



gods feel like  
their  
often  
ched?  
myth  
her  
know  
is  
? this  
a false  
creative  
a dream?  
i wonder if  
taining at a funk  
you. do all of the go  
like this? does there  
feel cracked? do the myths of  
feel like a falsehood do they feel like  
? the humans have left one offering  
there is a bouquet of  
other, they cry to  
savior, stone as  
they hold divinity. Repeat  
as if they are people  
humans know i am  
ous. do they know that  
antiface? this folklore  
humans creative

aphros

issue 62



# *aphros*

*issue 62*

Pace University's Literary Magazine

Aphros (af·rōs), a Greek Centurian sea-god (Ikthyokentauroi), believed to be a wise teacher

## EDITORS

Kate Clay  
Zoë Adams  
Laura Gooch

## EDITORIAL STAFF

Felicity Flores

## FACULTY ADVISOR

Charles North

## COVER ART

“Girl with Halo”  
Mckeilla Malabunga

## SPECIAL THANKS

Cody Dennis  
Tess Adams

## MISSION STATEMENT

Aphros is Pace University’s undergraduate literary magazine in New York. We provide an opportunity for Pace writers and visual artists to see their work published and to develop their craft through readings and group workshops. We publish a yearly magazine of students’ creative work.

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**1 (800) 872-4339**

*Cailyn Mickelsen*

Hello. You've reached the all-encompassing help line  
to report the end of the world.

Your call is very important to us.

We'll be with you shortly.

In the meantime—

Press 1 for natural disasters—

fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, drowning and  
freezing and burning up.

Anonymous malpractice breaking off the tip of Florida  
and sending California underwater.

You know, the kind of stuff you think:

“Couldn't ever happen here.”

Press 2 for extraterrestrial invasion—

aliens, UFOs, abduction, you know the type.

For thinking your neighbor looks just a little different today,  
and wondering if he really is from Nebraska, like he told you at the  
block party.

He's always just been a little odd.

Press 3 for international conflict—

for wars and rumors of wars,

(I heard Margaret tell Mary yesterday that we sent the boys back in—)

for bombs and planes and good old-fashioned  
hand-to-hand combat.

For blood on your brow and your brother  
broken alongside hope in the dirt.

Press 4 for pandemics and disease—

coughs, sneezing, that twinge in your gut,  
some lump you really should've had  
the doctor check out months ago, dear,  
because I'm getting rather worried about it all.

Press 5 for silence—

the internet's down again, Dad.

“Just unplug the router and plug it back in again!”

The phones have stopped working, the electricity's gone out,  
and there's nothing left here except you and

your blinking cursor on that document—

your email won't go through.

(You're sure people are suffering much worse, elsewhere.

Respirators down, trains veering off course.

But this is what's sticking in your mind:

You were supposed to email your brother today.)

Is this how everyone lived, before?

And is this how everyone dies, now? Alone?

Press 6 for impossibility—

for the Earth being swallowed up by the sun,  
for an asteroid veering off its predestined course,



for an end to oxygen and water and sunlight  
and beauty and that rose bush steadily growing in your mother's front yard.  
She'd just last week gotten it to bloom.  
For a simple stop to that something that's been brewing just beneath your skin  
and lurking beneath the surface of your blue backyard pool.

Press 7 for simplicity.  
An end in 2 words instead of two thousand.  
Faith's broken body lying next to your brother's.

Your call is very important to us.  
We'll be with you shortly.

## **Bones Regenerate Every Ten Years**

*Cailyn Mickelsen*

“Bones regenerate every ten years.”

This is a fact that sticks with me after  
honors anatomy lecture on a Wednesday.

Bones regenerate every ten years.

In three more years, my femur will  
no longer display the hard-won evidence  
of my fifth-grade fracture.

In nine more years, the same for my  
fifth metatarsal:

the bone resurrects, the metal cannot.

Skin regenerates every twenty-seven days.

Once a month, give or take.

The dry-soft skin of my palms doesn't remember  
pressing into your wrist—

pulling you up and out from the toppled over shopping cart  
in that old, ever-empty parking lot

nestled between the 5 Freeway and the Barnes and Noble.

We haunted that lot like a pair of old ghosts,  
bones rattling, skin and organs and muscle all  
long since rotted away.

Oh, but darling, something deep deep within me  
cannot forget you;

door to my rib cage, bone of my bones.

I pulled you from my own rib, maybe,  
sculpted you out of thrice dead skin cells

and scabbed over knees, bitten nearly to death  
by cracked asphalt.

Soon that skin, too, will be born (again) new.



## Orpheus in Middle Age

*Cailyn Mickelsen*

I've walked for so long and grown so weary.  
(My joints aren't quite what they used to be, at twenty-five, at fourteen, last week)  
Theoretically, you're behind me,  
just like how we used to walk up our high school stairs  
because I was scared of falling down backwards  
and knocking down freshmen like bowling pins.  
My joints were still bad, back then, a couple of bones cracked, a couple of tendons torn.  
And I was always worried.  
Theoretically, I've only got a few more steps to go until the end.  
Until we can emerge back into the sunlight  
and the reflected retrospective beauty of yesterday's trivial argument.  
(Something so simple—I think I forgot to wait for you to come home  
before going to bed.  
I think I left a couple unwashed mugs in the sink.  
I think I forgot to text you good morning.)  
Theoretically, all is forgiven and tomorrow will be spent  
holding your body to mine, wondering at new myths and old beginnings.

I wonder if  
my footsteps, resonating against the tight stone walls, sound somewhat  
lonely without their mirror, their counterpoint,  
your two small feet in those new expensive boots.  
(Pretty sure we had an argument about those too.  
They ate up a whole paycheck, cost me a couple hours overtime,  
but God, if you didn't look divine in them,  
like someone had scooped up the infinite evidence of the holy  
—the trees and the rivers, the geese flying home—  
and funneled it into those two tall black boots.)

Maybe we've grown a little distant, these past few months.  
Grown hesitant to touch and to give;  
to dream and hope and wish and all those other  
impossible verbs we clung to in our youth.

I'm basically made of memories at this point, darling:  
passing dumb notes on pink sticky notes in history class,  
late night Dairy Queen runs in between your night shifts at Burger King,  
working side by side in our cramped home office.  
The monotonous details escape me now, but the shape of you is burned into my prefrontal cortex as you were, as  
you are.

## ARIZONA

*Nina Hook*

When the sun hits its peak

I'll be on my way

to Yuma.

Where the sand blows in your seafoam green eyes,

squinting at the fiery ball of fire.

Where you dry up like a date before he adds the ice cream.

Prune-y you are!

I'll walk to Yuma

through the sand dunes,

changing formation when the air decides to go for a jog.

Kind of just like you.

I'll walk to Yuma

where the silly jump (with your hands above your head) into the canal bank

fills your soul up....

Hydration, baby!

I'll walk to Yuma

to lick your lips lined with red hot salsa

from my grandmother's checkered kitchen.

I'll walk to Yuma

and get burned by the sun...

grinning like a devil as I turn to d u s t.



**La Vie**  
*Zoe Schuman*

A tarot card reader in the 2nd arrondissement once told me I was going to die alone, surrounded by beautiful women.

The tell tale charade of a bashful casting of the eye elsewhere when yours make contact, why don't we forget me within each other-

I've lost weight but my collarbones still hold their usual shape.

She covers her breasts with both of my hands, holds back her hair with a tortoise shell clip and strokes the sweat from her face, we whisper about the men and other things.

One slept with me in order to "fulfill a cliché."

One sucked upon my earlobe on the metro back from the Marseilles station the night after France won the World Cup. It is patriotic to hurt one another & I am through with patriotism.

From now on, only time is to be shattered by the promises breaking all over it through Paris.

I was promised a girl and a garden.

I waited. I was patient. I became something else. You should've seen me. I was so beautiful.

## **Indica**

*Zoe Schuman*

The sharp parts are still teething on my fingers.

I bleed. Memory, stay close to me...

Memory, go sprawl on somebody's else's lawn, trace the rosemary bushes for spirits thrumming blue stars, watch the baby's- breath foam over blades of grass, and I'll be on the street corner cooing: come on home, dear.

## **Grief**

*Zoe Schuman*

Maman dancing by the campfire at the lake

Maman eating the frozen mangoes

Maman motionless on the bathroom tiles

Purple as a Sabbath wine.



## **Marigold**

*Zoe Schuman*

Offering a cigarette with a match already lit, you meet a man who looks just like you.

Standing five foot eleven inches, decorated with rounded tortoiseshell rims.

A wolf in a ball gown guards the velvet roped door, swaying to no song-

My backless dress, the drugged wine with the pink pills, plastic champagne flutes, forged bills drenching the bar stools, the harps dusty string crescendo, the marigolds.

How foolish he must feel in his tuxedo. I must submit my business to pleasure with his combed hair and polished shoes waxing the viscous hardwood room.

I should tell you there's a city where it always rains. I wish to live there.

He approaches, looping his arms around you, tucking his muzzle into your neck.

"Your eyes feel like honey," he says.

Each time you breathe a bamboo tree in Brooklyn grows, the room gets bigger, your hands wrapped around the bark, grasping at the size of a reason effervescent enough for you to stay.

"Will you promise to visit?" You answer.

The room fills with silence. He moves towards you.

Out of his body, all of the blueberries are growing.

## Untitled Memory

*Mckeilla Malabunga*

or perhaps if I lead you through the memories myself.  
sit atop the newly renovated washing machine,  
where he ran his fingers along my sides  
raising my pinkie to promise it'd remain a secret.  
if i had you hold my pajamas in your hands,  
a hand-me-down decorated with stars,  
bright pink and soft as I lead you to the second.

it's here that your bony knees will hit the cold tile,  
confusion flooding through your senses  
watch as he towers over you.  
you can't quite make out his face, but no matter,  
you're too afraid to look. afraid that doing so  
will make it that much worse.

it's the same face you see eating with your grandma  
at the breakfast table. staining your memory,  
keeping you close as your vision begins to blur.  
it's here that he tries to lead you to the bathroom,  
and again, his hands are running across your legs  
up your thighs as he places your hand on his.  
it's only fair, isn't it?

## for the caged quetzal

*Felicity Flores*

Guatemala, do you recognize me?  
the little girl trying to plant a mango seed on a fire escape  
a continent away  
calling out to you

Britannica tells me  
Guatemala is bounded to the north and west by Mexico, to the northeast  
by Belize and (along a short coastline)  
by the Gulf of Honduras, to the east by Honduras,  
to the southeast by El Salvador, and to the south by the Pacific Ocean.

i used to sit on my bedroom floor clutching a map  
believing that Guatemala was as far as my index finger  
the geography was useless

i wanted to know where my great grandmother's candy shop was,  
what the chocobananos tasted like,  
which road led to my mamita's pharmacy,  
see the basilica with the body of christ

i stopped singing when i stopped going to the church  
god and I don't see each other much  
i wonder if Guatemala recognizes foreigners  
i wonder if God remembers the spirals of my curls

I want to leave new york so I can stop looking over my shoulder  
new york whether it's fantasy or fever dream, will never bring peace.

at seventeen i wanted a muse,  
happiness is such a monotonous subject.  
cigarettes in dimly lit bathrooms, ritz crackers for supper,  
and loving people who rarely return calls will not sustain you.  
this tortured artist trope living off praise and ice water never served me.

for as long as I can remember I have been drawing a home with a red roof.  
I see Guatemala in the Rhode Island roof  
and the mango tree in the backyard that never bears fruit.  
It's not beloved by Quetzals and surrounded by sand,  
but a home with love and tamalitos de elote is achingly familiar.

## **I'd Rather Be Angry Than Not**

*Allison Bloom*

To  
feel  
anger  
is better  
than to feel  
nothing at all  
at least I think  
getting mad is so  
easy you can just stub  
your toe or bite your tongue  
or spill your coffee or get cut off  
on the highway or call your mom or  
watch the news of course I'd prefer to  
be happy but that's a lot more work these  
days you would have to fall in love or  
pet a dog or go viral on tik tok or  
take stimulants or turn off the  
news and go to sleep but  
then you go back to  
feeling numb and  
at least if you're  
mad you  
haven't  
given  
up

I was not born overweight, but when I look in the mirror all I can think is, “God, how did I get so fat?” It’s a simple question with no simple answer. There are too many factors to consider that make it impossible to have one definitive answer. Call it genetics, call it environment, call it whatever you want, but I can’t be sure what’s right, what’s true. All I know is that everytime I bother to look in the mirror, which is more often than I care to admit, I repeat over and over again, “Dear God, how did I get so damn fat?”

For somebody who hates their body, I spend too much time staring at it, picking it apart like a piece of art needing to be critiqued. In the mirror, in the front facing camera on my phone, in the window on the train, I stare at blurred images of a girl I don’t even recognize. But they’re all me no matter how disconnected from them I feel. They’re all me no matter how much I don’t want them to be. They’re all me no matter how much I hate them. I hate them. I hate me.

---

As I grew and moved through my life, my awareness of the size of my body only grew. Middle school was a nightmare for too many reasons and my weight only added to that nightmare. I could never sit in class or walk down the halls or eat in the cafeteria without feeling like everybody was watching me. Me: the girl that was more fat than she was human. Me: the girl who couldn’t keep up in gym class. Me: the girl whose face would get beet red just going up the stairs. Me: the girl whose body jiggled and moved, bounced and shook for no reason. Me. I couldn’t—no, I wouldn’t wear tight clothes because they accentuated my rounded stomach, highlighted the back fat that got pushed out by my ill fitting bras, showed off the stretch marks on my arms and thighs and chest.

My chest always seemed to be the topic of conversation. What else did middle school boys have to talk about besides video games and breast size? Of all of the twelve, thirteen, and fourteen year old girls in my middle school, it was obvious and apparently well known that I had some of the largest breasts in the grade or possibly, probably in the entire school. This brought me more attention than I ever wanted. I was nothing more than a pair of breasts to be gawked at. That was all I was to so many people. In eighth grade, I was friendly with a group of boys in my history class who had a particular fondness for my breasts. On this particular day, the boys were trying to guess my cup size as if they could possibly know the difference between a B and a C cup, of which I was neither.

“You’ve got to be at least a B cup,” one boy asserted. He was completely sure of his answer. I smiled, my cheeks flaming at the comment, and shook my head. The attention wasn’t new, but it felt almost flattering to be talked about in such a sexual manner. I was like a rare bird at the zoo that everybody wanted to get a peek at. I felt special, unique, never before seen. At thirteen, this had never happened to me before. At least, it had never happened right in front of my face though I was sure it had happened too many times behind my back.

“They’re bigger than that, dude! Do you know anything about boob size?”

“Oh, come on. They must be like a C. Right? Tell me I’m right, Laura.” Another shake of my head. If they just kept going through the entire alphabet they would eventually get to the right answer.

“Bigger?!” Their eyes were wide, unbelieving.

“Bigger,” I replied.

“What are they?”

“You have to tell us!”

“C’mon, tell us!”

“Fine, fine! They’re a [insert absurdly large breast size here].” From what I can remember, they were somewhere in the D range. This shocked the boys, who only knew tiny perky perfect porno boobs. Every boy was shocked except for one.

“So?” this one said. “Everybody knows that big boobs don’t count when you’re fat.”

My bubble burst. Suddenly the attention, no matter how demeaning it was, wasn’t something I wanted. I watched as all the boys nodded, agreeing that my large boobs “didn’t count” because I was fat. I didn’t know what to say. I didn’t even know what that meant. All I knew was that I wanted to make myself as small as humanly possible and just disappear forever.

I shrugged my shoulders and nodded for a third time, forcing myself to swallow the lump that had suddenly appeared in my throat. I didn’t cry. I wouldn’t cry because that meant more unneeded attention being brought to the fat girl with the fat girl boobs that didn’t count. I was just a piece of meat to them. I was not a human with feelings and insecurities. I was the set of tits that didn’t count. They didn’t count even though they were



still there, they were still dreamt about, they were still masturbated to. But they didn't count. Because fat people didn't count.

---

My freshman year of high school wasn't much easier than middle school. Going into it, I had hoped that in the masses of students, I could just vanish. I wanted to get lost, to be completely forgotten about. People couldn't insult me if they didn't remember I existed.

That year I took a course called Child Growth and Development. For someone who wanted to not only be a pediatric surgeon, but also wanted to have a million and one kids of my own, the class seemed like a smart one to take. My teacher was a conventionally pretty petite blonde woman in her forties or fifties who had too many opinions she didn't keep to herself. She rarely, if ever, had a filter and usually it didn't bother me. Most of the things she said were comedic in nature, slip ups of an older woman trying to sound hip to a bunch of 15, 16, 17, 18 year olds. But not everything she said was accidental or funny or acceptable. Not everything she said rolled off my back without a second thought.

On this particular day, we were learning about pregnancy and gestational diabetes. We watched a documentary about one woman's pregnancy journey and her struggle with gestational diabetes. During the film, the teacher decided to pause the film on an image of the woman, looked at us, and asked:

"When you look at this woman, what's the first thing you notice about her?"

Our answers were things along the lines of

"Oh, I noticed how pretty she is"

or

"I noticed her eyes first".

Trivial, normal little things. But that clearly wasn't the answer she was looking for. "The first thing I notice is how fat she is," she said, as though that was the obvious answer we all should've given. She practically spat the word "fat" right in my face. Fat fat fat fat. "Look how fat she is. That's so unhealthy. It's going to kill her." She was talking to the class, but it felt like she was talking directly to me. It was as if she was calling me out because I was fat fat fat fat. She might as well have said, "Look how fat you are, Laura. Everybody, look at how fat Laura is! Look look look! Isn't it disgusting?"

---

My sophomore year of high school, my sister decided it was time for her to lose weight. It was time for her to follow in my mother's footsteps, to diet until she felt beautiful. She joined Weight Watchers and in the blink of an eye, she lost over seventy pounds. Suddenly, she went from being so much larger than me to weighing the same as me. Whereas I looked the same, she looked extremely thin in comparison to how she used to look. Suddenly, even though we weighed about the same, I was the fat sister. I hadn't lost any weight. I was the same as I had always been, but somehow I was bigger and uglier than I was before all because she was skinnier and prettier than she was before.

I was nothing in comparison to my thin sister. Nobody saw me anymore. They only saw her, how beautiful and skinny and perfect she seemed. And what was I? A fat slob in comparison. The constant obsession with weight and appearance made me feel even more self conscious if that was possible.

Everybody told my sister how amazing she looked. They were so proud, so in awe of her discipline. She had done it. She had done the seemingly impossible. She had lost weight. She had gone from being fat to being skinny. She was a wonder to behold, a true rarity. We weighed the same, but I was not a wonder. Nobody was in awe of the girl whose weight remained the same.

We may have weighed the same, but I felt profoundly larger than her. I was profoundly ashamed for not changing at all.

Recently, I was talking to my sister about this time in our lives. I knew what this time was like for me, how this made me feel, but I didn't know anything about what she felt, what this was like for her. I always assumed that everything was good. She was thin and gorgeous. Life is always good when you're thin and gorgeous. Of course, that wasn't the case. The comment my sister always got was, "You've lost so much weight! What a great start." A great start. She lost seventy pounds, but that was just a start. She was practically skin and bones, but that was a great start. There was always more to lose. Everybody always expected you to lose more even when you had nothing left to give.

My sister's weight loss seemed like magic, but in reality it was starvation. Starvation was the magic that shaved off a third of her body weight. Nobody calls it an eating disorder when you go from being fat to being skinny. They just call it discipline.

---

I re-downloaded Tinder during quarantine. There I matched with a guy who went to college in Massachusetts, which was where I returned to after the pandemic forced me to leave New York City. He was young, blonde, and attractive and somebody who I was sure would never go for me if we met in person. But I didn't care. He had swiped right on me and that was a compliment in and of itself.

Our extremely short conversation went something like this:

It's a match! Say hi to Jason.

Sup

Hey!

Wyd

Just in my room doing homework. Nothing too interesting. What are you doing?

In bed. What are you looking for on here?

Nothing in particular. Just meeting people and seeing where it goes. What about you?

Honestly just looking to hookup. You down?

I don't know you.

So? You have a car?

Yes, I do.

You come to me and we can fuck in your car.

I don't know... I don't know you and you don't know me. Also, there's a pandemic going on and you could get me sick or I could get sick. Doesn't seem safe to me.

Wow such a pussy

Calling a girl a pussy is not a way to get pussy.

You're a fat pussy

---

Recently my therapist asked me about my relationship with my body. It had come up a few times here and there over the last three years of seeing her, but it was never discussed much beyond "I hate my body" and "I don't like what I see when I look in the mirror". We had more pressing issues to address before we could even begin to think about my body-self relationship.

I told her that I wasn't in love with my body; that all I wore was leggings and oversized sweatshirts because I wanted to hide. I wanted to be seen as more clothes than human because that's when I felt safest. That's when I felt the smallest.

She asked me to do something small over the week before I saw her next:

"Laura, I want you to do something small for me. This week I want you to write down reasons you are grateful for your body. What does your body do for you that you are thankful for? Do you think you can do that?" I considered this for a moment. I thought back over all of these moments; these moments filled with feelings of shame and self loathing and inadequacy. These moments where I felt the most seen and the most ugly. I thought how can I appreciate something I hate? And then I thought about the small, mundane things that I take for granted

like being able to walk or being able to speak or being able to breathe.

I am grateful for my body because it got me to school this morning.

I am grateful for my body because it allows me to write.

I am grateful for my body because it is my home. *I am grateful for my body because it is my home.*

## Self Portrait

*Zoë Adams*

This is a body made of clay  
She's lumpy and spills over herself  
She was formed in layers  
Adding more clay to round out the shape  
And cover the mistakes made by the sculptor  
This body has been found in textbooks  
Art history shows its love for her dimples and curves  
But people have forgotten that history  
Laughed at the depiction of Venus  
Interpreted this clay woman with hate and rage  
Shamed her for the clay that they squeeze in their hands  
She is a body made from the earth  
The clay is ancient and full of life  
The Venus of Willendorf was a self portrait  
Made by a woman who saw her body with love  
The clay of my body shaped in the same way  
Bumpy  
Not symmetrical  
Made of lumps  
And made of love

## **My Aunt Lives At The Swimming Pool**

*Kate Clay*

Rabid born-again Christian she  
Got into drugs and cheated on my uncle  
But still I always  
Wear my sunglasses on the top of my head  
Just like her



## **Beneath ‘Mr. Farrel’s Plumrose Tree’**

*Laura Gooch*

Beneath Mr. Farrel’s plumrose tree

I lie in fallen leaves

and think

about who I am.

I have been all over this world

of never-ending possibilities

viewed it

through many different lenses,

but now here I sit

in this grassy endless sea

and wonder who I am

in relation to it all.

You see

I am torn strips pasted together,

a part of my mother and a part of my father,

bits of my mother, scraps of my father,

pieces put together

in a collage like no other.

I am my father’s dark edges

and my mother’s striking curves

that run together like threads.

I am sewn

into a girl

into a woman

into everything I am meant to be

and nothing I am not.

I am the darkness

stroking the leaves

on the trees I lie beneath.

I am the light

between the leaves

casting a heavenly glow

on the green sea I dream in.

I am all together

light and dark,

broken and made whole,

familiar and brand new.

*Excerpt from Notes On Womenhood*

*EB Fehlner*

A Vocabulary Lesson:

Sorry (adj.)- A qualifying word used to make certain statements seem less aggressive

“Sorry, I have a boyfriend”

Luxury (adj.) - refers to certain menstrual products that are essential to females

“There's a luxury tax on Tampax, a box is \$13.99”

Tired (adj.) - What a women looks like without makeup

“You look tired today”

/

“You color like a boy.” The kid next to me said.

It was a snowy February in fourth grade. Our class was learning about the history of New York State. Our teacher had asked us to draw a map of our home state, and color in all the important landmarks. I was coloring the Erie Canal.

“What?”

“Why do you press so hard? It looks like a boy colored it.”

/

My parents met in college in Boston. After they were married, my mom kept her maiden name in a small act of rebellion. When their first-born turned out to be a girl, they were thrilled.

They named me Elizabeth Frances, after my great-grandmother. She was a feminist and fought her whole life for women's rights. My mom likes to tell me about the time my Great Grammy took her to the inauguration of President Clinton.

In 2016, she was able to vote for a female president. 6 months later, she passed away.

/

In January, my mom and I went to the Women's March in Seneca Falls, New York. Known as the birthplace of the suffrage movement, the first ever convention to discuss women's rights was held there in 1846. It's about an hour away from my hometown.

I'll never forget that day. Walking through the streets, surrounded by other amazing women, I felt like I could do anything.

None of us were alone.

My future, and the future of the world was female.

/

The other day my dad told me about the time he was the most proud of me.

It was at a father/daughter book club meeting at our local library.

I was the only person who hated the book.

Well, I was the only person who spoke up about it.

I was the only one in the room who had a father who raised a girl who would speak for herself.

## **I Can't Speak**

*Octavio Iglesias*

I left and never came back the same

I go back to my homeland as an American

A gringo

A yankee

I return home as an Argentinian

A Latino

A Hispanic

I ask “que soy”

You're Dominican!

We laugh it off

Born in the Caribbean

Raised in America

From Argentina

My pride spreads across the earth

Like a mountain range

Inhaling different cultures

But this means I can't speak

Why is the L silent in salmon?

Why can't I say “tap” the bottle when I refer to cap it?

Why can't I say, “come down from the car” instead of “come out”?

Why can't I turn off the candle as opposed to blow it out

Language mixed in my brain

And I couldn't keep up

I still can't keep up

Now I decided to learn French

A hot wind blew across the dry, sloping hillside as Olivia sat on her porch staring at the picture frame in her hands. The image of a group of smiling young women on a green lawn in front of a tree in the frame changes with a silent slide, now showing two of the women mid-dance, their skirts flared out. It's been so long, she thought as she brushed a wrinkled finger down the face of the dancing girls. She had been young then, happy and unprepared for what was to come. The girl in the photo had no idea the changes she would live through. The image changed again, now showing her younger self sitting on a beach with sand so light and soft it could have been sugar. No more places like that existed, at least not where she could afford to go. Beautiful places, especially those with clean, clear, water were reserved for the ultra-rich, children of those who had hoarded wealth and had disregarded the warnings in favor of cutting costs. In her youth she had known some of them, worked taking care of their children for a fraction of what they were making. It had saved her in a sense.

Olivia was born Eighty-Seven years ago in a decaying old city, nearly forty million miles away, once called Boston. Sixty years ago, when the plagues, fires, and floods became too much to handle and everyone had to flee, she had been sponsored to come to Mars and work for a family in the habitation pods of New Connecticut. Becoming a Martian had been easy. Working for people so out of touch had been the challenge. She had shortly left and had used the last of her savings to head for the only place people like her could afford to go.

The Terraforming Quarter bore a striking resemblance to antique photos in textbooks she had seen growing up on Earth. The Mojave Desert or Wadi Rum in Jordan. She had seen pictures of the untouched landscapes taken many years before they had been ravaged by corporations. The few settlements in the Terraforming Quarter were tough, sturdy structures, built for function over aesthetic. They had none of the polish and sleek design of New Connecticut or even the municipal sectors. It almost looked like the Old West towns she had seen in old movies starring men with thick accents who rode horses. There were no horses here though. It wouldn't make sense to try and bring such large animals on the spaceships. That hadn't stopped some of the extremely wealthy who kept menageries as status symbols. No, out this far it was only people and machines.

In hopes to entice people to come work the land, the Terraforming Commission had taken a page out of some of those very same textbooks and films. They were giving out farming plots to anyone interested, first come, first served. Her family had been farmers generations ago when Earth was still clean and fertile. She figured she could take up that long-forgotten mantle.

Olivia had been lucky. She was lucky to have made it off Earth. She was lucky to have had sponsorship on Mars. And she had been lucky when her name was drawn to get a small plot of farmland, just a handful of acres. It wasn't much but it had a quaint prefab farmhouse and a complementary tractor.

The rusted out remains of that tractor still sat out in the field. Olivia could just see it's hulking mass, overgrown with vines, from where she sat. It had broken down more times than she could remember, causing her to become quite friendly with the town mechanic. The Terraforming Commission had strategically set up the farms around small town-like settlements in order to create a "jumpstart for a new community" for the farmers. Mostly these little towns were places for the Terraforming Commission's investors to sell farming equipment to the new homesteaders. A sad smile crossed Olivia's face as she remembered the first time she had gone to the mechanic's shop in the little town she now called home. It was a small place called Desert Rose Machinery Repair run by a young woman close to Olivia's own age.

"Looks like this is the problem," The mechanic had said, pointing to something Olivia couldn't see. "I should be able to fix it easily enough. I'm Sarnai by the way. What was your name?"

"Olivia. Sarnai is a beautiful name, I've never heard it before," Olivia responded.

"It's Mongolian. It means rose," Sarnai informed with a smile.

"I take it you're the 'desert rose' this place is named after," guessed Olivia.

"That's right!" said Sarnai with a laugh. "How long have you lived out here? I haven't seen you around town before."

"Not long actually. I got the land lottery and have been getting settled," Olivia replied, feeling herself flush slightly at having stood out. "Have you lived here long?"

"Longer than most! My parents were part of one of the first terraforming teams out here. After they made the land workable, they settled down. My father said he liked this part of Mars since it reminded him of the Gobi Desert back home," Sarnai said brightly. "My brother actually followed the family business and is developing new methods with the Terraforming Commission, while I decided to stay here. The town needed someone looking after all you new folks anyway."



Sarnai repaired the tractor in what felt like record time, much to Olivia's disappointment. She had found it so easy to talk to Sarnai. She had yet to really connect with anyone in town yet and found she was growing lonely out on her farm. As the town got smaller and smaller in her rearview camera, Olivia wondered when next she would see the young mechanic.

It wasn't long before Olivia found herself back in town. She ended up needing to pick up more fertilizer for her crops and eagerly hoped she would see Sarnai again. Olivia had no such luck. The General Store was busy but none of the people shopping were familiar to her.

"You're new," pointed out the clerk as Olivia piled her shopping onto the counter.

"I guess it's obvious," she said absentmindedly, more focused on making sure she hadn't forgotten anything.

"I don't mean nothing by it, just thought I'd say welcome! We're a fairly tight knit group all the way out here. It's nice to see some new faces for a change!" The clerk seemed to be genuine, something Olivia was still getting used to. In New Connecticut, everything had a double meaning. In fact, more often than not, things would have a triple or quadruple meaning. The constant reading into what was said had been one of the things Olivia had hated about the place.

"You should come out to the Community Center for the dance being held next week," the clerk said, pointing her in the direction of a screen by the door. "It'll be a good chance for you to get to know everyone!"

The screen turned out to be a digital bulletin board showing different eFliers. In the center the largest showed the silhouettes of two people dancing. They appeared to be in quaint, old-fashioned clothes. The people out in the Terra-forming Quarter had a fondness for old fashioned things it seemed. The eFlier boasted that the dance was to "Bring the Town Closer!" and "Keep the Old Earth Traditions Alive!"

She decided to attend and, after a small mental debate, even pulled out one of her few date-night dresses to wear. On the way into town, Olivia told herself that she would have fun even if she didn't know anyone there. This would be how she would meet them; she had reasoned with herself.

The dance had started with a lesson in the style of old folk dancing they would be doing that night. There were a few people at the front of the room who were directing the lesson. Olivia's heart jumped when she realized one of them was Sarnai. One of the other people at the front of the room started introducing the dance they would be learning. They said it was from almost a hundred and fifty years ago and was called Lindy-Hop. It was a popular dance during one of the wars of that century, not that that narrowed things down much. The music they danced to was old and fuzzy sounding but had an infectious bounce in it that caused Olivia to feel effervescent. She spun and rocked and skipped as she was taught as she danced with each partner that rotated around the room.

"Hey there, Olive Tree," Sarnai said with a smile when it was Olivia's turn as her partner. The nickname made Olivia blush. "I hope the tractor isn't giving you any more trouble."

"Your reputation as the best mechanic around remains spotless," Olivia laughed. She was getting caught up in the music and felt giddy.

"Have you danced this before?" asked Sarnai as they bounced together.

"I hadn't even heard of this before tonight!"

"You're a natural, you have to dance with me more when the lesson is over." The invitation hung between them as the song ended and they leaned into each other for a finishing flourish. It even stayed with Olivia on her way back to her farm afterwards, leaving a small smile on her face.

Those early days, weeks, months had passed like that, days spent working the land interspersed with visits into town, shopping trips and socializing with her neighbors. She had met other young people her age, new lottery farmers joining the town trickling in from time to time. They bonded over books, and vids, games, and casts. In the evenings most nights, the young people would meet in town. Sometimes it would be for a dance like that first one Olivia had gone to. Other times it was for watch parties, mystery and horror vids tended to be popular but corny romance vids always drew crowds.

One night, a few years into Olivia's new life, Sarnai had grabbed her by the arm and pulled her away. They sat together on a hill, passing a bottle back and forth. They had talked for hours alone out there, and between stupid jokes and hard truths they shared their first kiss together under the light of Phobos and Deimos. They held each other and smiled and held each other and cried.

"I thought I was alone," one of them whispered through the tears, neither could be sure who had spoken.

"So did I," the other choked out in reply.

Olivia was lucky. She had made her way nearly forty million miles from where she had been born, had resigned herself to working the soil on a strange planet alone. But Olivia was lucky. She had found a heart that matched her own. She and Sarnai had gotten married five years later. Their wedding photos were some of the few images Olivia kept in static picture frames around the house, as opposed to the scrolling digital ones of landscapes and friends from a planet

far away. At the wedding they danced Lindy-Hop just like that first night. They continued to dance Lindy-Hop until their knees were worn and their feet ached.

A tear slid down Olivia's wrinkled cheek as she recalled how eventually Sarnai had stopped dancing, slowed down like a tractor that needed servicing. How she had held her wife's hand and eventually faded away. How Olivia had to make room in their garden for one last rose. How the earth had felt in her hands as she smoothed the ground flat, hoping that one day something would grow. Olives and roses maybe, after Olivia was planted there as well.

**To Rachel Rabbit**

*Kate Clay*

This year, she said, I am sick of thinking  
She wants to be  
An unenlightened woman

Funny how you are so much closer to god and the chords and the earth when  
You have a hand down your pants  
Much more honest that way  
Scrunching your eyes biting your lip  
And always always turning your face toward Heaven  
It's how we were made  
To glorify Him

I'm doing less sleeping pills she said  
You can get those things from the drug store  
Where kids get scooby doo valentines cards  
And uncles and girls buy beer

They have meat too  
Red stuff still breathing on the counter  
Pig feet  
Lobster's eyes  
Said she couldn't stick its head in the boiling water so  
Down the toilet it goes  
Like the bags of white powder  
In that movie about her husband last year

I get it I could get I swear it let's be dirtbags let's be unenlightened together  
Teach me how gorgeous model leviathan  
Show me a monster  
It's kind of funny how I need to run all the way to the opposite edge

## **Orange Juice At Night**

*Kate Clay*

Like this dry patch on my lip  
The left peak  
Yes, just there  
Flaking nonstop like nobody's business

I keep picking and picking  
Late at night  
Thinking I'm having epiphanies  
And star spangled thoughts when  
All I am having is  
Another orange juice  
Straight down the hatch

## **Your Alarms**

*Jackson MacDonald*

Lounges carry girls named Maria, and little black dresses, tighter on  
The upper East Side, making love to the masses and  
cooking hot cakes under things elaborated as the sun. Too many skeletons and the loafers they use as sponges, wiping  
the dogs, opening closing the mouths, embellishing the times we've seen the clowns turned belly up,  
Spayed. Drunk men like to elapse,  
when he's dusting off my mothers fault,  
he's in love with capitalizing the words,  
calling it a blend of all the shades of reason he's found for his day, his time, his collapse. Your feelings feel too much,  
your pigs puff the lamps and the shades of every drink,  
Purred into the heart  
And dragged on by the dust.  
When she settles in the dark,  
she'll feel the heart in her veins,  
She'll settle for the bars,  
the gratitude  
the subway nasal cars,  
the blame that you travel with,  
there's no ocean to embellish,  
there's nothing to name.

## **Musa**

*Eric Colon*

No se puede vivir el amor  
(sanamente)  
Sin tener la certeza  
(y sensación)  
de que tiene su toque de efímero  
y su porción de ficción

A veces comienzo a pedirte  
con tal de poder pensar  
que nunca vas a irte  
Comienzo a pedirte deseos  
con tal de enterrar bajo el alma algunos de mis miedos

Piénsame como si yo fuera el mañana  
que dicen que el tiempo cura,  
pero a veces pienso que hay heridas que nunca sanan  
Dime esas palabras que no salen de tu boca  
que los cambios en la superficie siempre se notan

Se el ángel de mi pecho  
que prefiero llevarte ahí bien puesta  
que sobre mi hombro expuesta  
Guárdame un poco de tu egoísmo  
Para que cuando  
inevitablemente  
y por supuesto  
tú te vayas  
A mi también me de lo mismo.

Cuéntame que piensas  
cuando me miras  
y levantas las cejas  
para que cuando  
solo vivas  
entre las mías  
pueda seguir escribiéndote  
aunque tú nunca lo sepas

Prepárame para lo peor  
mientras me das lo mejor  
prepárame para bajar al infierno  
después de subirte al cielo  
prepárame para hablarte  
como quien reza:  
solo,  
callado,  
apartado  
y sin esperar ninguna respuesta

Tócame,  
pero procura que lo sienta



Tócame,  
como si fuera el último día  
Tócame  
como si fueras la marea,  
    retrocede,  
    adelanta,  
    choca,  
    y salta.  
para que cuando por fin llegue la sequía  
la meteorización en mi piel,  
me recuerde que tú si existías

Ábrete  
como si fueras una casa sin puertas  
muéstrame las heridas  
que te hicieron  
tus dudas,  
para yo curarte,  
inventando respuestas  
Deja a nuestras cabezas juntas  
y nuestras lenguas ligadas,  
para que cuando me faltes,  
pueda consolarme  
en que te descubrí toda rota  
y te devolví rescatada

Entiende que te entiendo  
y reconoce que te conozco  
regálame  
tan solo  
    un día sincero,  
    un futuro incierto  
    y un ultimo beso  
    que me deje loco  
para que  
cuando termine este renacimiento  
y pueda sentirme otro  
consiga hacerte arte  
cuando pase por el barroco

Enséñame,  
a quererte sin decírtelo  
así como dices tú  
que haces conmigo  
Enséñame  
a volver a ser tu amigo  
que si al menos eso consigo  
habré logrado devolverme la oportunidad  
de vivir con alguien  
todo lo bonito  
que no viví contigo  
Enséñame  
a tener el alma inundada  
y la mirada desierta  
para que algún día,

si nuestras miradas se conectan,  
pueda esconderte todo lo que sienta  
y que ni tú misma te des cuenta

En fin  
yo si se  
quien eres:  
tú eres una musa  
y las musas  
nunca  
se quedan para siempre.

**Muse (translated)**

*Eric Colon*

We can't experience love  
(truthfully)  
Without having the certainty  
(and that fleeting thought)  
that it's clearly ephemeral  
and partially fake.

Sometimes I end up begging  
to get myself to believe  
that you may never leave  
Sometimes I let you hear my wishes  
to burry under my soul those fearful itches

Think about me as if I were tomorrow  
because they say that time heals,  
but maybe some wounds are never cured at all  
Just tell me those words that never leave the tip of your mouth,  
since there's no way to hide anything that happens above ground

Be the angel in my chest  
I would rather have you there,  
safe  
and not in my shoulder,  
exposed.  
Save me a little bit of your egoism  
So when you  
inevitably  
and predictably  
leave  
I can go on  
caring as much as you ever did

Tell me what you think  
when you look at me  
and those eyebrows go up  
so that when you move  
to live in the space that is above mine  
I can keep writing about you  
even if you never find out  
even if you never read

Prepare me for the worst  
while giving me the best  
prepare me to go to hell  
after lifting you up to heaven  
prepare me to talk to you  
like those who pray:  
alone,  
quiet,  
way apart  
and not expecting any response back

Touch me,  
but make sure I feel it  
Touch me,  
as if it were the last day  
Touch me  
as if you were the sea,  
    retrocede,  
    come forth,  
    crash,  
    and jump.  
so when the drought finally comes  
the weathering in my skin,  
reminds me that you were indeed, real.

Open up  
as if you were a house without doors  
show me your scars  
show me your doubts,  
so I can make them go away,  
making up the answers along the way  
Let our heads stay together  
and let our tongues stay tangled,  
so when you go missing,  
I can find relief  
in the belief that you got here broken  
and I sent you back healed

Get that I get you  
and recognize that I know you  
give me  
just one  
    sincere day,  
    uncertain future  
    and a last kiss  
that makes me go mad  
so when  
renaissance is over  
I can feel like another  
turning you into art  
rolling into my baroque

Teach me,  
how to want you without telling you  
just like you say you do  
while thinking about me  
Teach me  
how to become your friend again  
because if I can achieve just that  
I'd have recovered my chance  
to live with someone else  
all of the beautiful things  
we never had  
Teach me  
how to have a flooded soul

and dry eyes  
so that one day,  
if we ever gaze at each other again,  
I can hide everything that goes on inside  
so that you can't notice, even if you try

In the end  
I do know  
who you are:  
you are a muse  
and muses  
          never  
stay forever.





**AFTERGLOW**  
*Nina Hook*





**SEPERATION ANXIETY**

*Mckeilla Malabunga*





**“UNTITLED”**  
*Mckeilla Malabunga*





# BLUE BOY

*Mckeilla Malabunga*





**GIRL WITH PILLS**  
*Mckeilla Malabunga*

If you are Dianne DiMassa      call me  
or  
Stein's soirées

It was Matisse who insulted the cook  
over an omelette  
at Gertrude's      on a Saturday

some bush aside my porch      resembles  
maidenhair leaves      but won't be  
indentations      flowing over soft arms

think of them dining      lingering  
   chatter  
   i've read  
dark matter's      cosmic filaments twirl      invisible threads  
huge      twisting braids of motion      a rotating caboodle  
            moons      stars      galaxies  
   and clusters

of countenance

*Maureen Owen*

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We greatly appreciate the contribution to this year's publication.

## Philip K. Dick's Last Earthly Appearance

for Andrew Joron

I am reprocessing my life, after being glued inside Dante's Inferno  
A writer sentenced to rewrite his novels as sick cheapo hack

In order to buy a house, drive a Buick Jetmaster, and wear a suit and tie  
How can I prove that he and I see the same colors and kiss the same crooked air?

A writer sentenced to rewrite his novels as sick cheapo hack  
An orderly congress of money piles illuminates a convoluted situation

How can I prove that he and I see the same colors and kiss the same crooked air?  
I confess to containing at least one other unsavory human being

An orderly congress of money piles illuminates a convoluted situation  
It doesn't help that I have memories dating back 2000 years or more

I confess to containing at least one other unsavory human being  
What if his world is my heaven and my world is his heaven?

It doesn't help that I have memories dating back 2000 years or more  
I crash into cobblestone streets and hansom cabs when this happens

What if his world is my heaven and my world is his heaven?  
I will start by traveling to earth to prove my visions are entirely real

I crash into cobblestone streets and hansom cabs when this happens.  
I am reprocessing my life, after being glued inside Dante's Inferno

I will start by traveling to earth to prove my visions are entirely real  
In order to buy a house, drive a Buick Jetmaster, and wear a suit and tie

*John Yau*

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