in trouble. "Bad client, usual motel, room 07." You taught me to help friends when they need us, Mom, so I went there. I knocked on the door and he opened. He was sweating, didn't smell like sex, and stood shaking with a bottle of Hennessy in his hands. I saw her in the background, against the headboard, crying, broken. So, I smashed his nose. I hit him with the force that I would have wanted to hug you and abuela, with the rancor I felt for the government that didn't let me visit my own country because I was a defector. A man who just tried to swing his bat at another league, for more money. Now I was swinging my bat in another country, at a stranger's nose. I hit for a 1.000 average that night. 3-for-3. Nose, forehead, temple. Game over.

He lay there, and became colder by the minute. She screamed at me hysterically, saying that she just wanted him to leave. She wasn't feeling her job that day. I wasn't either. I wasn't feeling my job. I wasn't feeling my life. I wasn't feeling, period. I had been killing people with the shit I sold them every day anyway, so I didn't hesitate to hit the motherfucker. You taught me not to hit women, Mom, so I killed him. He lay on the floor, with his eyes open, still confused. What did he do wrong? Why did a stranger kill him? He was at the wrong place, at the wrong time. I sat down and waited for the police. His name was Albert and he was 26, just 26, a father of a beautiful



6-year-old girl named Rihanna and a 4-year-old strong boy, Connor. Connor needs a heart, Mom, he was born with a heart disease and there's no cure for it, except another heart. So, I will give it to him. He will still hate me. I killed his dad, imagine, but I'll give him life. Eye for eye, heart for heart. I'm writing my last couple of words, and I'm glad I'm writing them, because I wouldn't be able to say everything looking you in the eyes. Tell dad that I love him, and that you guys didn't raise me like this. My last wish is that in my next life I want to be born with the same blood running through my veins and in the same land.

Love,

your son

YOU ARE NOT INVITED

Judith Matamoros

Breast ripened
Paint on my face
Take me on the floor
Claw marks on my exposed waist
Shield of fabric ripped away
If I smile your way, I'm flirty and a slut
If I frown your way, I'm playing hard to get
If I cry cry cry I clearly deserve it
Everything I do or don't do is taken
As an invitation to come shatter me
Silent noes, tears of woe
State of shock, feeling disgust
Wishing to shed the skin you tainted
With your venomous touch





THE TRUTH

Sammie Zenoz

April 11, 2008

The sun started to set, and it washed the dilapidated apartment buildings in a remarkable golden light. Aly stared out the window blandly, unable to pull herself away from her thoughts. Biggie Smalls blasted on the speakers as the smoke from her lit cigarette whipped around the car. Her boyfriend, Chris, yelled something to her over the music, but she leaned forward to turn the volume up louder, effectively shutting him up. He scratched his scraggly beard and watched as the wind teased her flaming red hair. The car sputtered on, and Aly glared at the palm trees passing by as Chris continued to drive his old Civic towards his home down the neighborhood roads. His Mom's car and his Mom's house, Aly reminded herself resentfully. Only recently did she start to look at her boyfriend with such disdain. It was as though she was seeing the apartment, the car, the neighborhood, for the first time and all for what they truly were: a fucking shit heap.

She had agreed to stay the weekend with him and even asked him to come pick her up, but when she threw her old duffel bag in the cluttered backseat and hopped in the car, she couldn't stop thinking about Carolina. Memories flooded her as she bit down on her lip, fighting the urge to scream. The scene of her best friend broken down into tears replayed ceaselessly in her head and it made her want to punch something, anything. It had been a reticent car ride and she knew her abominable mood had contributed to that, but she was glad for it. She couldn't think of anything to say to him after last weekend.

As the car made its last turn towards his place, they

spotted a group of young men sitting along a low-lying wall chain smoking cigarettes. They made no attempts to conceal their forties as they shouted obscenities at each other. When the car came closer, Aly's eyes narrowed as she locked in on the oldest of the thugs.

"Stop the fucking car!" she commanded suddenly, slapping her hand against the stereo controls to shut off the music. Chris looked out the window and recognized the men in an instant.

"Fuck! There's no way I'm stopping this car," he shouted but she had her hand on the door handle and had already swung her legs out the car door before he could finish his sentence. "What the fuck, Aly!"

"STOP THE CAR!" she roared now with such ferocity that Chris pulled over to the side of the road and parked. She ripped her seatbelt off and charged out of the car, as Chris continued to fumble with his. The men were still laughing when Aly flew right through their group, towards a larger man with a swath of gold around his neck, and caught him square in the jaw, mid chug. Beer sprayed everywhere as he stumbled back a step, taken completely off guard.

"Fuck you, you fucking piece of shit!" Aly yelled. She swung out another awkward fist that missed as the man took a step out of reach.

"What the fuck!" he cried out as Chris ran up and grabbed Aly from behind, holding her back as she tried to charge again. The other men had stopped laughing and flanked their companion, ready to defend.

"Control your fucking girl, bro," one of them shouted angrily as another yelled "Fucking crazy bitch!"

"I didn't do anything to her! She's a fucking liar!" the man snarled back at Aly.

"I saw you," she hissed. "I was there. I know what you did!"

"She wanted it! She fucking wanted it! She's lying!"

Aly's fury swept through her and she broke free from Chris's grip. She lunged forward swinging out, willing herself to connect with any part of his body, and she did. Chris grabbed her again, letting the man jump out of her reach. He stumbled back against the wall, his eyes dark with anger.

"Stay the fuck away from me, you crazy ass bitch!" he warned, smashing his forty against the crumbling concrete. The broken glass glinted in the last rays of the sun as he held up the jagged remains menacingly.

"You're seriously going to threaten a girl, man?" Chris shouted as he doubled his efforts in holding Aly back.

"She's fucking crazy!" the man accused, pointing to Aly, who was red in the face and still fighting to claw his eyes out.

"And you're a fucking pussy!" she spit back at him.

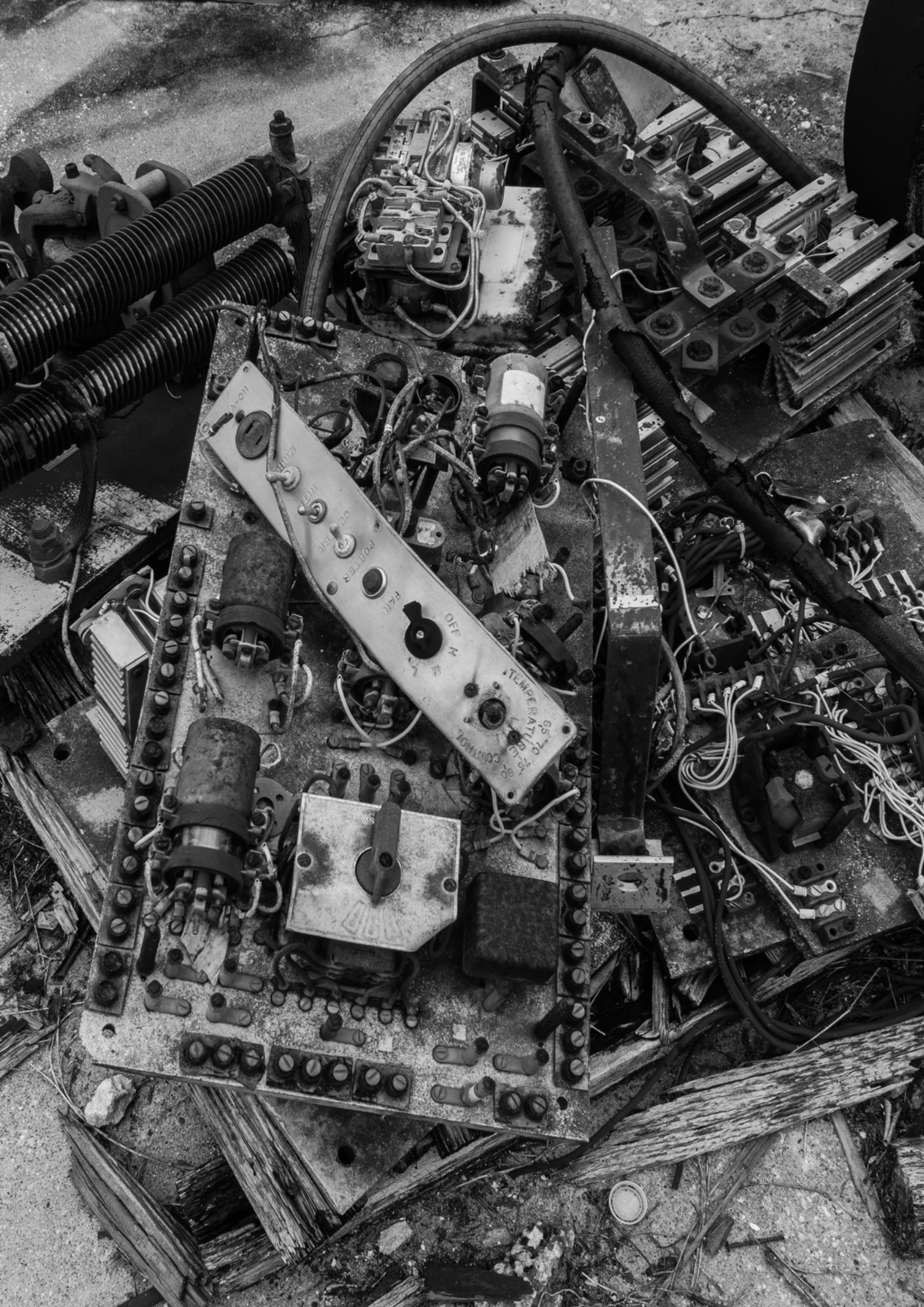
Chris spun Aly around to look at him. "Enough, Aly," his voice pleading now. "We need to go." Feeling outnumbered and losing steam, Aly glared one last time at the man before stomping off, slamming the car door as hard as she could when she hopped back in. Chris stumbled after her and hurried to get the keys in the ignition. They drove away in silence for a moment before Chris dared to speak.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" he asked seriously.

"I don't give a fuck. I'll fucking kill him," she said, still shaking from the fight. They approached the apartment now and pulled quietly into the driveway. Her pale face was flushed pink and her breath shuddered. Chris shifted the car into park and turned to look at Aly. She looked back at him, tears streaming down her face. "It's my fault. I let this happen," she whispered. Her face crumbled as she finally surrendered to her anguish.

April 4, 2008

I remember the vodka distinctly. A giant plastic handle of sin. It was Skol vodka, and I knew even at eighteen that it



TEMPERATURE CONTROL
OFF 11
FAN
POWER
ON OFF
KNOB
110V

110V

was noxious but also a good bargain. I remember Aly's boyfriend asking a few guys from the neighborhood if they wanted to throw down on a bottle. None of us were old enough yet, but one guy stepped forward valiantly. He introduced himself to us as Jason. He was Hispanic, dark skinned, and his last name had a fistful of syllables. He wore thick gold chains and was always asking to bum a cigarette off anyone who had their box out. He was a big guy and wore his gut with no shame, and being the only one of age, he stepped into the discount liquor store after collecting our cash. A few moments later he came out holding the clear jug high over his head in victory, its contents slopping ominously inside.

I remember taking shots in the small worn kitchen. I remember playing cards up until everyone became too drunk to play cards. I remember being in the bedroom with him. I remember I was sitting on the end of the bed, drunk beyond any point I had ever reached at eighteen. I remember he sat in the beanbag chair on the floor next to the bed. *I was alone in the room with him.*

He beckoned me closer and I flowed to him like the contents of the vodka bottle sloshing from side to side. He laced his thick fingers around the back of my head and led me down to him and I didn't resist. I was no longer a body; I was fluid and silver. I was only liquid now, and I bent to his will. *I didn't resist.*

He took control and I took the passenger seat, perhaps even the backseat. He rushed me up and spread me across the bed like one hastily lays out the sheets in a hurry. He had my pants pulled down and I had braced myself for what I imagined came next and it never did. Instead the doorknob tremored, and a loud knock came at the door. Shouts from far away filled the room, demanding it to be opened. *He locked the door.*

Thinking quickly, he swept me up into the bathroom

and locked the door behind him. He lifted me up onto the sink and finished pulling my pants away. In the dark I saw nothing, but I heard his breath hitch rhythmically as he thrust into me. I remember the faucet digging into my back and having the thought to pull away, but I couldn't compel myself to do anything but hold on. *I didn't say no.*

Another knock came at the bathroom door this time and a girl's voice came through it shouting, "Open the fucking door right now." She sounded angry. He cursed under his breath and pulled his jeans back up.

"Put your pants back on," he demanded in a whisper, scooping them from the floor and shoving them into my hands. I struggled to pull my clothes back on, holding the wall for support as my head spun in the dark. He turned on the light and made sure I was ready before he unlocked the door.

He ducked out and was instantly met with Aly's furious interrogation. I stepped out of the bathroom trying not to hug the wall.

"Get out of here," Aly snapped at him, and he continued to protest.

"Nothing happened!" he told her. "I swear to god!" *He lied.*

"I don't believe you. Get out. Let me talk to her alone." Aly's boyfriend led him out of the room and when they closed the door shut, she sat down on the edge of the bed with me.

"What did he do to you?" she asked. "Tell me what he did to you."

"I'm fine, Aly." I told her reassuringly. "I'm okay." *I said I was okay.*

I managed to pull myself together and we left the room to join the others. Sensing the tension, Chris swung his arm around Aly and declared that shots were to be taken to clear the air and get the party started again. Vodka was poured out

into blue solo cups and passed around the cramped room and Aly seemed to be a little more at ease. Soon after that, there was not a drop of liquor left and the guys sat conspiring on how to keep the party going. Jason knew a guy with Xanax down the street and the matter was settled. I was the only one with a car, but Aly insisted I was too drunk to drive. Despite the earlier incident, it was arranged that I would accompany Jason as he drove to get the drugs, ensuring the safety of my car.

As I sat in the passenger side of my Sentra waiting to leave, I could feel the weight of my eyelids becoming heavier and my head growing foggy.

"Caro!" Aly's hand shook me awake with a start. "Caro, are you sure you're okay?"

"I'm fine. I told you." *I insisted I was fine.*

"You look fucked up." She frowned at me a moment as I squinted my eyes to look at her. "Caro listen, I'm handing you your phone. If anything happens, please call me. I will fucking kill him."

"I'm okay." I repeated, letting my head rest against the inside of the car door. We left and as soon as the car sped away and swung around the first corner, he pulled to the side of the road. He unbuckled his seatbelt and leaned over to run his heavy hands across my body. My lips were numb and my whole body tingled as I sat there with my seat cranked back, enjoying the sensation of his touch as warm waves of intoxication washed over me. *I enjoyed it.*

I started drifting when I heard the engine start, and felt the car jolt to life as he began driving again. I thought of asking him where we were going, but it was easier to just close my eyes and ride the wave. I didn't open them again until we stopped. He walked around to my side and opened the door.

"Get in the back," he told me, and I looked up at him

through one eye and said nothing. He leaned down and kissed me, his lips too wet, his tongue too big, and the scrape of his stubbled cheek too rough and yet I didn't fight him off. *I kissed him back.*

He unbuckled my seatbelt and gently, persistently, coaxed me out of my front seat nest and into the back. I found it odd to be sitting in the back of my own car and thought to remark on how I wished I could enjoy it more often, but the thought was fleeting, and it escaped my mind completely when he climbed in after me and shut the door.

His hands were on me in an instant and my vision went black as I plunged into a chaotic sea of sensation. I couldn't see that we were parked behind a warehouse, or that we were in the backseat of my car in the light of day, or that this strange man, like a gluttonous snake, had wrapped his hungry inescapable coils around me. I felt his dripping saliva as he gnawed on my neck. I felt him undressing me and I was seized up in this inexorable moment, trapped in time. Caught up in the warm wave that was sweeping through my whole body, I lay there apathetically as I felt him press himself hard up against me. Poised to penetrate, he took one devastating moment to pull his mouth from my body and look me in the eye.

"Are you sure?" He asked me if I was sure.

I opened my eyes, startled by the interruption. I looked around the car, and then up at him. I watched the glint in his eyes fade away and took in the sight of him. I studied the gold chains that swung around his neck and the thick black chest hair that curled out from underneath his black tall tee. It was hard to feel as exhilarated looking at him raw and up close. I thought of Aly and what she would say if she saw me here, letting a strange man take me this way. I thought of my parents and the constant disappointment I had been to them for too many years to count. I thought then of my father with the



10.17.16

ghost of shame in his eyes, and the haunted looks he gave me now that I wasn't his little girl anymore. It was as though I had fallen down a deep dark well and I was just climbing out to see the harsh light. I screwed my eyes up and shook my head.

"No," I said.

I tried to melt away from him into the cushioned seats, but his grasp on me remained firm and unmoving. His eyes went dark and he asked again, "Are you sure?"

"How about now?" he queried and I felt the hard tip of something stab awkwardly and aimlessly between my legs as he thrust forcefully against me. He searched for my reaction, but I just lay there hunched uncomfortably up against the inside of the car door.

"We shouldn't be doing this," I whispered breathlessly. He thrust again, this time hitting his mark. I gasped in surprise, and he smiled, greedily drinking up the shudder in my breath.

He grunted laboriously as the sound of his body slapping against mine resounded through the car as though a clock were chiming ceaselessly in the distance.

"Why aren't you stopping me?" he asked triumphantly.
I said No.

I lay with my bare ass against the threadbare seats of my Sentra and willed myself not to enjoy his plunging in and out, as dread began to build up in the pits of my stomach. *I said No.*

When he finished, he told me he was going to keep my underwear. I stayed curled up in the backseat with just a thin cotton t-shirt clinging to my body with sweat. I finally succumbed to the surge of nothingness that had been threatening to take over. We drove for some time and I felt the car stop as he jumped out to get the drugs. Through blurry eyes I watched him hold up my underwear to a raucous group of men. I heard them laugh hysterically as one of them yelled,

"Those are fucking granny panties." *I said No.*

Before we made our way back, he insisted I pull myself together and come up to the front again. When we pulled up to Chris's house, he shifted the car in park, and turned to look at me. I sat awkwardly, my head clamoring with thoughts. He pulled from his pocket a tiny Ziploc bag of thin white pills, and fingered one of them out. He raised his hand to my mouth and slipped it in, letting his fat fingers linger on my lips a moment. I swallowed dryly and stared ahead as he turned and got out of the car.

"Are you coming in?" he asked.

I looked at him, desperately hiding my growing panic. "I just need a minute."

Without another word he went inside the house and knowing there would soon be people out to find me, question me, I bolted from the car and stumbled carefully down the old sidewalk. I walked the stretch of the block and found an empty corner of bushes to hide in. I dove behind them and lay on the ground, watching the sky twist violently above. I stayed there for an eternity, and even when I heard voices calling my name in the distance, I couldn't find the will to move. My phone buzzed and I read through bleary eyes a message from Aly: *Where are you? Are you okay?* Only one thought crossed my mind as I lay there cold and barren, much like the forgotten bottle of vodka. *I was raped.*

When the sun started to set, and the night cold crept in, I finally willed myself to get up and brush the leaves and dirt off my clothes. I slowly walked back to the house with more ease, the grip of reality taking a greater hold of me with every step. In all that time hidden among the bushes, I decided I couldn't bear having to tell anyone what happened, that I just needed to get to the car and make it home.

I collected Aly and told her I wanted to leave, ignoring questions about where I had been. We gathered our things



and as we were getting into the car, Jason stepped out of the house and flagged us down for a ride. I didn't know how to decline without tipping Aly off that something might've happened. He hopped into the back and I drove him a few blocks down, to a decrepit old apartment building. When we pulled up, he stepped out of the car and tapped for me to lower my window.

"I want your number before you go," he told me. Panicked, I felt Aly's stare from the passenger seat and I hesitantly recited it to him. He smiled and leaned in to give me one last wet sloppy kiss and I quickly said goodbye and drove the car away. I used the back of my sleeve to wipe away the spit with so much force my lips burned. *I wasn't raped.*

As I sped away my heart swan dived into the depths of my stomach, and my face burned as I tried to stop the tears cascading down my flushed cheeks. Aly sat quietly next to me, taking in what was happening.

"Caro, are you okay?" she asked softly.

I swung the car dangerously around another corner and punched the gas. The tears were flowing freely and it was pointless to try and hide them. I felt like screaming until my throat was raw and bloody. I wanted a hot shower, but I knew there was no water that ever existed scalding enough to wash away what had just happened. *Was.*

"Caro," Aly had her hand on mine, but I snatched it away, startled. "Caro, what happened?"

Stopped at an impossibly long red light, I couldn't bear to turn and look at her. I hung my head with shame as I tried to wipe my face. How could I explain when I couldn't piece it all together myself? How could I think of anything but the memories that flashed through my mind like unwanted whispers? *Wasn't.*

"I don't know," I told her finally, my voice breaking. "I don't know what happened."

Journal Entry, April 4th 2018

Is ten years enough time to talk about it again? Could any amount of time ever be enough? I would love to tell you that I turned it around, that I found justice or meaning of any kind, but that isn't the case. The truth is that I've carried the weight of it through 3,650 days, a passenger during my worst times and the better ones too. I've held onto it like a dirty secret, this paralyzing fear of being found out for the fraud I am. I lived in shame, terrified that someone would come to know my darkest skeleton; that I couldn't stop a part of myself from enjoying it. The agonizing voice in my head that reminds me that I didn't do anything to help myself, that I didn't do anything at all. I list it in my head, over and over, hitting every point, like a mantra, like a chilling incantation, I go through it:

*I was alone in the room with him.
I didn't resist.*

*He locked the door.
I didn't say No.
He lied.*

*I said I was okay.
I insisted I was fine.
I enjoyed it.
I kissed him back.*

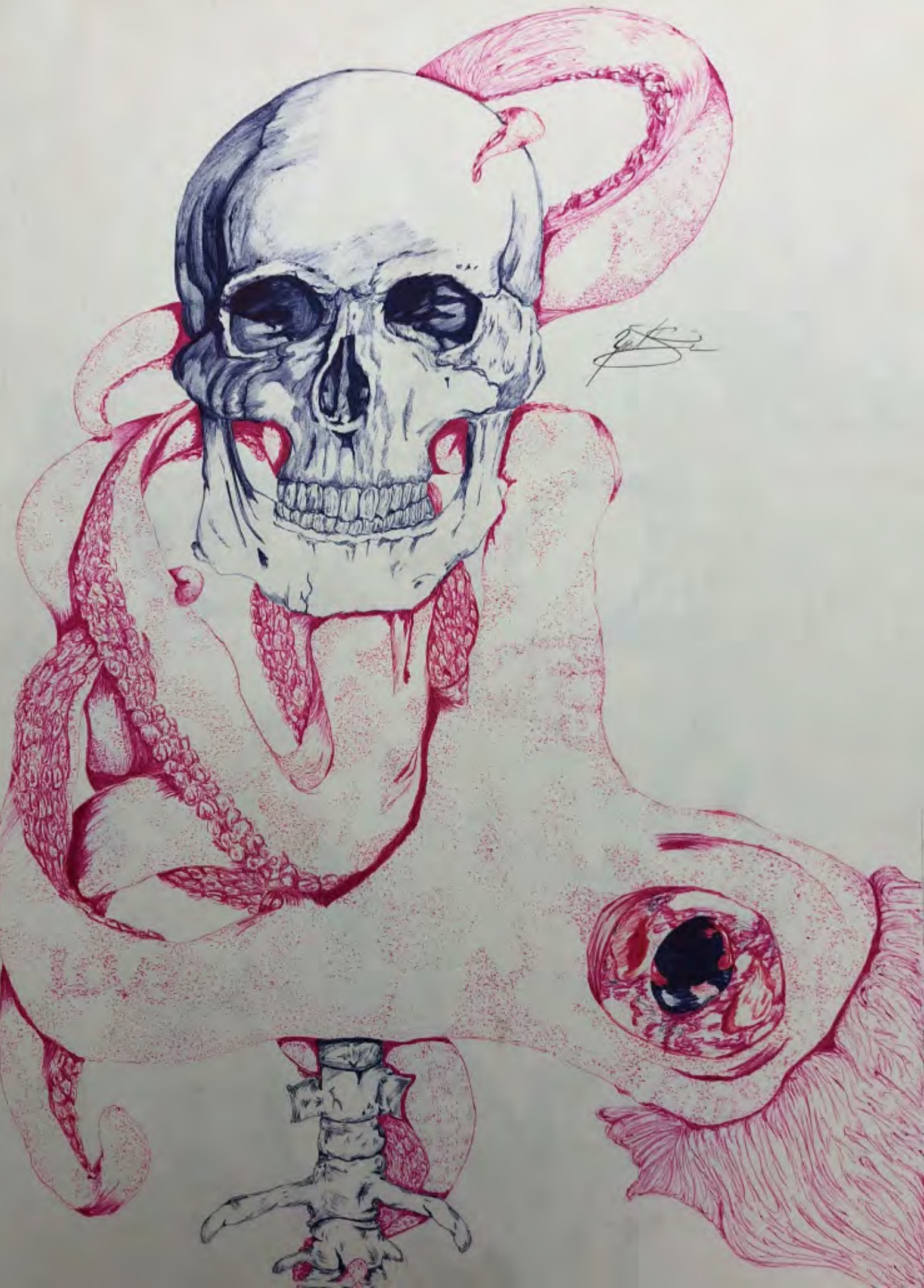
*He asked me if I was sure.
I said No.
I said No.
I said No.*

*I was raped.
I wasn't raped.
Was.
Wasn't.*

The truth is in the was and in the wasn't. The truth is something I've had to hide like an infection that silently spread through my body, ravaging me as it went. The truth is what haunts me. The truth is what's on the tip of my molested tongue. The truth is that I hated myself for far too long. The truth is that I need to let it go, finally. The truth is that it doesn't matter what the truth is. The truth is I'm free now.

BUBBLES, Luis E. Prieto





EL MONSTRUO

Pedro Mario Alfonso

Hay poco espacio
en el sofá de casa.
Lo habita un invitado
inoportuno y raro.
En sus ojos venenosos
se reflejan ojos conocidos y
congela la casa
la sustancia en sus venas.

Sus axilas desprenden
olores de muertos podridos,
acumulados en el fondo
del basurero de la sociedad,
asfixian a las plantas
que solo saben llorar
lágrimas que pesan
porque cargan con mamá.

Se cree infalible el intruso,
se burla de todos,
se planta en el seno
donde habitaba el amor.
Crece con cada puñalada,
con cada grito, con el miedo,
con la noche, con el día,
con mi madre y cada ruego.

Entre paredes por el mundo
se esconde y se multiplica.
Da giros extensos por horizontes
que no alcanzo a ver,
evanesciendo su rostro
y alimentando mi olvido.
Un día cualquiera al girar el llavín,
tras la puerta su pupila me apunta

y me dice mientras a un hermano
abrasa,
"yo tengo carnet vitalicio del sofá
de tu casa".

CEASELESS

Alexandra Hernandez

Again. I found myself writing that word again. I did not want to forget it. I heard my name and I looked up. The pencil my hand was holding fell. The chemistry professor pointed at me, and with each step he approached my seat at the back of the class. I ripped off the sheet of paper from my notebook, and I hid it in my pocket as if the professor would punish me for what I just wrote. "Are you paying attention to my class?" spitting words from his mouth. "Yes," I lied. He saw my notebook. Empty. After ten minutes full of decent offenses to my lack of attention, he sent me out of the classroom. Again.

Dark. My bedroom is covered by a typical darkness. Lying on my bed, thinking about that word. "Are you hungry?" My mom shouted from the kitchen. I heard it as a whisper. "No," I lied. I could not abandon my room to go to eat. I could not fill my thoughts with food. Just that word. That was the only thing I could think of. I took my little diary from under the pillow. Page 359. I wrote it with pen one more time. Another humid circle was drawn on that page, blurring my word. I closed my notebook, it consumed me. Dark.

Perpetual. Stuck in my head, taking my breath, absorbing all my sensibility. Every five minutes that word appeared in my thoughts. Which thoughts? There were no other thoughts. "Are you ready?" The man covered with ink interrupted my thinking. "Yes," I lied. He asked me to lie on the black leather couch. I closed my eyes. I closed them strongly. It might have been a failed attempt to escape. I felt a cold iron needle touching my heart. I felt each letter being created, but that was all that I felt. It was done. I was incomplete. Perpetual.

...

Years. Everything has changed. People are different, my surroundings are different, I am different. The only thing that has not changed is my word. My lovely, unique, and powerful word. It is not as constant as it was before, but it is still there. Immortal, not in my skin, not in my head. Just immortal. In the pumpings of my heart, in the breath that I take, in the mountains, in every smile, in each failure, in the simplicity of life, in the impossible, in the minorities, in the eternal, in me, in you.

CONNOTATIVE ETYMOLOGY OF AN ANARCHO-FAGGOT'S NAME

Nicolai Cardona

My father only knows my name,
And I intend to keep it that way,
Our surname is shared: Cardona,
For a small town in Catalonia,
A place far past its anarcho-revolutionary days.

Tooth and claw against maelstroms of ire,
My mother, who I wish I could be more like,
Fought to name me: Nicholai,
A name from Ukraine,
A place far past its anarcho-revolutionary days.

It is in this union you can draw parallels,
Connections to radical histories,
Revolutionary antiquities,
But that's seeing the ocean for a sea shell,
And that's turning a blind eye to reality.

My mother tells me of the time
My father held a gun to her head
The day she tried to leave,
Right in front of my six year old sister,
And I am shell-shocked by something I wasn't yet born to
see.

English tales tell of fae folk,
Inhuman, malicious, ethereal,
And all they need to have power over you,
Is but your name,
A name you never chose.

My father only knows my name,
And if I had the power,
I would cauterize him of that,
I would excise him of that,
I would guillotine him of that.

LOST IN THE SAUCE, Anonymous





VICTIMS

Luis E. Prieto

SISTER

"Bishop e5."

"You're leaving the queen unprotected, Dad." He played opposite the chessboard, facing the door.

"Take it then."

"If you insist. Knight d3."

"Rook f1. I think that's checkmate, sweetie."

"Are you sure? Bishop g1." My father taught me how to play chess. He insisted in playing blindfolded because he had faith. Chess is all he does ever since mom died. He's as much a father as he is a chess player. Dad performs both roles with the same ideal of adroitness. The same arrogance for which I kicked his ass playing chess.

We waited for Victoria. She was upstairs. It was her big day. The board of trustees had voted to implement her suicide prevention campaign on campus. Victoria had a tough year dealing with our own mother's suicide. We all went through moments of sorrow and grief, solitude and despair, but she focused on helping other prospective victims. She had a heart of gold, my sister. Born in a cradle of piety, we were taught everything there's to know about Catholic morality. Our first words must have been "Lord, save us." That's how mom taught us. We assisted mass every Sunday and prayed every night, all together. Though after she slit her wrists, we said, "To hell with this," and learned to pray to our own deities.

Victoria started taking substances that helped her concentrate. Adderall, Ritalin, Concerta, Vyvanse, you name it. And, of course, this led to the consumption of other drugs that calmed her, knocked her out, and amused her. She was a top student during the day and rewarded herself at night.

Victoria felt in control for the most part, but after wandering too long around the wicked valleys of grief, the outlets became blurrier by the day. She once vomited from the balcony. She hadn't left her room and it struck me as weird. She told me that she couldn't sleep, and she had an early meeting with a few community leaders that were interested in her service project. She ran out of pills and decided to chug down a wine bottle to calm her anxiety. That explained it; from afar, I thought she was spitting blood. I should've known that rock bottom in terms of addiction is to drink for the sole purpose of sleeping at two in the morning and end up shaking in the cold like a crackhead.

Father grew impatient. "She is taking long, isn't she?"

I took my phone, texted her to hurry up. "We came back very late last night, Dad. Do you wanna play another game while we wait?"

"I guess, if we have time. Class starts at eleven, right?"

FATHER

"Checkmate again, Dad."

Since my wife died, I've had a hard time dealing with Victoria. She reminds me of her. Eva is more like me, but Victoria inherited her mother's character. Before I felt proud of their likenesses. Now it scares the fuck out of me. It's a nightmare. Not only does she remind me of her beauty, but also her foolishness. Lovely and disturbing at the same time. "Your sister better hurry up or we won't be there on time. I'll go check on her."

I heard a noise as I walked up the stairs. "Vicky! Are you ready? C'mon. Your sister's gotta go too." My heart started to accelerate with each step I gave. She didn't answer. I opened the door and saw her on the floor, passed out or something.

"What the fuck!" I ran up to her body when an elbow hit me. A young man, strong and dark skinned, jumped over me. He held me down. "I didn't touch her I swear. I just needed my stash man. Fuck fuck fuck. She took it. I told her not to and she didn't give a fuck. She stole and took every single one of those fuckers," he said as we wrestled. "Let me fucking go. I wanna help." He punched me, hard. I almost fell unconscious. He made a run for the open window and jumped to the garden. Bushes broke his fall, but he hurt his right foot. I could see he was in pain. He limped. I grabbed a rifle from my room and followed him. "Don't move. I'll shoot. I swear." He stood outside his car going through his trunk.

"It's all good man. I'm not going anywhere. I'm just looking for a syr-" He reached out for something, but I never knew what it was. I pulled the trigger. No second thoughts, only skill.

STANLEY

Someone threw a party the day Victoria heard back from the board of trustees. She invited me there to go celebrate with her friends. The house was h-u-g-e. I could easily lose my way walking around the never-ending hallways, passing loads of doors on each side. Everyone did their own thing. Stoners smoked and drinkers drank as if their lives depended on it; some sought a piece of love, company. Whatever that meant in a place like this.

Predictably, I found Victoria sleeping on the toilet a few hours past midnight. I hadn't seen her since our last shot so I went to look for her in the bathroom. The door was locked. I broke the lock. Victoria's arms looked as cold and white as the porcelain where they rested. The basin faucet was open and a

stream of hot water ran for god-knows how long. I gawked at Victoria's drunken state as a cleric stares at Christ. She looked beautiful and disgusting.

I placed a damp towel on her forehead. Another one on her neck. Half an hour passed as I cleaned the bathroom and Victoria sobered up. She stood up mumbling, zigzagging, giving short steps, and she hit her head on the wall. I swept the floor, washed the basin, gave Victoria new towels, and threw the dirty ones away. Victoria stood before the misty mirror. The owner of the house came up to the bathroom. I looked at him ashamed of the mess Victoria made. He couldn't care less. He just said, "Yooo, what's that you selling. It is potent, man. My friends are trippin their minds out and they want more. You have more, don'tchu?" I looked at him laughing and said, "Price's gone up, my man. It's potent as you said. I have a few left and wanna make sure whoever gets them truly deserves them."

"Give me a price, dude. You're at my party."

I grabbed Victoria's arm and answered, "I was actually leaving. It's twenty each. Pay or fuck off."

"Alright, alright...no need to be a bitch, bro. Gimme ten," he said, handing me a couple of hundreds.

"Cool." I took ten small pills from my stash. "Listen, tell your friends to take it easy. They take long to kick in but they're pretty fucking strong. Don't want anyone passing out on my shit. Gives me a bad rep. Here, this extra for you. It's on the house."

We walked a few blocks to my car. Victoria looked anxious and I grabbed a blanket and a plastic bag from my trunk. I gave them to her as she sat in the back seat. I sat next to her.

"What is that that you're selling now?" She had to ask.

I said, "I dunno, never tried them." Honestly. "I don't fuck with hard drugs but they say you get the hang of euphoria at first and then it trips you down till you knock out."

Victoria moved closer.
"Don't you try. You're pretty fucking drunk."
She kissed my neck and whispered, "I bet they're good to have sex."
"You've had enough for the night. Plus, I can't keep giving you free shit." I said, pushing her away. "All I need to have sex is a condom and a sober girl, love."

CERRO NEGRO, Luis E. Prieto



RED RIVER

Judith Matamoros

Crimson petals flow
Aspiration fades in-
Water, razor kisses veins.





DEADLY CAMELOS

Judith Matamoros

Taking bitter pills
on a church Sunday morning,
Father, I have sinned.

VORTEX OF HEAVEN

A'shunti Zanders

A life worth living is free
A pure voice hides in the night
Only so, to bring out the light
The unknown is to stay the same and will always be
A hypostyle home sits in the middle of the sea
Sexually inactive with the dark, the light shines bright
The house is broken; a sea of tears and fright
In the clouds, bore the fruit of the tree
Listen to the wise man speak
We all weep, we all weep, push me, go to sleep
Be the fruit you eat; cling to me, cling me
Follow my glow if you seek
Within the mountain find yourself knee-deep
I want you to know God is a She



RIDE ALONG THE STARRY SKYLINE

Luka Bilbao

Ride along the starry skyline
Of the town that well imprisons.
Fight the thoughts that stand in line,
Your frosty soul just feels no mission.

Love and care they cannot cure,
With bars and pipes and snow of "choice"
What your poor soul had to endure
To clear your ears from great noise.

You ride towards deadly fate,
With elegance and seamless speed.
Your feline eyes may fool your mates
But no one knows just what you need.

Now all that remains is the silence of your fleet,
For a bird sleeps on the wind when she has no feet.





ARZU SINGH

Luis E. Prieto

As he did every morning for the past twenty years, Mr. Singh sat in his rocking chair almost looking through the ceiling. Two decades ago he'd seen, from that same wooden throne of his - at the time both the man and chair held a better condition - his daughter's first steps. Sunlight waned through an open window. He was reliving the moment Arzu ran into his arms when she was younger, oozing charm, and she hit her forehead hard against his chest. Glorious days had risen in his life since Arzu was born, but those days were now dusking.

Mr. Singh grew up in rural Guyana. He became a miner at the age of fifteen and married his wife Ayesha Singh at eighteen. They were muslims, but they weren't religious. They had enough errands to run during the day to ensure they'd make it through the night; they didn't have time for rituals. The first time anyone saw Mr. Singh pray was the day before Mrs. Singh gave birth to Arzu, their only daughter.

They moved to the capital afterwards. Georgetown promised better economic opportunities. Mr. Singh wanted to grant Arzu a blissful childhood and decent education. Things he did not have. He was as well-read as any man with his background, but Mr. Singh spoke as if his mind and voice were one. He knew what to say, and the form, time, and space he chose to speak had great impact in the function of his words. He was a most talented chef, too, and found work at a restaurant soon after their arrival in the city.

Mr. Singh's thoughts and ceiling inspection were interrupted as Arzu entered the house grumbling, in a soft way.

"I've told you it is not safe to leave the door open, Dad.



You are going to get us killed." Mr. Singh did not flinch and Arzu continued, "I got you milk and some bread. A woman gave them to me in exchange of five words."

"Five words! For bread and a glass of milk? A bit expensive, don't you think?" It was indeed overpriced, but it was either that or nothing. Arzu sold her words for three dollars each; five, if they were from a foreign language. No words were ever repeated, and neither could they be translated. Arzu picked them carefully so the meaning was lost if translated or revealed to someone besides its original owner.

She answered, "Well, I know plenty of words. It's food we are lacking, Dad. I think it was a fair trade. Things are not as before. You know that, and the cloud over our heads favor this city. They remain stagnant."

Mr. Singh stood up from his rocking chair and followed Arzu to the kitchen. He grabbed the one piece of bread his daughter had brought, took a bottle of mayo, almost empty, and began spreading it on the bread. He served himself a glass of milk and gulped it down in a second; he poured another one, heated it, and handed it to Arzu. As he took the first bite off the bread he asked, "My dear, have you ever thought of going away?" Upon hearing these words, she spit out the milk over the table in front of her.

She wiped it with a rag and answered Mr. Singh, "Never, Dad. Why?"

"It's normal at your age. Today everyone wants to go out there." Mr. Singh took the rag from Arzu's hand. "I had to wait till I married your mother" said the old man as he wiped the table. "Even then, my mother didn't want me to leave her alone. Sometimes I regret it. At my age, loneliness is the one thing that kills people." Mr. Singh returned to the living room and sat in his rocking chair, this time looking out the window. "After sixty-five years at life, this wrinkled body can adapt to anything but loneliness."

Clouds cast a shadow over the morning sun. Mr. Singh remained quiet, submerged in his thoughts for the rest of the afternoon.

Arzu left the plaza very late on Thursday of that week. People walked back and forth all day, but they weren't interested in her words. The dirty streets grew in solitude as the afternoon became a silhouette. Arzu began to lose hope; she wondered if her words weren't valuable anymore. If she couldn't make ends meet with her trade, what could she do? These were her thoughts as she walked home. The door was wide open when she arrived.

She hadn't complained yet when she noticed her father on the floor. The small fridge and microwave they kept in the kitchen were gone. The rocker and window were broken. Whoever had been there must have seen her come from a distance, smashed the window, and left. Arzu scurried to her unconscious father. She sat next to him and began sobbing over his chest. Mr. Singh eventually regained consciousness. He said, in a soft voice, as if running out of breath with every syllable, "How was your day, my dear?" Her father's sudden awakening made Arzu jump out of her skin.

Calming herself, she stuttered, "Aw- Awful, D- Dad, I don't know what this country has become," as she rested her head on his chest again. "There's not a spark of decency among us. Since when is it right to rob a poor old man and his daughter and leave him to die. Very brave are the folks in this city, fighting us, small fish in the ocean, but no one stands up to the government." Mr. Singh struck his daughter's dark and curly hair. He looked through the ceiling of his now unfurnished home and remained pensive for a moment.

His painful voice revealed that, while present, his mind was absent, lost in some dark alley of memory. "If only your mother was here. She'd blow these clouds away. Your mother was a warrior, you know. Blessed you are to have inherited her

heart and character. Look at me. Ever since she passed away I'm just a crippled old mad."

"That's not true, Dad." It was.

"It's been three years since I retired. Your mother made retirement seem even fun. After I spent my whole life working, day after day after day. I never had peace of mind, just enough money to raise you. That's why spending more time with her seemed fair. But I've never been treated fairly in my life. At least she left you. I think I'd go crazy without you."

Arzu smiled through the sorrowful speech. She thought of nicer memories. "Once, I went with her to sell the dumplings. A woman came and murmured something in my mom's ear. I don't know what she said, but she also pointed her finger to a corner in the plaza. The one with the statue. Two kids played there. Mom gave her three dumplings, free of charge."

TRASH, Anto Chavez



Arzu wondered what the woman had said. Mom told her "words." But she never knew which ones exactly. "We sold those dumplings at three dollars each. Mom paid nine dollars for that lady's words." Arzu almost cried. "I never minded poverty, Dad. I could care less about money. Misery, though, truly breaks me. I lied before about wanting to leave. I do, Dad. I'd be accepting a wretched life if I stay. Mom and that woman were as poor as they were pure, Dad. We don't have to put up with this evil. I want to leave the city, but only if you come with me."

"Only a fool believes his life would be better if he lived in a different place, dear. Seventy percent of your problems are the same. They only exist in your mind. You can run as much as you want, but there's no escaping your mind."

Arzu stood up, "I guess misery is also a mental state. Better to accept our fate, then." She noticed her father was bleeding. "Dad, what happened to your hand?"

Mr. Singh reacted surprised, too, "I don't know, dear, I don't remember. Must have cut myself when I fell."

Arzu stopped for a moment. That's weird, there is no glass on the floor, she thought and then said, "I better clean this up. It's not a lot, considering they only left the kitchen table and Mom's photo on top. They weren't so miserable after all. Though I don't know what we are going to do with that window. We can't leave it open all night." The broken window opened the landscape to a small, dark patio, a bench, a tiny table, and a crystal ashtray. It surely wasn't that heavy, Arzu thought. The ashtray belonged to her mother, who inherited it from her father. It was a rare piece. She estimated it'd go for sixty, eighty dollars, but in reality, she couldn't possibly know. "They must have left in a rush. It is they? Right, Dad."

Mr. Singh washed his injured hand. "I only saw one, dear, but I lost consciousness. I couldn't really tell you." He bent down and thought of ways to fix his chair.

"Alright, you work on that, Dad. I am going to pick up the glass shattered on the other side." Arzu went through a back door in the kitchen. Everything looked suspicious. She couldn't understand why they had broken a window when they could have escaped through the back door. She saw footprints outside. However, she only saw one set of footprints. How come the footprints in the patio match the ones outside the kitchen? She thought. Maybe there was more than one thief. Dad cannot be certain there wasn't, but they'd have to be wearing the same shoes, and have the same size, too."

"I'm just glad they didn't take the ashtray," she said out loud, picking it up, "Mom would be heartbroken."

She returned to silence, yet she didn't cease thinking, She didn't understand how can an old fridge and microwave be worth the risk? As far as she knew, the ashtray alone could be worth more than those two combined."

The next day, Arzu left the house early as usual. She went to the plaza, hoping that today people would be more generous. She was not going to file a report with the police. What for? They'd probably sympathize with the thieves. Besides, Arzu didn't have a license to sell in the street, and she didn't want to call attention upon herself. It's not like the fridge stored any food, and whatever they ate on a regular basis could be eaten cold as well.

Arzu thought she should make a quick stop at the corner bakery. If anyone in that city was going to give her information about what happened, that person was to be found in La Panadería.

María, la panadera, was Venezuelan. She moved to Georgetown escaping the Chavista dictatorship. She was well acquainted with the Singh family, having been an intimate friend of Mrs. Singh since her arrival in Guyana. She talked with a thick and warm accent. As soon as Arzu entered the bakery, she greeted her, "Arzu, ¿cómo estás? Tanto tiempo sin

pasar por aquí." María walked around the counter and hugged her, "¿Por qué esa cara tan larga? ¿Está todo bien con tu padre?"

"Usted tan amable, señora María. Mi padre está bien. Pero nos han robado en la casa. I hoped you or your customers could help me."

Nothing that happened in that city escaped María's ears. "¡No me digas que fue en tu casa! I've heard my clients talk about it. Many of them heard a noise last night, like glass breaking, they said. But no one saw anything. They say that it was quick, but you know how they are here, always gossiping. So I didn't pay much attention."

Arzu said with a paused tone, "Quick, huh. And nobody saw it. Tough luck, I guess. Anyways, muchas gracias señora María." Arzu thought that if she didn't get there soon, the plaza would be full of vendors occupying every selling spot, or at least, all the good ones.

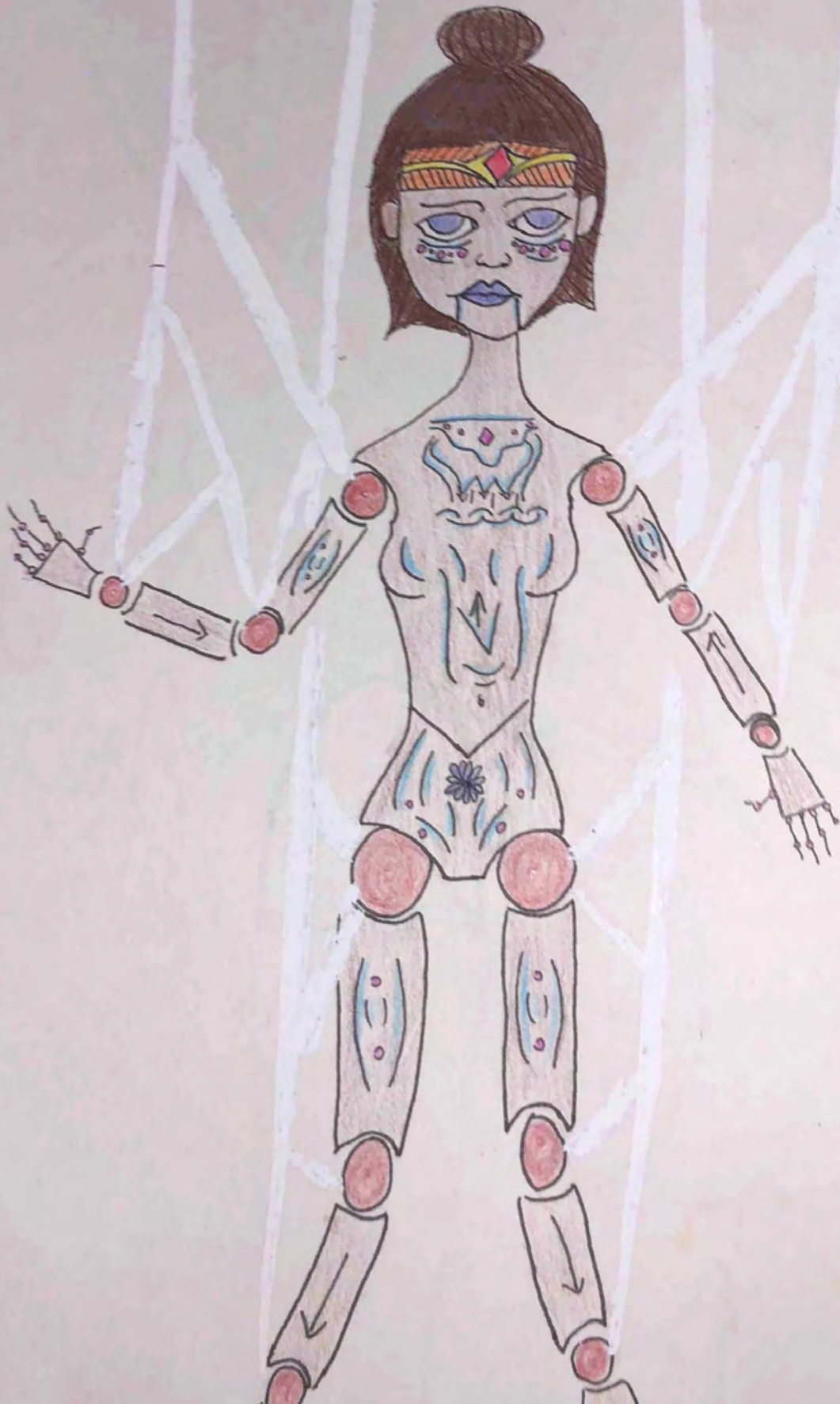
"Pero no te vayas, permíteme un cafecito."

Arzu tried to say no, but the charming, gentle woman was stubborn as well. She grabbed Arzu by the waist, making a sort of incomplete ring between them. As she sat Arzu down on a wooden stool, she ordered one of her employees two espressos and a cachapa.

"Tell me, mi Niña, how's everything con el señor Singh? It is a shame what happened to him. I heard he's been sober, lately. Is that right?"

"Two years," a feeling clicked in Arzu's heart.

"That is great. I tell you, I saw that man after your mom passed away, just retired. I didn't think he'd make it much longer. Men die, you see, soon after their wives. They need us more than they think. But your old man is a survivor. I'm happy for him. They had their fights, you know, but he was a good husband, decent, at least, or better than most. For what you see around here, your mom was very lucky. It's a shame she



died so young. And what about you, mi niña, ¿cómo te va a ti?"

"No tan mal, señora María. I started trading words, not precisely profitable, but I am very good and it gets me going." That made Arzu remember she had somewhere to be, and she asked María to excuse her.

María grabbed her hand and said, "Espera, un minuto. Didn't you say you trade words? I think I owe you something, then. Here, take, this bread is for stopping by. Next time, you stay longer, alright, and we talk more."

Arzu appreciated the gesture. That uncut loaf would make up for the words she could not sell the day of the robbery. "Muchas gracias, María," and she left to the plaza.

By noon, Arzu had sold five words; two of them were foreign, and they paid her with money. With those bills and the breadstick, she had enough for two or three days of food, soap, and milk. She decided to go check on Mr. Singh. She couldn't stop biting her nails. Arzu felt light headed as if she had awoken very abruptly. Her eyebrows twitched and her feet gained speed. She walked fast. She had a strong, strange presentiment.

Arzu darted home. The sun was up and bright and blistering. She carried her bread under her arm as she ran. She dropped it when she entered the house. The door was left ajar, again. Mr. Singh lay asleep in his fixed rocking chair. A bottle of rum moved faintly on his thighs. Judging by his dissipated look and solid smell of alcohol, he'd been drinking. Mr. Singh's problem had escaped Arzu's mind for a long time. She had been deep in her own grief. How could she walk through hell, not noticing her whole world burning? A dry breeze and glaring rays penetrated the house through the window hole connecting the living room, patio, and outside world.

Arzu paced over where her drunken father slept. Mr. Singh remained crooked in his chair. His sight made her cringe. The sun shined in his bald forehead. She went outside and

took the ashtray from the patio's table. Then she walked back inside. She washed the dirt and ashes away; sporadic tears ran down her face. Arzu grabbed the rum bottle from Mr. Singh's thighs, put it on the kitchen table, and placed half of her money under it. She continued to her room, took an old quilt from under her bed, and covered her father with it. Arzu thought she could go back to the plaza; she could stop at the bakery; she could leave that place. She walked away with the ashtray, her money, and her bread.



Puzzle, Anto Chavez

MY DADDY'S ISSUES

Maria Paula Guerra-Chavez

"So you want to be like Yuri Gagarin?" said my dad as he spread the soft butter on that summer morning. I wanted to be an astronaut. He said that they ate avocados and flew all over space. I developed a really deep love for avocados and he, well, he flew around space with Añejo Blanco bottles of rum.

OUT OF HER MIND

Laura Rodriguez

Lose control, control freak.
Desperation kisses her skin
While water washes the remaining fear.
Oblivious outsiders cannot hear the voices
But they keep tormenting her fading forces.
Condemnatory minds
If she dares to share what is inside.
Theatrical interpretation of what they want
Is what she does behind their backs.
Rehearse
Rehearse
Hide and hide
If no one knows, then no one bites.

She keeps awaiting the final round
Foreigners judge
And the mind crumbles down.

In the darkness of the old battle
No longer fears can be dismantled
And after thousands of rising suns
she discovered her major foes
Which are none other than her own thoughts.

DIARY OF A TRANSFER STUDENT

Luis E. Prieto

day one

while I played in the snow,
the day wasn't bright or dark,
I found the orange nose
of one forgotten iceman

day three

the sunrise smells like spring,
the sunrays paint doodles in the floor,
I think about that sparkling ring
I bought and never showed

day fifteen

nothing here should remind me of home,
not the empty drawers or the coffee pot,
not the dry laughter when my lighter burns;
home is a memory I lost a long time ago.

day twenty

I met a girl in the subway
she sat gently reading The Aleph
I sensed the scent of carnations in her,
as if had tasted arsenic, I walked away

day twenty-one

her memory hurts as those candies



NOSTALGIA, Cesar Sarmiento

I have cut my tongue with very often
I can no longer tell if the story I remember
is real; could it be real only to me?

day thirty

she's like this state's exquisite nature
bright and beautiful on the shallow eye
but turns cold and bites once I touch
the pale, the dead, the lonesome

home
as I remember it

she always felt like home;
I always lived inside the jaw of a wolf



ARCHITECTURE OF AGGRESSION

Edward Malone

throttle, rage, thrash
heat comes in a flash
palms sweaty
your boiling point is about ready
grinding teeth
hotter than the molten core beneath
overlooked once again
betrayed by a close friend
your shitty boss is at it again
no more patience to pretend
someone has gorged on your insecurities
no more care for fatalities
that's the last slice of bullshit you'll be fed
there will be consequences
when disrespected
shyness, silence, your mouth shut
not this time, feel it in your gut
shove
push
scream
let them feel your wrath
claw
bite
curse
show them what hell not hath
until it all goes numb
it's in you.

MEMORIAS REFLEJADAS

Alexandra Hernandez

Luego de entrar corriendo a la habitación, aún sentía la sangre goteando de mi labio inferior. De repente, algo llamó mi atención: un par de ojos grandes e inocentes me observaban fijamente. Podía percibir una lágrima delicada caer por sus mejillas. En la oscuridad de aquel cuarto, el brillo de su mirada era como el de las estrellas alumbrando el cielo nocturno. Justo en ese momento entendí.

Entendí la razón por la cual siempre corría a su habitación con su preciado oso rojo de felpa entre los brazos, ocultando su rostro con sus pequeñas manos, intentando inútilmente esconder su dolor. Entendí porque todos los días se encerraba en la oscuridad de las mismas cuatro paredes. Entendí como la vida, cruel e injusta, se le pasaba a esta alma pura. Ella no se daba cuenta de lo que estaba ocurriendo.

Recuerdo verla pestañear varios segundos después de hacerle un gesto. Pensé que no lo notaría por la penumbra en que nos encontrábamos. En su rostro se tornó una sonrisa, pequeña y forzada. Yo respondí de manera similar. Posó su mirada en mí por un instante. Recuerdo claramente lo que me dijo. "Te confieso que hay muchas cosas que no comprendo ¿Por qué mi padre llega a altas horas de la noche? Huele extraño y lastima a mi madre." Hizo una pequeña pausa, respiró profundo y tuve la impresión de que aguantaba el llanto. Pero luego continuó con más firmeza.

"Quisiera hacer algo para que nadie sufra, pero quiero a mamá y quiero a papá. Quiero lo que solíamos ser". Subí y bajé la cabeza en señal de comprensión. Busqué las palabras adecuadas antes de emitir cualquier sonido. Proseguí "No llores más, respira y comparte tus problemas. Busca ayuda si es necesario, no permitas que termine en otra triste historia."

Le guiñé un ojo y ella sonrió. Después de eso recordé que anteriormente, en algún momento de mi pasado, alguien me había dicho aquello que le comenté a la niña.

Me aparté de enfrente del espejo, sequé mis lágrimas y limpié mis heridas. Por última vez observé al hombre posado en nuestra cama y a mi valioso tesoro rojo de la niñez desgastado por el pasar de los años y me despedí de ese desagradable olor que impregnaba el cuarto y salí de mi habitación sin mirar hacia atrás.

A LOST BEACH, A'shunti Zanders



LIABILITY

Anto Chavez

"Los verás pronto, mi niña" said her sweet voice right before I jumped on the bus. I turned around and saw her one last time before I walked to my seat. I grew up with abuela telling me stories of two strangers who happened to be my parents. I remember sharing a hammock with her and resting my head on her shoulder, making myself comfortable and listening to her memories; every detail seemed so distant that my six-year-old-self could only picture fictional characters. Abuela described Pablo as a tall brown man, who always held Ana's hand when they visited the tiendas looking for pineapple and corn nuts. I was named after Ana, who had me at sixteen. Abuela says it was a tradition in Xela to pass on names in the family, but I often wonder if Ana was just too young and scared and did not have the time to think of another name for me.

In a matter of seconds, every seat on the bus was occupied. People from all over Guatemala surrounded me. Next to me I found a family, two kids young enough to be my siblings holding a half-naked newborn baby. Coming across them made me question Ana and Pablo's decision back in 2001. After a while, they realized I had been observing them; both smiled at me and the girl handed me a bottle of water. "No, gracias," I kindly declined. Abuela mentioned not to trust anyone. Pablo had also been preparing me for this moment in every phone call we've had for the past fifteen years. He often said I needed to be cautious when the time came and made me promise I would not talk to any men throughout the journey.

I snapped out of my thoughts and turned to the window. Every building was grey in Quetzaltenango. Some said it

was depressing, but I always enjoyed it. When I was a little girl, abuela used to tell me that Santa María and Santiaguito volcanos married each other and Quetzaltenango was born from their love. The city was built from the ashes of these two, which explained the darkness of its streets, or at least it did for an imaginative girl like me. It sure gave me a lot of trouble in school though; teachers thought I was crazy.

As my gaze followed every detail of the city, I heard someone yelling out instructions. My understanding of the information was intercepted by the background noise on the bus, but the shouting became louder and felt closer. Abuela told me to follow orders, yet my eyes pierced the mountains. I figured I could ask another passenger afterwards, just like I did during my school field trips. Nobody listens to the tour guide anyway. Unsure I was ever coming back to Xela, I decided to disconnect from the voice on the bus and focused my attention on the outside scenery. Snapping fingers quickly blocked my vision and I nearly jumped out of my skin. "You better listen to me, güera" the voice I ignored before turned into a face, a scary one. Covered in tattoos from head to toe and holding a gun bigger than my face, the man looked nothing like any tour guide I had ever encountered.

Lobo, as he demanded to be called, continued to explain the journey we were about to face. He did not sound Guatemalan; his accent was different and the words he used were not part of my vocabulary. The baby next to me cried from time to time, and Lobo twitched with every sob. By the end of his speech on how to behave during the following days, he mentioned his town was the next stop. Assuming Ana's memory spoke the truth, I supposed he came from Mexico. She mentioned the first risk was crossing the border with Tapachula, one of the most dangerous cities in the state of Chiapas.

We spent around four hours on the road until we got to the border. Once we reached our destination, Lobo rushed us

down the bus like sheep. Crossing the border was the easiest part. On the Guatemalan side, immigration officers were not enforcers, and it was almost impossible to find agents along that Mexican border. But some of the designated routes to enter Mexico are also used by drug smugglers. Drug cartels are eager to find immigrants about to embark on the quest for the American dream. Manipulation runs their trafficking cycles; while the naïve are willing to transport in exchange of empty promises, other travelers are just threatened to do so. To my advantage, Lobo understood the process very well, and I had always been good memorizing directions.

"Jas?" a woman murmured behind me. I could recognize

No NOS MOVERÁN, Anto Chavez



k'iche' from a thousand miles away; somebody in the group spoke my native language. Abuela never let me forget my roots; she made sure I mastered her mother tongue. For a split second, I felt home. I turned around in one movement, almost in search of a familiar face. The young woman who had offered me a bottle of water earlier looked disoriented. It was her voice, she said it! I thought, and then I figured she might not be fluent in Spanish. Even though she directed the question to her boyfriend, I went to the back of the line to make sure they understood. I convinced myself compassion drove my action, but the selfish desire to feel closer to abuela seemed a much more accurate motive.

"I'll take you up on that water offer" I broke the silence, smiling at the girl. "My name is Ana, by the way."

Without hesitation, she nodded, as if I had given her an order. She had a massive sack on her back, another heavy bag on her left shoulder, and the baby on her right arm. Knowing she needed a free hand to search for the water in her bag, she extended the baby resting on her right arm to me. I didn't realize what she was trying to do until it was too late to back out; I was already holding the baby in my arms. The baby only wore a diaper and a small yellow blanket that read "Isabel." The tiny human gave such an angelic impression when she slept. Her warmth and the smell of lavender calmed me.

"I'm glad you changed your mind Ana, you'll need it" she told me in broken Spanish as she grabbed the bottle inside her bag. She sounded relieved. We switched the baby and the bottle of water. Isabel opened her eyes and blinked a couple times when I placed her in her mother's arm. "Perdón" I quickly apologized, feeling guilty for interrupting her baby's sleep. The mother ignored my comment as she caressed Isabel's forehead back and forth until the soft strokes put her back to sleep. She then looked up and smiled at me; her serenity implied my apology wasn't needed.

Mesmerized as I witnessed the mother-daughter bond I never had, I almost forgot why I approached her in the first place and abruptly changed the subject. Pointing at the suspicious men in every corner of our walk, I explained they all worked for drug cartels and essentially repeated Lobo's earlier speech.

"Since you were at the back of the line, I figured you couldn't hear him, so I wanted to make sure you understand we can't trust them" I lied, because I remembered how much I hated when others underestimated my Spanish.

"Gracias. Desde el bus te vi cara de sheka, eh?" She left out a small laugh, and proceeded to introduce herself and her family "Soy Flor. Viajo con Isabel y Miguel. ¿Tú?"

"Pues, yo viajo sola" I replied with a sigh.

"Not anymore" Flor assured me.

From that moment on, I remained close to Flor and her family. I helped them with Isabel and taught them Spanish. Miguel and Flor protected me as one of their own. My relationship with them grew with every step we got closer to Texas, every abandoned house we crashed, every bus we took, every river we crossed. We literally went through an entire country together. And I enjoyed their company, but I could not stop myself from making painful comparisons.

One of our last nights together I dared ask "Did you ever doubt it? Bringing Isabel, I mean."

"Never. Family stays together" Miguel confessed in a heartbeat.

Although part of me broke with his answer, the other part felt pure happiness. I admired both Flor and Miguel for taking such a risk to keep their daughter close to them. Isabel deserved the world, and they were willing to do anything for her. I couldn't wait until she grew up into a successful young woman and showed them it was all worth it. The pain, the tears, the blisters, the sweat—all of it. The so-called American



DYNAMITE, Anto Chavez

dream, you know.

We finally passed Ciudad Juárez, crossed the desert, and got to the critical part of the journey. Every traveler was exhausted from the fear of animals and temperatures that could have killed us already. I had never seen Lobo so nervous. His forehead sweating, fingers shaking, and eyes about to pop. He demanded silence as we all walked through the last part of the path to El Paso, Texas. The only lights we saw in the dark were those of border patrols, which checked the area every ten or fifteen minutes.

We hadn't drunk water in over a day, and Flor worried



about Isabel. She tried to keep her calm, but the baby shivered and felt as warm as fire. Suddenly, Isabel started crying. Uncontrollably. Lobo turned and gave Miguel some type of signal. He looked furious. Everybody did. For some, it was the third time they tried crossing to the United States, and Isabel represented a risk. It all played out in less than a minute, but lasted years in my head. Lobo went to the back, gave Miguel a nod, and grabbed Isabel by the neck. Miguel had tears in his eyes, but held Flor down as if he had always known this was a possibility. He covered Flor's eyes and mouth as Lobo cracked the baby's neck with a twist. People seemed relieved because the crying stopped. No one looked back. They only looked forward.

BLUE PADDED WALLS

Ana Chao

Blue padded walls
Murmurs bounce off each
Lights of gold and white
Dance with the dust
As my breath provides their tempo

Murmurs turn to screams
As I peel my skin
Shoved down

silence

twitch

Electricity racks my brain
Maybe when it is mush
The twitching will stop

Blank stare
Wilted hair
Peeling scabs
Straightjacket cradle

twitch

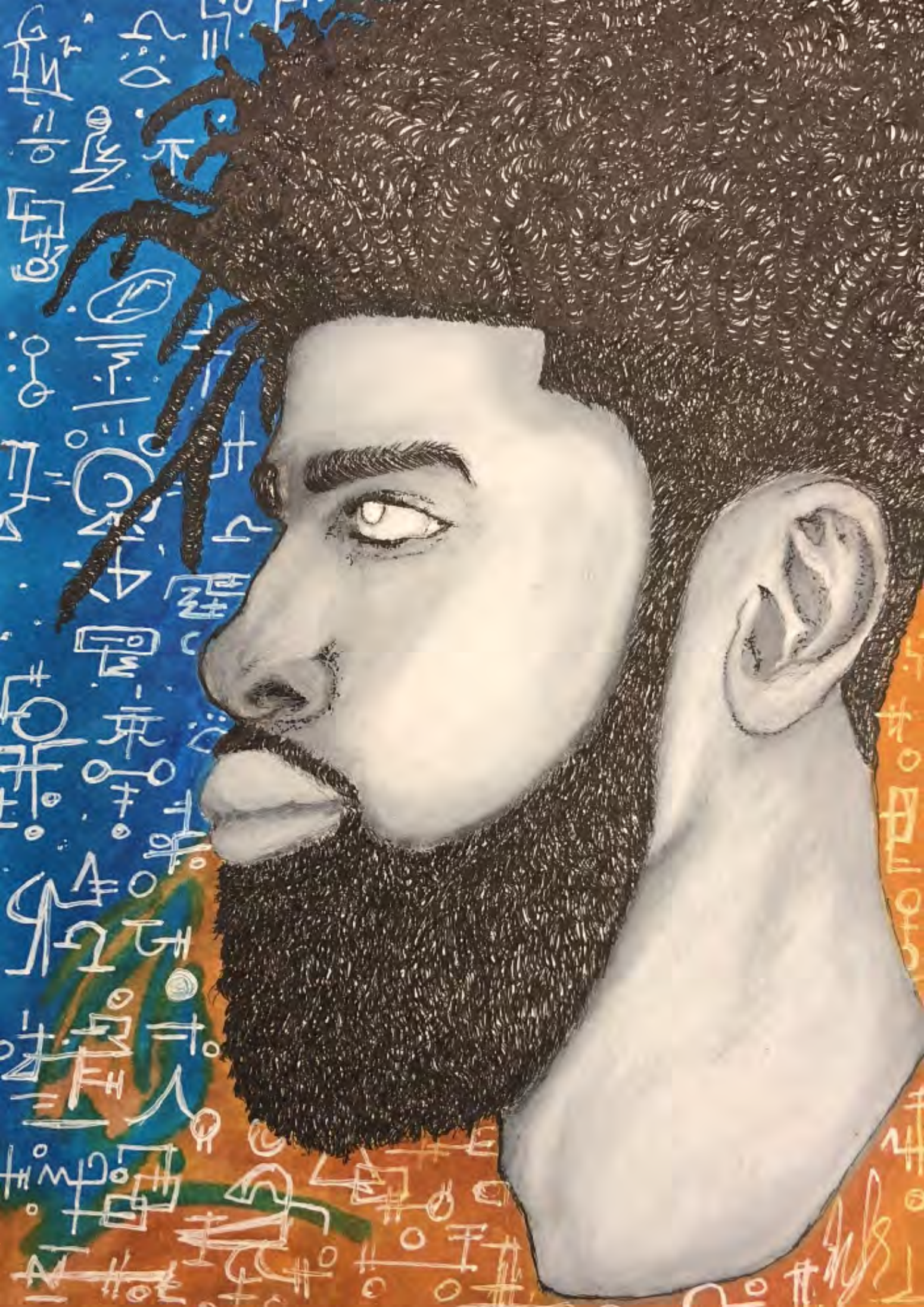
Another pill
Taking a swill
From the doctor's pipe

twitch

If only to keep the rest of him
Away from me

Wiggle
Free from the pale-yellow bands
Itch

twitch

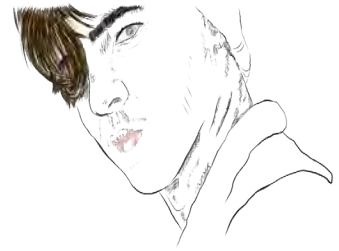


URBANITIES



Anto Chavez
Co-Editor-in-Chief

Luis E. Prieto
Co-Editor-in-Chief



Cesar Sarmiento
Layout Designer
Web Designer

A'shunti Zanders
Illustrator





Pedro Mario Alfonso
Editor



Ana Chao
Editor



Alexandra Hernandez
Editor



Sammie Zenoz
Editor



Lily Arce
Staff Member



Luka Bilbao
Logo Designer
Staff Member



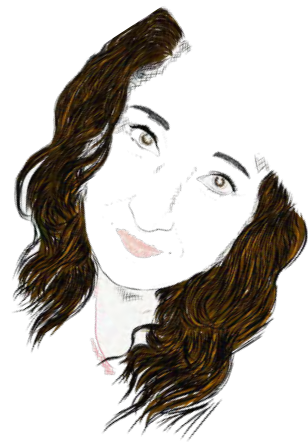
Mattias Carattini
Staff Member



Maria Paula Guerra-Chavez
Staff Member



Elizabeth Jimenez
Staff Member



Judith Matamoros
Staff Member



Omar Figueras
Faculty Advisor



Emily Sendin
Faculty Advisor

Email us at:
urbana.iac@gmail.com

Find us online at:
urbanalit.com

Follow us at:



THANK YOU

Urbana Vol. XI wants to thank everyone who contributed in this eleventh edition. Our advisors, Emily Sendin and Omar Figueras, were the pole holding our canopy. They are the most experienced *Urbanities*, and they taught us what it means to be one. Editors and staff members are the real protagonists of this magazine. Their constant efforts to thrive and excel as writers and visual artists were crucial to our success.

Moreover, we thank the people behind the scenes, those who make everything happen from the shadows such as Dr. Malou C. Harrison, Loretta Ovueraye, Robert Troy, Glenda Phipps, Omi Ramirez, and everyone in our Media Services and Network Services department. Thank you for allowing us to create. You're invaluable to our team. Lastly, we want to thank the reader. The time you invest reading this magazine is our greatest reward.

Peace,
Urbana Vol. XI

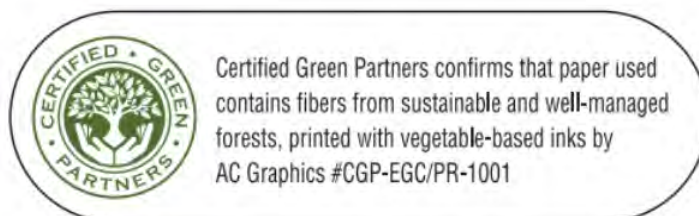
Urbana Literary & Arts was founded in 2008 and its purpose throughout the years has been to promote artistic and creative work within our student body of over 15,000. Since its inception, our magazine takes pride in its sole mission of serving as a medium of expression for students. *Urbana Literary & Arts Vol. 11* was published in 2018.

The views expressed within these pages are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of our institution. Copyright of the work showcased in this volume remains with the individual authors and artists.

Urbana Literary & Arts is published once a year by students currently enrolled in credit courses at Miami Dade College, InterAmerican Campus at 627 SW 27th Ave, Miami, FL 33135. For this year's volume, the student population nominated several themes and staff members chose one by voting. Submissions were received electronically at urbana.iac@gmail.com. They were logged for control purposes and stripped of authors' names and information before being distributed to staff for review, selection, and editing.

This volume was created using a MacBook Pro with Adobe InDesign CC 2018 software. The fonts used throughout the magazine are Europa (regular, bold, and italics). Moreover, no contributor and/or staff member of *Urbana Literary & Arts* received any monetary reward while engaging in this extracurricular activity.

We can be reached at (305) 237-6070, urbana.iac@gmail.com, or visit our website at urbanalit.com.





InterAmerican Campus

**Miami Dade College
District Board of Trustees**

Bernie Navarro, Chair

Marili Cancio, Vice Chair

Daniel Díaz Leyva

Jose K. Fuentes

Benjamín León III

Dr. Rolando Montoya

Juan C. Zapata

Eduardo J. Padrón, President, Miami Dade College

Dr. Malou C. Harrison, Campus President, InterAmerican Campus

Miami Dade College is an equal access/equal opportunity institution and does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, marital status, age, religion, national origin, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation or genetic information. Contact the Office of Director, Equal Opportunity Programs/ADA Coordinator, at (305) 237-2577 for assistance.



**Miami Dade
College**

InterAmerican Campus