Reader Snoopy,

This issue juts out in all directions—without opposition, with independence—each piece a treat, a poptart, to be swallowed whole or savored, depending on what you like. The pieces are piecewise mostly, but even that is not a continuous definition.

Who needs those anyway? When you have Robots, a camera, a heart so red, and a family full of genius.

Thank you for reading, unwrapping. Thanks to everyone who helped. Thanks to the warm air, which took a while but is here.

Jake Orbison, e-i-c
6 is Malina Buturovic
8 is Rachel Calnek-Sugin
12 is Jennifer Gersten
18 is John Lee
24 is Deborah Monti
26 is Olivia Noble
28 is Wei Tai Ting
30 is Victoria Wang
40 is April Wen
For I Regret That I Made Them
Mornings these days she gets out of bed reciting
“I am the resurrection and the life”
Then invents one by one the pieces of furniture in her apartment;
Table (wicker, inherited with the apartment), chair (upholstered, brought from
home tied to the back of the car she drove 563 miles, a ceaseless wanderer),
Red plastic kettle which reflects back—warped and saturated—points of light from
The lamp behind the dresser.

Raised Christian, she now worships no one.
When Gabriel comes to tell her she is pregnant with Jesus,
She laughs in his face
(Thinks for a moment about raising her middle finger; doesn’t because
How can he be expected to understand her modern parables?)
This will be the fourth time she gives birth to Jesus.
(She has already given birth to Gabriel at least eight-hundred times.)

Not even 99 years old, already father of a multitude of nations, mother of all the
living.
The kettle boils over.
She makes tea.

In the hallway, before Thanksgiving dinner
Jesus rubs up against her breast;
On the 24th of December, 2017, her body oozes complicity.
At dinner she knocks over his wine glass
Not in revenge, but as redemption.

There should be no schism in the body.
And so? She is the body;
He is the wafer.
She is the body of the survivors and the non-survivors and the version of each of
us that dies when it touches the flame.
DUMPING YOUR ROBOT

“I’m breaking up with you,” I tell my robot.

“Okay,” he smiles. I know he’s agreed because he was programmed agreeable, but his easy acquiescence teeters something in me, that this matters no more to him than “okay” and the cheery high five he extends, thinking we’ve come to productive agreement.

“It isn’t okay,” I say, and he agrees, again. I tell him he doesn’t understand, so he asks me to explain.

I tell him humans are incapable of apathy, that they can go back and forth on something or hold many conflicting desires simultaneously, that right now, for example, I want to go for a swim and eat a cheesy pretzel from the 81st street cart, and set out uptown without destination, but it is 1am on Christmas Eve and I am already in pajamas.

In the time it’s taken to explain apathy to my robot, I could have gotten dressed, walked to the train, and rode to Fleetwood. Right now I’d be walking through an apartment complex in the dark, slipping through the gate behind a neighbor, climbing three flights of stairs to the door of the boy I love.

“Real love is never apathetic,” my robot repeats. How could I walk away from him now?

ROBO-HUMOR

What did the buffalo say to his son when he dropped him off for school? Bye-son.

Did you hear about those antennas that got married? The reception was great. Robots don’t “do” sarcasm. They’re like my grandmother.

Knock knock. Who’s there? Your robot. Your robot who?

What? I’m confused. Your robot who?

I’m afraid I don’t understand.

Why don’t you tell me more so I can be a better robot?

THE FIRST TIME I SAW A ROBOT

They had Teddy’s robot all ready for the funeral, he sat off to the left while the rabbi gave the eulogy. His eyes glowed, unfocused and stony, as his mother spoke of the plate of pasta he’d stuck in the fridge and never come back for. Teddy is the only person I’ve ever seen die and I didn’t even know him. His death did not happen to me, I was only witness to the transformation of his body as it fell past my classroom window and became a bird.

ROBOTS AND ART

Robots play piano well, but they never get past a certain level. My teacher Monica said I played with my whole soul. Some people don’t have a soul, she said. That day Monica started wearing her sleek, black wig, was the one she told me about her early boyfriends and Sunny’s Sundaes in Delphi, Indiana. That was when I understood she had a robot of herself as a young woman; it reminded her how healthy and beautiful she’d once been, on good days, it convinced her she still was. She pretended she did not have this robot, and never brought her to lessons. The robot couldn’t like things, could only learn them. It didn’t understand the difference between Bach and Brahms, why Bach made Monica focus and Brahms filled her with longing.
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YOUR ROBOT AND YOUR MOTHER
“What do you want?” my robot asks,
“Tell me so I can help you get it.”
“I don’t know what I want,” I say,
and find myself next to my parents’ bed,
showing my robot how I used to stand by my mother
after a nightmare, breathing until she woke up.
I carry him to the kitchen counter,
where she would warm ask why I was crying. “I don’t know,”
I’d insist. She thought I was hiding something,
but it was an aimless and inexpressible sadness.
“I’ll comfort you after a nightmare,” my robot promises,
we sit quietly while he rubs my back
and braids my hair, and the sadness bubbles in me.
It’s easy to be mean to your robot
like it’s easy to be mean to your mother
because you know your robot will still be there for you.
I slap my robot but he doesn’t mind.
I remember the worst fight I’ve ever had
with my mother, the thing she said
before she slapped me. I start to cry
and my robot comforts me. In his cold arms,
I am 16 again, and my mother is standing
outside my bedroom door.
She knows tonight I am afraid of her
so she speaks from the other side of the wall:
“I love you,” she says,
“I love you too,” I say, “No matter what.”
She laughs because this is so obvious.
“Of course,” she says, “No matter what.”

BAD ROBOT!
I was trying to program my robot
but my robot programmed me!

ROBOT CLAIRE
Claire said I was the only one
who understood the world was bittersweet.
Her parents got her a robot of herself
without depression. It was a welcome home
from the hospital gift. Claire hated her robot,
and she set to work on it
like an angry child giving a haircut
to her pretty doll. She taught her robot
to cry when it was the perfect temperature
or a baby smiled or the sun set over the river.
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MRS PARSONS’ INCREDIBLE ROBOT COLLECTION
I read an article in The New Yorker
about a woman who collects used robots.
She rescues them, their missing limbs
and bashed in noses, from junkyards
and trash heaps. She makes the rounds
on Monday mornings to see if anybody left one
at church over the weekend.
Most people stop wanting their robots,
they sit in the comfiest chair in the house
for hours without moving, they pop out
from under furniture when you get up
to go to the bathroom in the night,
or sometimes it isn’t night, sometimes
it’s nine in the morning, pouring boiling water
from pot to teacup, when catching your robot’s eye
across the counter is like looking in a mirror
and seeing how alone you are,
unbearably by yourself inside your body.
The article says: “Mrs. Parsons is determined
to surround herself with everyone else’s shit,”
which might be why my sister sent it to me.
One got the sense that Uncle Marty did not so much live in his Beekman Place apartment as it had swallowed him. The high ceilings made him look even shorter than he was at five feet, five inches, and the floors, carpeted in a plushy beige faux suede, sank you with every step. Against the burgundy wallpaper, he seemed to be not merely pale but fading away.

I never saw him working. Once, when I was wandering back from the bathroom and took a wrong turn, I chanced upon his study. It was strangely empty, as if it had been drained. On his desk were a small tin of alligator clips, slim folders in file sorters, and several modest stacks of paper. Looming above the printer was a large framed black-and-white poster of Einstein, with his tongue hanging out and his eyes manic, that could have belonged to anyone.

As I closed the door, I swatted the urge to search through his drawers. I was never good at Magic Eye; my brain refused to stitch those apparently senseless patterns into anything resembling a Dutch seascape or cheerless dog. Even if I had seen something in that room, I would not have understood what it was.

Science did not run in our family. It struck Marty alone. He was a genius, an inventor with over six patents to his name. So said my parents. At one Thanksgiving, I studied him, watching him spoon mashed potatoes into his wide, contented mouth, white flecks accumulating in the short whiskers above his lips. He cut his meat into small, uneven pieces and appeared to swallow them whole. From this I learned that geniuses were not particularly clean eaters.

His mind seemed a hermetic well. Perhaps he shared nothing because he doubted I would understand what he was saying. I returned his silence with my own. The consequences of speaking to him, of distracting him, seemed dire. The future of science was at stake, I thought, and I dared not hamper Progress with the minutiae of my weekend plans. He had high cholesterol and had inherited a family history of serious heart trouble. He was in his sixties and his retired features seemed pleasant because his face knew no other way. We said hello and goodbye to each other and presumed the rest.

We had our chins in common, maybe. Sometimes I had to remind myself that we were really related.
Manhattan, 1958. At six in the morning, six senior boys convene in the basement of Stuyvesant High School, a public high school for the scientifically adroit. They are the members of the Cyclotron Committee, a new club, and they intend to build the first atom reactor ever to be housed in an American high school. Martin Gersten, age 15, of Brooklyn, is their president and founder. (He has skipped several grades.) He is the neighborhood darling, the human interest feature of the year after year after year. The New York Mirror publishes a short, bemused article on Marty’s quest to gain permission for the project from the Atomic Energy Commission.

When the club turns on the cyclotron three years later, the sheer energy it requires causes a neighborhood blackout. It chokes on its stolen light, impossible to save, abandoning six boys in the dark. For an instant, however, it works. It is alive for as long as it takes for it to die. But alive is alive.

Marty only had good fortune with science. All his marriages except the fourth and last concluded in divorce. Each of his wives was younger than her predecessor. I only knew Veena, his third wife, who was from India. She had two young children, Sitij and Divya, from a previous marriage, and was an engineer at Marty’s audio technology company. A year after their wedding, Marty and Veena had a daughter. At the time of her birth two months too soon, she could fit in my father’s hand. Her parents named her Amanda, after the nurse who saved her life.

Amanda stayed small. In winter, when she was a sophomore in college and I a freshman, we agreed to meet at an Argentinian restaurant in the East Village. My parents assured me that “Amanda is doing well, very well,” which meant she was doing better than before. Compounding her problems was her poor sense of direction, not unusual among premature babies, that meant she could not always find her way. I walked to the back of the restaurant and finally spotted her, a dark huddle beside the far wall. Her coat enveloped her; she seemed to have been swaddled in it.
People mistake us for siblings, although she has slightly darker skin. We are the spitting image of our fathers, and thus each other. We have their hooked noses, long limbs and oblong faces. We look nothing like our mothers, both of whom are Asian immigrants. Against reason, we both feel this is our fault.

What Marty was occurred in isolation. It struck our family but once. We felt no envy, only confusion about what we had done to deserve it.

My mother tried her utmost to interest me in the lives of the scientific intelligentsia. She lugged home stacks of biographies, whose frequently neon covers featured clean-looking people hunched over microscopes as if looking for something lost. They piled on the kitchen counter, collecting dust and fines.

One book I did read was a picture book about Phineas Gage. After a horrific accident in which an iron rod went through his skull and destroyed much of his frontal lobe, Gage evolved from construction worker to 19th-century medical curiosity. Inside the book was an image of a real human brain. The uncomplicated smoothness of the skull belies the brain’s tight, effortful coils: the duplicity of the body.

Genius is clean, unmarred. Genius is inherence, arising of its own accord. Genius: unbidden, the mind will construct something from nothing.

Sometimes, with the writing I admire, I perform a kind of fieldwork: weighing it, measuring it, listening to how it is speaking. But the work continues to be like interrogating a stranger or worse, someone you are trying to know though his expression sears.

When I asked my mother about why Marty never spoke to me, she laughs. You were never very sophisticated, she says over the phone. It was you who never wanted to talk to adults. You just wanted to leave dinner and play with your cousin. Maybe all children are like that.
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Marty played music when he was young. Like my father, who played the bassoon, and like me I play the violin. More fascinating for Marty, however, was whatever made music, music. He quit the violin after his bar mitzvah and began studying sound. He had two jobs in his teens, one at a classical radio station and another as a technician at Bell Laboratories. As my father tells it, Marty got both of them by simply walking into their offices and explaining who he was. He created a radio station at age 13; at 20 he had founded his own speaker company, Ohm Acoustics, which still exists. He found investors in Japan and India.

Even as an infant he had pointed to things "That! That! What is that!" demanding to know what they were and how they worked. He commenced a research position studying sight. In his 30s he created the software used to evaluate patients for Lasik surgery. Like my father, he had astigmatism.

He was obsessed with clarity.

Patents by Inventor Martin [name redacted]

Ultrasonic Scanning Device with A Hybrid Controller Device for Performing Ophthalmic Procedures with Improved Alignment Ultrasonic Scanning Apparatus with A Tuning Fork-type Vibrator

(He had perfect pitch and an unbelievable ear.)

Compact Keratoscope with Interchangeable Cones Loudspeaker Voice Coil Arrangement...

One Saturday, when my parents were away, he picked me up from music school in a taxi. He helped me balance my violin case on our laps, asked me how I was (fine), and resumed his silence. The radio was on, but not loudly enough. Fortunately the ride to his new apartment was not long. He had sold the one on Beekman Place after his divorce from Veena and was now living in a smaller, whiter apartment on Riverside Drive.
“What do you know about quantum physics?” I blurted. Of all the questions. As in school, I was only interested in asking questions that made me sound smart. But this had only sounded smart in my mind.

“Well, nobody really knows anything about quantum physics,” he chuckled. “I can give you a few basics...” He continued, but I was not really listening. I did not know what was more disappointing: that I had squandered our ride discussing something inane, or that I had not been simply dazzled by his response.

Uncle Marty left all of us at different times.

A month before, he was at the airport, waving to his adult son, Alan, at the terminal’s edge. Some weeks later, he dropped Amanda and her boxes off at school. Then one night Allison found Marty at the kitchen table in his pajamas, the teakettle screeching. My father, opening the door for my mother and me, wasted no time: Marty’s gone. When it came to Uncle Marty, the three of us were always the last to know.

The funeral was on a Saturday. My parents picked me up early from music school and drove the several hours to a small Italian restaurant by the Irvington waterfront, which his last wife Allison had selected for the reception. The three of us drifted past faces we did not know, seeking out the food though none of us were hungry. Amanda was at a table in the back, flanked by her friends, one of whom was resting her head on Amanda’s shoulder. Amanda was holding a guitar but not playing it, just swaying and humming to herself.

When she saw me, she hobbled over and looped her too-long arms around my neck by way of greeting. Her grip burned me. When a down feather came free of her coat and lodged itself in my nose, I nearly sneezed, but thought better of it. She began to rock me, and it occurred to me that she thought she was holding me together.
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About a hundred of us gathered on the picnic tables beside the Hudson River. Amanda and her old babysitter, Sue, sang a song about loving people and growing old. I wasn’t really listening. I was crying without knowing precisely why.

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My father is retelling one of many stories about Uncle Marty’s trip to Japan:

Marty accepts a colleague’s invitation to dine at a well-known expensive restaurant. Gathered at the table are six tall Japanese businessmen in suits and Marty, Jewish, stocky, sweating through his shirt. The shrimp arrive writhing on a porcelain platter, headless but alive. They are engulfed by a swarm of hands. Marty, who does not care for seafood, feels he must be polite. Following his colleague’s lead, he dips a shrimp in sake and swallows it unflinchingly.

“Whole, live!” my father exclaims from the couch. “Can you believe it? Live!”

Marty shifts in his seat. “That’s Japan for you,” he says, and goes quiet. His souvenirs are all over the living room. There are two hanging scrolls on the far wall, one of a samurai and another of a young girl masked by her fan. Her eyes are not facing front, but to the side. She knows something, I think on some days. And on other days, like today, I think she is just shy.
You think, “Sugar.”

Ringside, you found the name. You had won your tenth consecutive bout; the crowd celebrated, whooped, hollered as you sat in your corner, thinking about the match—that sick left hook, the throbbing pain in your side. Then, you heard her voice. “Hey, you’re sweet as sugar,” she whispered in one ear. Blinded by a stream of camera flashes and a swollen eye, you never saw her face. You heard her voice. Did you imagine her warm breath against your neck? Later, you asked around. No one had seen her.

After the match, her voice found you. You began dreaming of punches in slow motion—clever bolo shots, calculated jabs, devastating uppercuts in sweeping gestures. In these dreams, the record’s static would play. Soon after, the sound of her lilting voice. Limbs amid their brutal dance, you heard her—gentle yet strong, deep yet floating. “Sugar Ray. Sugar, Sugar Ray.”

It has been ten years since you last heard this voice and its melody. You often hum to yourself, but it never sounds true. What has happened? Ten years ago, you put down your gloves. You sold your flamingo-pink Cadillac. You broke up your—what did the French call it?—entourage. Ten years ago, you stopped dreaming. You stopped dreaming of the ring. You have not hit a man since.

Now, stand before the mirror and look. Hold your fists before you, bend at the knees. Jab, dodge, jab, smile, dance. Dance, Sugar! And dream. The crowd’s yell, knuckles upon bone, the blood-spattered canvas. There. “Sugar, Sugar Ray...” the sweet voice sings.
What did Sugar dream when he dreamt of killing Jimmy? Their entire match from the first bell? The referee’s downward gesture, the brutish faces around the ring, the hot light against his shoulders. One round in, the bloody ropes; the next, Jimmy’s buckling knees. Soon after, the left hook that leaves Jimmy floored. Followed by a pause—the silent crowd begins to murmur. Sugar lowers his arms, stares over his shoulder. A flurry of urgent shouting erupts. Lost midst a dream’s darkness, he only makes out the doctor’s telling hands. Sugar jolts awake; he stares at the ceiling.

Or did he dream in symbols? The sapling felled by gleaming ax, the hare caught between the wolf’s hungry jaws, an eclipse as the moon is pulled by lasso, fixed permanently before the sun.

But Sugar was a dancer. Perhaps he dreamed a dance: a duet never before performed. The music races towards the climax and as the pace quickens, Jimmy stumbles. He breathes heavy, rests his arms upon his knees, collapses as the trumpet solo blares forth. While Jimmy’s weak chest heaves, Sugar’s feet continue to tap, strike the floor with great precision. “Breathe, Jimmy. Breathe,” Sugar whispers.

Sugar looks over his shoulder, turns the rest of his body. He walks toward his opponent, toward his dream. He looks into eyes that had moments before watched his own fists expand so large. Jimmy Doyle is pronounced dead. The body is carried through the ropes.

Sugar, must you dance so furious a beat?
Sharkey’s Stags

Sharkey’s stags are made of clay. So is the ref. The crowd too—clay heads peer over the ring’s apron; above, gray cigar smoke wraps halos.

At this point, the heads are still, intent, all men. The businessman tabs dollars on his fingers. The postman notices an envelope in his sleeve, tucks it inside his pocket. The brick worker brushes dried mortar from his

The stags step out from their corners. Now, the heads turn grotesque, contorted; some force sculpts their brows downward, pulls their jaws high, impels howls and whoops. The stags meet each other with equal blows.

The heads enact their ordinary routines. When the stags clash, they twist and cheer. For some, the deafening impact of a body sent to the canvas seems to evoke joyous memories; they recall the home team’s ninth-inning comeback, swimming nude by moonlight, the confession of love when first reciprocated, a kiss from a long time ago. They leap, wave empty fists, cheer in unison. For others—supporters of the prostrate stag—the ground seems to have crumbled beneath them; they mourn. Cursing their luck, they slam their foreheads into the ring’s apron. Dents and furrows form. The stag rises on the eight count. The fight continues.

At the ring’s center, the stags press close, hold each other, cease swinging. One rests his head upon the other’s shoulder. They breathe deeply. Sweat and blood form creeks down their backs. Ringside, a judge drops his pen, the heads silence. The referee only watches. The wheezing of broken ribs, their heavy breath.

What turns clay to marble?
Lee Sharkey’s stags are made of clay. So is the ref. The crowd too—clay heads peer over the ring’s apron; above, gray cigar smoke wraps halos. At this point, the heads are still, intent, all men. The businessman tabs dollars on his fingers. The postman notices an envelope in his sleeve, tucks it inside his pocket. The brick worker brushes dried mortar from his The stags step out from their corners. Now, the heads turn grotesque, contorted; some force sculpts their brows downward, pulls their jaws high, impels howls and whoops. The stags meet each other with equal blows. The heads enact their ordinary routines. When the stags clash, they twist and cheer. For some, the deafening impact of a body sent to the canvas seems to evoke joyous memories; they recall the home team’s ninth-inning comeback, swimming nude by moonlight, the confession of love when first reciprocated, a kiss from a long time ago. They leap, wave empty fists, cheer in unison. For others—supporters of the prostrate stag—the ground seems to have crumbled beneath them; they mourn. Cursing their luck, they slam their foreheads into the ring’s apron. Dents and furrows form. The stag rises on the eight count. The fight continues. At the ring’s center, the stags press close, hold each other, cease swinging. One rests his head upon the other’s shoulder. They breathe deeply. Sweat and blood form creeks down their backs. Ringside, a judge drops his pen, the heads silence. The referee only watches. The wheezing of broken ribs, their heavy breath.

What turns clay to marble?

You are driving your dad to his workplace. Now that it is winter, the sun sets early; you watch it peek through the rear-view window. You remember when you sat in the passenger seat with your father driving on this same sloping road and that same warm light blinding you as you pounded a baseball into a worn-out, black glove. The baseball’s red stitching is falling apart. An old CD hums through the car.

You say goodbye to your father. Through the car window, he looks you in the eye. You make sure to look him in the eye. You have never been good at that. He smiles, walks into his workplace. You drive off. You seem to make every green light. You reach your destination and park. In the glove compartment, you find a tin of Wintergreen Altoids. You toss three into your mouth, swallow.

You walk into the concert hall and look around. You look down at your watch when you hear her call your name. You spin around, bumping into her. You apologize as she laughs. When you sit down next to her, you breathe. You talk about the program and the day. You notice the lights dim, the audience quiet, the performers appear. You watch the show proceed. You laugh at the joker, you cry at the heartbreak. When she rests her head on your shoulder, you turn your head sideways, slightly down and see her — her pale skin, her green-brown eyes, her long, dark hair.

You are standing on top of a hill behind a monastery that overlooks the city where you have both lived your lives to this point. She is standing at your right. You tell her that there are usually not so many stars. She looks up at them. You point at the bats zigzagging across the purple sky. She turns toward you. You embrace her.
Lieber Snoopy,

My family’s property once enjoyed a forest to the west. As a child, I learned to hunt there. Deer, elk, wild boar, all beasts I found. Since then, the trees of this forest have been cut down. You will only find deer now. A doe and her young—the white speckles of their fur, their timid eyes. Or the wandering buck—his massive chest, the crowns of his antlers.

On my first shot, I killed a bird in flight. My father had said, “Aim and do not miss.” I walked slowly to retrieve my prize. There, under the August sun, the tall grass had splayed from the fall, formed a nest. At the nest’s center, the bird’s distorted body heaved; its beak slowly opened, tensed, closed shut. Kaputt.

This stillness is what I now know. Stillness that I have inflicted, reveled in; each victory memorialized by a silver cup. Perhaps you think this is wrong. But death is not so bad. This darkness has fulfilled my longing for solitude, the reliving of simple pleasures—a good steed racing beneath you, gymnastics competitions, long afternoon walks with dear Ilse in the shade of our forest. In Germany, I will be mourned as a hero. I have only excelled in killing.

Enough from a dead man. Jagdgeschwader 1 sends their regards. They will avenge me; expect the fury of ten jastas, 50 Fokkers showering lead upon your red, wooden structure. One day in the near future, you will turn back and see the white of my brothers’ mad eyes as they descend from cloud cover. You will feel the trembling of your heart. Then, you will weep. You are a dead dog, lieber Snoopy.

Dein Manfred Richtofen,
The Red Baron
Lee

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The Red Baron
I. Laying
hermana, me oís? do you hear me? do you see my blood
do you see how my veins are brandished with the sweet scent
of everyone’s uncle sipping mate
light-skinned latinas, milky residue slipping down a cafecito
my mama never grabbed me by my hair but sometimes I wish she did;
to teach me my identity
mama don’t leave me en el medio, don’t make me feel without skin and
without culture.
what if god and la virgen had a baby that was white like me
latina like her
assimilated into American culture like the royal We.
a few years ago I tried to burn myself with the sun. I shut my eyes and laid my body bare and let
the rays sting the knees I later brought to my chin, mourning. as my skin began to sweat and
redden, I bit my lip, hoping the tan would validate my heritage and rid me of the poser latina spirit I had swallowed thirteen years earlier.
hermanas, me oís?
my mama’s hair is curly like my skin curling off in peeling chunks.
some things are impossible to forget and others too sun-dried to recognize.

II. Standing
they used to read me La Viejecita Que No Le Tenia Miedo a Nada
The Little Old Lady Who Wasn’t Afraid of Anything
to soothe my neurotic soul and relax my spasmed knuckles
I worried about melting in the sun; I still do
who takes the time to remember a grandfather’s brother whose
heart, they tell me, loved too much it exploded
when I asked if it bloodied his tanned chest
they wrinkled their eyes.
throwing seashells on the graves of my mother’s parents;
it is impossible to see the hue of one’s skin when they are dressed in rock and moss
in the story the viejecita is being chased by individual articles of clothing
and I sometimes wake up sweaty
the beat-up shoes, the trousers, the blusa following me
chasing me out of urugua, my homeland
embarrassed, my skin reddens as I run, panting
to the bathroom mirror, to the sink faucet that drips
like my grandfather’s brother’s heart
I flip the handle up with a sweaty knuckle
the water exploding out, splashing against the bottom of the bowl
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the water exploding out, splashing against the bottom of the bowl.

III. Floating

tea is most bitter at the bottom of the cup
my hands break from my sister's, dearest
a mangle of white limbs being whipped by the ocean

how come when I get high I see myself as paler
ghost girl just saw blood
crying and babbling about how it belongs to a grandfather's brother

who is happy with what they have?
mussels who make beach shores
the graveyard for their shells

I am tired and mama's hair is sun-dried raisins
she picks them straight from the vines of her scalp
throws them into a bowl of cottage cheese;
a snack before bed
sometimes I see myself as cottage cheese with raisin freckles
they used to be grapes but have shriveled under the sun's rays

it is the distortion of the cracked bathroom mirror, perhaps the drugs
ruptures like spider legs across a frame
my knuckles finally stilled.

Deborah Monti
yesterday I had the letter in my hand when I was walking in the dark and in the low blue evening heat with the flashlight swinging something shone from the curb & glinted like a dropped coin closer: and it was a bone-white spider with eyeshine flashing like a lighthouse from the grass.

Rilke said things that frighten us are things that are helpless, and wanting of our love, but I jumped quickly & away.
Cinematographe

Autochromie


Lumière
Winner of the Francis Bergen Prize judged by Peter Cole.
I don’t cry. Mr. Richards says I am very brave. He reminds me of the robot toy I used to have, because his face doesn’t move, and he keeps saying the same things: I have to be strong, and Papa would want me to keep going, and God has a plan, and I’m gonna be a man some day. When he looks at me, I feel important. He was one of Papa’s “drinking buddies” and always looked me in the eye, even back then. I do my best to be brave. We walk up to Amancio’s apartment together. As Amancio puts away the boxes, Mr. Richards bends down to shake my hand.

“You watch out for yourself, young man,” he whispers. “God knows, your brother certainly won’t.”

Amancio didn’t cry either, at the funeral. And I know he cries a lot. He cried all the time when he still lived at home. After the funeral, people didn’t call him brave. They said he was heartless. They looked at me and shook their heads and said, “Poor child, to have to live with that man. This isn’t right.”

I hold up my chin like Papa taught me and tell Mr. Richards I can take care of myself. He nods at me and leaves.

Rico, come in,” Amancio says.

Amancio is very tall, like Papa, and he cuts his hair short, like Papa did, and his face is just like Papa’s. But he talks different and moves different. He doesn’t grab my shoulders and say things by my ear. He doesn’t touch me at all. He looks at me from three feet away, and he smiles a little crooked, like he learned how to do it all wrong.

“It’s good to see you again. How are you?”

“Okay.” I look around. “Where’s my room?” He shows me to my new room, which is smaller than my old room and still filled with Amancio’s things. “I’m gonna get another bed soon,” he says. “But for now you can sleep in mine, and I’ll sleep on the couch.”

“Where am I gonna put all my stuff?” I ask.
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"Where am I gonna put all my stuff?"

He looks at me for a second. "Fine, okay. I'll clean up."

He shows me the rest of the apartment, which has even more books and paints, CDs and pillows, weird posters and ballerina statues. In front of the TV there's a little blue sofa and a big brown couch. We sit on the couch. It makes a farting noise.

"How do you feel?" he asks. "About all this?"

"Okay," I say. "I'm tired. I don't feel like talking."

I turn on the TV, and Amancio sits with me a little longer and then pours me grape juice from the kitchen. I hate grape juice.

We unpack my things. Amancio moves his stuff out of the room, and I spread my favorite things over every surface I can see. But it still doesn't feel like my room. It smells different. The blankets are too soft. The birdhouse I built last summer isn't in my boxes, and I think I must have lost it during the move. The window in this room is too small for a birdhouse, anyways.

I have a bad dream that first night. The world is upside down in my head. Everyone is talking backwards. When I wake up, I get out of bed and go to the living room. Amancio is sleeping on the big brown couch. When he isn't moving or talking, he looks almost like Papa. But his hair isn't gray, and the lines on his face are in the wrong places. Papa had laugh lines. I don't know what these lines are.

I lift the blanket and crawl onto the couch. Amancio groans, but moves to make room. It's a big couch, and I won't fall off if I lie on top of Amancio. He is very warm.

"What is it, chico?" he sighs.
"I don't like my room."

He wraps an arm around me very gently. I think maybe this should feel wrong, because Papa was never gentle, but it feels okay. "I'm sorry. I know you miss your old house."

"It was bigger."

"Mmhm."

"I want to go home."

He kisses my hair. I close my eyes. "I know, chico." His breath puffs my hair. "I know, I know."

I fall asleep to the sound of his breathing. We both wake up late, with cramps everywhere, and we have to run to church with breakfast in our hands. It's a different church than the one I know. Everyone smiles at me too much. They say nice things they don't really mean, and Amancio says nice things back. Afterwards, Amancio makes mushy, watery things for lunch. I tell him I miss Papa's carne frita, and he gets us street food for dinner, which isn't what I meant. I decide I'll stay in my room to sleep. This time, I don't dream anything.

—

Other than the funeral, the last time I saw Amancio was four years ago, when he left home. He was crying again. Papa told me to go to bed, but I snuck back out and watched him and Amancio scream at each other. Papa's face was all red, and he kept raising his hands, like he was going to slap Amancio. But he didn't. Finally he yelled, "Get out! Get out of my house!" and my brother ran outside with a suitcase and never came back.

I don't really know why. I was six. I asked Papa, but he just told me Amancio had it coming, and he was a dirty maricon, and I shouldn't think about him anymore. I still don't know what he meant. I guess Amancio did something really awful, or maybe Papa got sick of a son who was always crying and fighting and smoking with strange people. I don't remember. All I know is, I've never been more scared in my life than watching Papa yell.
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This new Amancio never cries, or fights, or smokes. He works a lot. He works every day except Sunday. He goes to a studio nearby where he studies art on a scholarship, and he specializes in drawing dancers. On the weekdays he sees me off to school, and then after school I play with friends or do homework. If I’m back home before the sun goes down, he never asks me where I’ve been. I tell this to my friends. Josh says I’m lucky Amancio doesn’t care, because I get to do whatever I want. I stay out with my friends more. On Thursday I go to Ian’s place. I know that Amancio’s apartment is farther from school than my old home, but today for some reason I forget. I try to walk home and get lost. I find Ian’s place again after an hour. His mom has to drive me home.

In the car, Ian’s mom says I can sleep over at their place any time I want. The people from church are all worried about you, she says. I tell her thank you, and yes, I’ll talk to Ian when I want to sleep over, but she shouldn’t worry about me. I lift my chin and try to look like a grown-up.

Amancio never finds out that I got lost. I don’t tell him. Papa worked a lot too, but he always knew where I was and when I wanted him to be there. He would come up behind me and lift me all the way up to his shoulders. He knew the names and parents of all my friends. He helped me every time I got stuck on homework. After school and on the weekends, we would play airplanes and futbol and baseball. His job was loads cooler, too. He was a security director for a shopping mall, and he led personnel and caught criminals.

Amancio asks me how I’m doing every night, but he doesn’t know any of my homework answers, and we don’t play sports because the apartment is too far away from the park. We’re both quiet at home. He says that his dancer friends sometimes give him tickets to their shows, and we can go to one, if I want. I tell him that dancing is boring. I know about dancing, the kind with the women and the musicians and everyone clapping hands. Papa took me to see it once. This was before Amancio left. It was the three of us standing in a row, and I remember Amancio was crying again. I remember the color of the dresses. And then Amancio was gone, and Papa didn’t take me to a dance again. He said a child can dance and a baby can paint, and a grown man spends his time on something better. He wasn’t going to lose me, too.
Amancio brings a painting home on Tuesday night. It’s a woman in a grey shirt and black shorts, standing on her toes with her arms open. It looks like she’s moving on the paper.

“I finished a new series today,” he says. “This one didn’t quite fit, so I can’t sell it. But I thought you might like it.”

“What’s she doing?”

“She’s dancing. This is called contemporary dance. Her name is Maria Anisimov.”

I take the painting. It doesn’t have a frame. “But it doesn’t look like she’s dancing,” I say.

“What does it look like, then?”

“It looks like she’s trying to fly.”

“Oh.” Amancio smiles. “That’s good. That’s fine.”

I put the painting in my room, and Amancio makes dinner. He tries not to make it as mushy, but I still don’t like it. We wash the dishes together.

“You want to talk?” he asks.

“Talk about what?”

“I dunno. Come on, let’s sit on the couch.”

We sit. The couch makes the farting noise again. I turn on the TV. National Geographic is comparing how deadly crocs and hippos are.

“So I’ve been meaning to ask you about your father. Our father,” Amancio corrects quickly. He pauses. “How do you feel? About, um.” He pauses again. The crocodiles sleep in the sun.

It’s easy to guess what he’s asking. “I’m okay. I just miss him,” I say.

“Okay. I know I wasn’t in your life very much, these past few years. But I just...” He picks at the couch. One crocodile leaps up and kills a zebra. Amancio twitches and stares.

“What’re the statues for?” I ask.

He’s still watching the zebra die. “What?”

I point at the ballerina next to the TV. “What’re they for?”
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“Oh.” He looks around the room, like he forgot he had statues in the house. “They’re models, when I want to draw but I can’t find someone to pose for me. I have a lot more at my studio.”

“Why are these at home?”

He smiles a little. “They’re my oldest models. I don’t need them anymore. I don’t usually draw ballet these days. But I can’t bear to part with them.”

“Do you only draw dancers? Don’t you ever draw anything else?”

“Well, for practice, of course I draw other things. And I only just started painting seriously, so I might do different things later on. But so far I always seem to come back to dancers. It’s funny. You know I don’t dance myself. I’m horrible at it. But I can draw the people who can. They’re making art with their bodies, and they love it so much. They love their bodies. I think I was envious at first, but then somehow I fell in love, too. You have to see it to understand. It’s different when they’re moving.”

I don’t know what any of that means. He says I can come with him to the studio one day, if I want, but I say I’m okay. I turn back to the TV. Crocodiles have better teamwork, but hippos are more aggressive and dangerous. The hippos win.

---

James comes on a Saturday night. Amancio and I just ate dinner. James has red hair, and small green eyes, and the widest mouth I ever saw. I stare at him from the little blue sofa.

“So this is the famous Rico!” he says, and ruffles my hair. I feel my face burn. I try to punch him to make him stop, but he just laughs. Amancio is laughing too. “Oh my God, hands to yourself, James! You’re a disgrace. Rico, James is one of the dancers I’ve had the privilege to work with. I didn’t know he was coming today.”

“I finished the show, thought I’d come by a little early because, you know, all the stuff that’s happened lately,” James bows to me with one arm out wide, the other on his chest. “And I especially couldn’t wait to meet you.”

“You’re a dancer?” I ask.

“Indeed I am.”

I decide that I hate him even more than Amancio. I lift my chin. “Dancing is for girls.”

Wang
He straightens up. His mouth is a big "O." "Is this boy for real?"

Amancio touches his shoulder. "Rico doesn’t like dancing."

"Yeah, well, there’s dislike, and then there’s blatant ignorance. Look, kiddo," he says to me. "Dancing is for everyone. And never turn your nose up at girls. Girls will kick your ass."

"Rico, don’t use that word," Amancio says quickly. "James, come on. Let me fix you a drink."

They both go toward the kitchen. "Seriously, how is he your brother?" James asks quietly. I can still hear them if I mute the TV.

"We had very different upbringings. Just, keep it easy, alright? It’s – not there’s a lot of stuff to work though."

"Are they still giving you shit about the adoption?"

"No, no. I don’t care about that." There’s a pause. "It’s just, it’s hard. For Rico and me both. I’ll tell you about it later, okay? I’ll call and tell you about it later."

"Yeah. Yeah, okay."

They start talking about wine glasses and grape juice, and they laugh. I unmute the TV.

James stays for a long time. He keeps asking me how I’ve been "holding up," and how’s school, and isn’t my brother great? His voice is too loud. Amancio acts so different around him, even less like Papa. James says that my brother loves me very much and works very hard for me, so I need to make sure to take care of him. I tell James that Mr. Richards said I have to take care of myself. James laughs. He and Amancio talk a lot, about dancing and painting, about people I’ve never met and places I’ve never been. I don’t want to think about these things. Papa would definitely hate James too. I go to the kitchen and fill a glass with grape juice and ice. I walk back into the room. James and Amancio are sitting close together on the big brown couch. I stand behind the couch. I pour the glass.

Amancio screams first. James jumps up and turns around, and he grabs the empty glass out of my hand. He’s making the funny "O" face again. I run into the kitchen. Amancio finds me and starts yelling about responsibility and respect and James is a guest, Rico, I thought you knew better. It’s like he wants me to cry. But I won’t cry. I yell back at him. I tell him I can take care of myself and he can’t tell me what to do. Amancio raises his hands and then drops them and walks away. He gets a dry shirt for James from a drawer. He tells James to leave, he’ll call. I run into my room and sit on the chair.
Amancio knocks on the door. I tell him to go away. There’s no lock. He opens the door.

“Why did you do that?” He still has juice in his hair and his shirt.

“You had it coming. Leave me alone!”

“I already tried that, but clearly it isn’t working!” He walks closer, and I grab the painting on my desk and stand up. “Rico! That’s enough!”

“You’re not Papa! I don’t have to do what you say!”

“I’m still your brother! I’ve given so much for you, I’ve given you my home! You think you can talk to me like that? Sit down.”

“No!”

“Sit down!”

“I hate you!” I shout, and it feels so good that I keep going. “I hate you, I don’t have to listen to you, you’re a dirty maricon!” I throw the painting on the ground and stomp on it.

And suddenly Amancio looks exactly like Papa. Papa when he was yelling. His whole face is red. I can’t move, I’m so scared. He grabs my shoulders and shouts, “Nobody in this house speaks that way to me! I don’t care if you’re my brother. I took you in because I thought you might be different, but I was wrong. You’re the same as your father and all the rest! Just the same!”

He turns me toward the door and lets me go. “Get out.”

I can’t move.

“Get out of my house.”

I can’t move.

“Get out!”
I start to cry, and it feels like I’m exploding. Everything hurts. I want to stay quiet, but it’s like I’m screaming, and I can’t stop. I grab the sheets on the bed, and I pull the sheets off. I push my toys off the desk. I knock the bookcase over so all my books fall out. I go through the room and turn every surface upside down until none of my things are left. And I cry and cry. It goes on forever. It’s like I had all these tears ever since Papa died, and now they can finally come out, but there are so many they don’t know how to make the hurting stop.

I cry until I think I’m going to die. I cry until I’m so tired I can’t move. And then Amancio says, “Oh my God,” and suddenly he’s there, hugging me. His arms are gentle. He starts crying too. We rock back and forth. The world moves back and forth. “Rico, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done that. I’m so sorry.”

Amancio lifts me onto my bed, and he gives me some water. I hold onto his shirt. He lies down next to me and he’s still there when I fall asleep.

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We sit, the two of us, side by side on the bed. He’s brought a box of tissues and holds it in his lap. We’ve used almost all of it.

“Why did you leave?” I ask.

“I was angry. He didn’t want me to do what I did, to be who I was, and I guess I just had enough that day. He told me to leave. And I left. I never even tried to come back. I won’t lie. I’m happier now. But I am sorry I left you.”

“Papa hated you.”

“He was angry.”

“Why did he hate you?”

“I don’t know. I think it was because I was different. I didn’t fit in the way he saw the world.”

“But he was always so nice to me. He liked me.”

“Well, Rico, you are a very likeable boy.”

I sniffle. He hands me another tissue. “You’re not that different,” I tell him.

“No, I’m not that different.” He pokes my side. “Did Papa teach you that word?”

He means maricon. I nod.

“Don’t use it again.”
I start to cry, and it feels like I’m exploding. Everything hurts. I want to stay quiet, but it’s like I’m screaming, and I can’t stop. I grab the sheets on the bed, and I pull the sheets off. I push my toys off the desk. I knock the bookcase over so all my books fall out. I go through the room and turn every surface upside down until none of my things are left. And I cry and cry. It goes on forever. It’s like I had all these tears ever since Papa died, and now they can finally come out, but there are so many they don’t know how to make the hurting stop.

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“Don’t use it again.”

“Okay.”

He takes a tissue for himself. “I know I’m not good at this. But you need to understand: never be ashamed to grieve. Okay? Sometimes grieving is the most important thing you can do. You loved Papa, and I—he changed us so much, for better or for worse. He changed us so much. I grieve with you now.” He takes a big breath. “What was he like?”

“You don’t remember?”

“I remember what I thought he was like. I want to know what you thought he was like.”

So I tell him about soccer and pineapple juice and playing cops and robbers. I tell him about Papa’s laughter and Papa’s cooking and Papa’s stories about the street he’d grown up in. I tell him that, once, I got stuck on the roof at school, and the principal was so mad, but Papa came with a ladder and got me down himself and the principal is still extra nice to me when she sees me. We both cry some more. It doesn’t hurt.

We spend a whole day cleaning up my room and washing the stains out of the couch. A few days later, the bed finally arrives. James comes over to help move furniture. Amancio made me practice apologizing to him so I would be ready. I tell him I’m sorry. James forgives me and ruffles my hair. He still stops me when I punch him.

When we’re done, the apartment feels smaller, but I’m used to it now. There’s music playing from somewhere down the street. A woman in the apartment below us laughs and claps her hands. I ask James if I can see him dance. He grins at me.

“You’re not going to call me girly, are you?”

I shake my head. “Girls will kick my ass.”

He laughs. Amancio covers his face. We make a little space in the middle of the TV room, and James dances for a minute. It’s only a minute, but it feels like forever. I hold my breath the whole way through. It looks like he’s flying. Like he’ll jump off the floor. Out the window. Up into the sky.
Jenny shakes her head at the IMDB Parent’s Guide for *Pulp Fiction*.

“Too violent? No pressure,” mumbles her catfish from the opposite side of the bedroom. Jenny’s boyfriend, Craig, is a pet ventriloquist, now semi-pro.

“The ventriloquist proxy market is growing,” he once said, without moving his lips. Deep down, Craig knows that pet ventriloquism is still seen as a notch beneath puppeteering, his first love.

Jenny peruses Putlocker for a less violent movie, and patiently closes pornographic advertisements. On the other side of the room, Craig presses his lips to the fish tank. The catfish mirrors Craig from the inside. To Jenny, this is intimate. Craig closes his eyes in ecstasy, making piscatorial noises. Jenny puts away Putlocker, then tucks herself under the edamame-print comforter. The next morning, Jenny wakes up to find a few dried tears all over Craig’s cheek.

“What’s wrong,” she says to sleeping Craig.

“I’m sleeping,” says Craig.

“Alright,” says Jenny. She goes back to sleep.

At breakfast, Jenny notices Craig is taciturn for the third week in a row. She spreads margarine on his toast. Craig mumbles to himself, *I can’t believe it’s not butter*. His lips don’t move.

“Remember when the TV people blindfolded Paula Deen and made her taste the difference between butter and margarine?” said Jenny. “She got so mad.”

“Paula Deen is racist,” says Craig.

“Hmm,” says Jenny. She goes back to picking lint off the challah.

Jenny (Craig)
The next day, Jenny goes to work, which lasts from 9AM to 5PM. She thinks about the outline of dried tears on Craig’s face. It reminds her of the shape of Colorado, USA, before it ceded to Wyoming. Jenny’s watch says 5:15.

“But I don’t feel like leaving,” she replies. Nobody in the restaurant hears her. A little boy in a high chair pulls on Jenny’s pinafore pocket.

“Get me some ketchup – vintage Heinz.”

“Say please, Timmy,” says Timmy’s grandmother from the leather booth.

“Please, Timmy,” Timmy says. He tries to raise his eyebrows at Jenny, but he only has one eyebrow. Timmy’s grandmother leaves Jenny an anecdotally notable tip.

Strolling home from work, Jenny ponders the financial merits of pet ventriloquism. She passes a dark alleyway and for the first time in five years, forgets to lace her keys between her fingers. A man walks toward her, examining her face. She looks back at him, wondering if he is lost, and if she looks like the kind of friendly pedestrian who will give directions. The man walks up to her and Jenny arranges her countenance into kindness.

“I have a gun and I’m not afraid to use it,” says the man.

“I see,” Jenny says.

“Give me twenty dollars.”

Jenny reaches into the front pocket of her knapsack and finds a five-dollar bill. She unzips her thigh-high boots and pulls out a ten-dollar bill. She takes off her bangle bracelet and un-tapes a loonie from the inside. She pulls two Sacagawea dollars out of her beehive hair.

“This is all I have,” Jenny says, pouring the money into the man’s outstretched hands.

“Give me your wallet.”

Jenny shows the man her left breast: no wallet. The man shows Jenny his pistol. For the umpteenth time today, Jenny thinks of Craig’s tears. She suspects that his sadness, or perhaps subgenre of dissatisfaction, has been festering for months. What did I do wrong? Jenny imagines how much sadder Craig would be if he found her tonight, shot by another man. Jenny looks up at the side of the building, and sees Craig several floors above on the fire escape, cutting his toenails. The man watches them fall onto Jenny’s face like snowflakes. He buttons up his Barbour jacket, and slouches into the distance.
As Jenny arrives home, Craig steps off the fire escape and into the apartment through the big window.

“Look what Timmy’s grandmother left me,” says Jenny. From her pinafore pocket, she takes out a two-dollar bill.


Jenny sees Craig’s lips move with the words, then curl into a smile. Jenny decides not to tell him that she nearly gave her life for these two dollars, and instead snuggles closer to him on the couch. Craig kisses Jenny’s neck, imagining it as Thomas Jefferson’s.

“What do you want,” Jenny asks aroused Craig.

“I’m aroused,” says Craig. “What do you want?”

“I want a pair of Frye boots,” Jenny says. This is the first time she has ever asked Craig for anything, excluding rent.

The next day, Jenny and Craig find the Frye leather goods store in Soho. They notice the Frye Company’s pride in its American-made products. They giggle and exchange a look that says, “marketing xenophobia.” Jenny feels a tension with Craig that is sexually intellectual. Suspecting they both just have spring fever, they enter the store. The door clicks shut behind them, leaving the store dark. Jenny gropes over to a light switch on the wall near the window, and flips it up. Strobe lights begin to flash twice a millisecond. Techno music rips through Craig’s weak eardrums, but Craig dances anyway. Jenny screams and flips the switch off, then the adjacent switch on.

The store fills with bohemian lights. Craig sniffs the leather goods. He sees the price tag on the sole of a pair of monk-strap shoes.

“I can’t do this,” Craig yells, sprinting to the exit. The door doesn’t give. He shakes it and yells Jenny’s name. Jenny tries the door. No dice. Craig bangs on the store window, but the pedestrians on the Soho sidewalk continue to fondle each other.

“Spring fever,” Craig whispers, his lips unmoving. Jenny calls out to the store to gauge the presence of Frye employees, but no one, not even the shoe-man from Connecticut who flirted with her last time, answers her call. She runs to the landline phone at the checkout counter.
“Gladys!” pants Jenny into the phone. “Craig and I—”

Jenny looks up to see Craig sprinting angularly around the store. He falls to his knees in what can only be described as retail despair. He punches the Sabrina, a burnt-leather, chunky-heeled bootie, in the tongue. Sabrina falls to her side.

“Hi Jenny,” says Gladys over the phone. “I’m starting to think our friendship won’t pass the Bechdel test.”

“We can’t get out of the Frye store.”

“Their shoes are nice but Jenny, you need a little more self-control.”

“You gotta help us out, Gladys.”

“After how much you spent last time? Jenny. C’mon. I have to pick Little Timmy up from school, anyways.”

“But it’s only eleven o clock.”

“I may be a mom, but I have a job too, you know.”

“Gladys!”

“After that snafu at Spicy Throwdown, Guy Fieri was desperate for a new publicist.”


“Let’s go,” Jenny says, her face pale.

“What’s wrong?” says Craig.

“Where’d you find that?”

“In the changing room,” Craig says. “What’d Gladys say?”

“She’s Guy Fieri’s...publicist.”

“Oh,” says Craig. He rests the sledgehammer against the checkout counter.

Jenny bends over the counter and sobs into Frye’s Spring 2020 catalogue. Craig wraps his arms around Jenny’s chest, and tries not to think of Thomas Jefferson.
“Look at me, Jenny,” Craig whispers. “I’ll take this sledgehammer, and bash that Guy’s head in. He’ll never touch you, or Jemma, or Mama, or Magellan, again. Don’t worry about his TV show. Next time, it’ll just have to feature his own thigh meat. Guy Fieri’s a star. But Jenny. Stars? They’re criminals, just like us.”

“I love you, Craig,” Jenny says. “I love it when your lips move. Let’s get out of here.”

Jenny laces on the Sabrina boots. Craig shatters the front of the Frye store with the sledgehammer. They step back onto the sidewalk and take the F train home.

As they pass the dark alleyway, Jenny reaches to interlace her hands with her keys, but finds Craig’s fingers between hers instead. The man with eighteen dollars crouches in the corner, feeding pigeons. Jenny makes eye contact with him, then shrugs.

“I love you too,” the pigeons coo. “No pressure.”
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48 is Jericho Brown
60 is Mary McNamara
Autobiography of Real: an interview with Jericho Brown

Jericho Brown is a love poet like Sappho was a love poet, like King Solomon; Jericho Brown is a political poet like Sappho, or whoever wrote Song of Songs. In his two books of poems, Please (2008) and The New Testament (2014), Brown reminds us that successful poetry must have a stake in both the personal and the public, the contemporary and the historical; that successful poetry is itself a kind of coherence of opposites. Born and raised in Louisiana, he now lives in Atlanta where he teaches English at Emory University. He has won numerous fellowships and award including a newly announced 2016 Guggenheim Fellowship. Before his life as a professor and a poet, Brown worked as a speechwriter for the Mayor of New Orleans. Well, not “before,” exactly—Jericho Brown has always been a poet.

In The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind, you included a beautiful essay that begins, “Every poem in a love poem. Every poem is a political poem. So say the masters. Every love poem is political. Every political poem must fall in love.” Is this a reader’s distinction or a writer’s distinction, or both?
What do we expect from the art we make? What do we expect from the art we consume? What do we want art to do? What draws us to it over and again, though it is always difficult, though it always knocks the breath out of us, though the best of it makes us—yes!—uncomfortable?

Jake, don’t you want to be changed, expanded? I mean wouldn’t it be lovely to know that what you do will indeed alter you? And as a reader, don’t you want to come away from what you’ve read with no choice but to see the world anew?

Yes, that’s what you want. That’s what I want too! We are one.

Poetry is meant to move us. This is not some strange thing I am saying here. And once our emotions are rightly moved and/or often moved, that makes for a change in our intellect; a change of mind. A real change of mind is only evident through a change in action. Feeling leads to acting. Love is, therefore, political. No distinction necessary.
Following your writing outside of Please and The New Testament, I always have been struck by how direct and genuine it feels. You have told me you love me, your reader, on more than one occasion. And your tweets, “If I don’t fall in love and stay that way, then my parents win.” “The grief is actual. You could touch it. Do you want to? Touch it.” “I #love you.” Including your tweets is probably not great journalistic evidence, but I like them a lot. Even outside the twitterverse, though, you use direct address a lot. Is that something you think about?
I think people want what I want. (That’s probably selfish or narcissistic. Maybe I shouldn’t think this way, and maybe it’s yet another feature of my thinking I’ll have to work to change.) I want people to imagine me. I want to be possible in the mind even before I’m met in person. I want my subject position—all of my subject positions—to be a consideration. I imagine other people want that too, so I try talking to people as directly as I can in my poems and otherwise. I try to come at things where I imagine folks already are or have been. Of course, that gets me into trouble sometimes…

For example, I have a friend who is asexual, and he came to a panel I was on recently. The panel was about sex and love and the body in poetry. The moderator asked a question of me, and my answer was that I didn’t understand why so many are uncomfortable talking about having sex when everyone wants to have it. Of course, that got a lot of laughs, but I felt like shit after the panel as I was walking away from the event with my friend.

You see, the comment re-establishes a world in which he must not exist, and I’m willing to bet that those laughs I knew would come as the result of the comment helped to enable my forgetting his existence. But, by God, he was sitting right there! A person I swear I love!

I kept apologizing, and he kept saying that he didn’t even notice. But him not noticing doesn’t change the fact that I was wrong, that I had committed a violence. And that violence isn’t just against him. It’s also a violence against myself because if I really do believe in the golden rule, and that there is value in speaking to what I know we have in common, if I believe I should be imagined as a possibility, then certainly, I should be able to imagine a way my comments can include my friend. He is, after all, my friend. And I am a writer for heaven’s sake. I should be able to work with language.

I should also say Essex Hemphill and Gwendolyn Brooks. These and other writers were aware that I could be before I ever was. They’re writing is for a future. I want to do what good writers do. We call James Baldwin a prophet because that’s exactly what he was. But those prophecies from the best of our writers aren’t just about culture. They are also about those who inhabit and add to that culture. They are about me. I owe those writers something for imagining that I could be when nothing of the world around them suggested someone like me was possible.

So how do I pay my debt? I try doing what they did for me. If I can imagine someone, Jake, I can quite literally, create him should the work in which I imagine him get into his hands.
Do you think about cultivating a public image?
Do you think about not cultivating one?
I don’t say the n-word in front of white people if that’s what you’re asking me!

Okay, I’ll be more serious for you here. I do worry that no matter how good my poems are, it’s hard for people to take them or me seriously because I have never bought into the idea that I should pretend I’m not having a good time. And I know what my good time looks like bothers people. I also know that’s they’re problem.

I’m very black and Southern and loud and country and sometimes even ratchet. And I will queen all the way out if the right song comes on in the grocery store while I’m buying lettuce. I love these things about myself. And those who love me love these things about me.

But some people read my poems and desperately need me to be the man in the poems… I’m not sure if that means they should change their expectations of a poem’s speaker (who is always unlike a human being in that he is a fixed being) or if it means they’re not so good at reading poems.

And I guess me typing this much shows that I don’t care which they’re problem is or what they think of me. Bad readers or bad expectation, they have these ideas because they read the poems all the way to their last lines, which means I’ve done the work I was supposed to do. Now they have work to do.

Don’t get me wrong. I’m not dropping my nudes on Twitter. But that is about the fact that I wouldn’t, not about the fact that I think it would change my public persona…a public persona which, by the way Jake, we both know doesn’t exist.

I would like for people to think I’m a good man. And I would like for them to think I’m a good poet. But more than that, I’d really just like for these things to be true.

Let’s ask some more questions here I want it to be clear that I’ve already thought about:

How many MacArthur Genius Fellows in poetry have enjoyed going back and forth with their friends publicly on Twitter?

How many Pulitzer Prize winners in poetry openly say anything radically left about race or gender in public talks or on panels?

How many National Book Award winners in poetry would ever plan to include in their acceptance speeches a word about how our community is made more safe when the women in our community know they won’t be sexually harassed?

How many poems are published by The Yale Review that… I’ll stop. I think you get my point.

I know what I’m doing. And I know what my work can do without me imprisoning my person.
In that same vein, you’ve written and spoken a bit about your relationships to the New Critics. In a conversation with Natasha Trethewey you mentioned that especially coming from the South, New Criticism had always been touchstone for how you analyzed poetry. As you developed as a poet, you began to write in direct opposition of their imperative. In a section of the essay I mentioned above you write to Cleanth Brooks:

“I’m sorry, but seeing the poem as artifact without seeing the history and culture embedded suggests we read without history at all. This may be a convenient way of reading for those who have a history they can’t face.”

There’s a lot to think about there, but first do you think that the public persona of a poet can or should enter into our perception of their verse? Of course you’re talking about identity in the excerpt I pulled, and I’m asking more about personality, but do you think we can or should think about the latter, if we must think about the former?

Does rejecting the New Critics in this way demand that the poet address their own autobiography, as the reader must? This might seem like an obvious question—no one has to write about anything—but some of the most lauded poets of the moment seem to be doing a lot of similarly thinking about autobiography as such, like Maggie Nelson, Claudia Rankine, and to some extent yourself.
I try not to demand to much of anything from poets. There are things I’d like to see and that I’d like to see more of, yes. But I really do think each one of us is trying to do the best she can do. This is why I don’t write reviews. And it’s probably why I haven’t yet figured out how to say no to writing blurbs.

I don’t like everything. I like very little. Still, I’m not foolish enough to believe that what I don’t like doesn’t have value.

I have yet to read the poem that I don’t think of as autobiographical. Isn’t poetry the real autobiography since—at its best—it is a record of the life of the mind?

And nothing is going to stop me from being surprised every time white people acknowledge the fact of whiteness in their poems. I’ve counted, and so far this has happened about six times in the history of American poetry!

But yes, you’re asking about personality more than you are asking about identity, so I should stay focused. It seems that what we fall in love with when we fall in love with the poems of Frank O’Hara is at least a facet of the personality of the actual man. We like hearing stories about Frank O’Hara and Dorothy Parker because something about those stories reaffirms our belief in the voices they create for us in their poems. And yes, we like knowing that Adrienne Rich and Denise Levertov and Sonia Sanchez and Grace Paley were willing to march and be arrested on the behalf of some ethical and moral cause because it suggests to us that the challenges set forth in their poems can indeed be met.

Should we need these things? No! But then again, we shouldn’t need much of what we use.
It’s really interesting to think about the psychic desires of the hegemonic culture as influencing on such a large scale how we write and read. On the other hand, the way we read poems is also so rooted in our personal history. Do you think these two kinds of baggage are ever in conflict? Have you ever noticed them operating differently in your readership?

For example, if someone were to pick up your book, they might place you in a lineage of Black poets more readily than in that of gay or queer poets. Maybe not, or maybe so and that fact is less illuminating than I think it is.

Your work bears a stronger formal similarity to the lyric poetry that the New Critics themselves were looking at; or rather, it is more strongly what we associate with the lyric form. Today that form seems to be fading. I mentioned Maggie Nelson and Claudia Rankine. Ben Lerner comes to mind, and Elizabeth Willis, Anne Carson—all those who seem to have wandered out from a kind of inherited lyric form towards something more influenced by a critical prose style. Do you see this drift as part of a larger contemporary trend?
Jake, my love, I think you’re asking me—a Southern black gay poet who’s lived on both coasts and is several years younger than the members of the Darkroom Collective but too old to call a Millennial, with a PhD in poetry where my teachers were both Tony Hoagland and Claudia Rankine—if I think some readers have a difficult time with a poet having complexities that make that poet hard to categorize, classify, and taxonomize.

I guess my answer to that is that my goal has always been to create that difficult time with and through my poems. My readers—may the Lord be praised!—either want the difficulty, or they already know that the individual is varied and that it’s okay that part of that variety includes the individual’s identities.

Yes, yes, yes, I’m just as frustrated as anyone else about being pigeonholed, but none of those frustrations will stop me from believing that an ownership of all my identities are of great use to my poems.

I’m not sure I agree with you about Willis since *Address* is the latest book that’s not a selected, and I haven’t had the chance to get to the selected just yet. (Forgive me, Elizabeth!) At any rate, I actually think of my work as being a great deal like Willis’s formally and otherwise, though I have some qualms with her poems as I would with any poet’s...

But sure, I’ll say there’s a trend...particularly in terms of what the work you mention has been able to do for poetry’s popularity and wider audience since there’s not really very much of a question about that...

I really just think, though, that there’s yet another genre of poetry for us to learn from and contend with, and that genre stands alongside so many others including the formalist leanings in the work of poets like Derrick Austin and Erica Dawson or the avant garde and performance-oriented work of poets like Douglas Kearney and Tracie Morris.

The question I think you may be asking me is why more people have historically and continuously preferred reading prose to reading lines, and that might have something to do with their perception of difficulty as it relates to lines. Of course, the poets you mention subvert the perception of prose as somehow “easier” by writing beautifully difficult poetry in memorable prose styles.

Or maybe you’re asking me why I have yet to give up on lines since they are clearly dead and since so many of the writers I love seem to use them less and less. Maybe I will give up on them some day. Anything is so very possible. But lines were called dead long before I was born, and yet they made their way to me, and I fell in love with them.

Of course, I won’t be agreeing with you that anything about the wrought nature of *Please* or *The New Testament* is “fading.” As a matter of fact, it seems to me alive enough for you to take the time to draft these complex questions about it. I should at least be grateful for that much!
In “To Be Seen” from *The New Testament* you write “We talk about God // Because we want to speak / In metaphors.” You also write in the first “Another Elegy” “Expect death. In every line, / Death is a metaphor that stands / For nothing, represents itself, / No goods for sale.” I’m interested in the connective tissue that metaphor provides here between God and death. Could you talk a little about that?
Those lines come from the poet’s frustration with trying to get at the truth by nailing the abstract nature of it down to something physical in the world. We do feel that there are times we know the truth, and we’d like to believe we can show just how well we know it through making metaphors. Of course, these metaphors fail us since the truth (tenor here) shifts in ways the metaphors (vehicle) can’t. I wanted, in these poems, to admit that I wouldn’t be getting it right but that I’ll keep trying and that I’ll get so close that sometimes—however briefly—I’ll feel satisfied.
New Haven is on one side of the country, and Los Angeles the other. Usually we think of television and poetry as artistic media separated by an equally sprawling distance. Mary McNamara is the fifth television critic to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize; she is the first to win in 28 years, however, as well as the first female to win for television writing. Our email correspondence crossed the distance, real and imagined, as she spoke with The Lit for an interview about television—an industry, a social barometer, and the most popularly consumed form of art in America today.

How did you get interested in TV criticism?

The Pulitzer Prize has been awarded five times for television criticism. The first time was in 1973, then ’80, ’85, and ’88—and now you’re the first television critic to be given the award in almost thirty years. Why do you think television seems to have been taken so seriously early on, and why might that level of attention dropped off?
Accidentally. I was working as an entertainment reporter, doing some reporting on TV but mainly focusing on film when the TV editor started one of the recapping blogs, called Showtracker. She asked members of the staff to pitch in and I started blogging about “Grey’s Anatomy” and “House.” A year or so later, one of our TV critics wanted to change jobs and she asked if I would be interested in becoming TV critic. I had just had my third child and was killing myself driving from interviews on the Westside to the various daycares on the east side and I asked “can I work from home?” She said yes, and I said sure. It was such a happy accident—when I started ten years ago, a lot of people seemed to think that TV was dead, so I would up chronicling the revolution.

I hadn’t realized the 80s were the golden age of TV criticism, though my friend Howard Rosenberg won in ’85 and in a recent lunch, he said if he had to do what my colleague Robert Lloyd and I do—cover the number of new shows on all the new outlets—he would go crazy! I think some of it was due to what I mentioned above—ten years ago, reality television was such a huge threat that many predicted the death of scripted programming (remember when NBC turned over its 10 p.m. slot to Leno??) while the rise of the DVR and the specter of cord-free “young folk” seemed to spell the economic demise of the industry.
One thing that’s interesting about TV criticism when compared with, say, book reviews is that book critics such as James Wood or Michiko Kakutani won’t review something that is typically considered beach reading. In large part, they don’t review some of the best selling books, the kinds of spy thrillers and romances that one finds in airport. On the other hand, vast popularity seems to ensure that a given TV program will be reviewed. Do you think that’s true?
Seriously, to hear people talk then, you’d have thought that by now, TVs would be as obsolete as 8-Track players and everyone would be watching webisodes on their phones. Which they are! But they’re also watching TV which, instead of dying, became the ascendant art form of the 21st Century.

Which may be the other reason—the whole “I only watch PBS” snobbery is finally dead. Again, when I started, otherwise intelligent people found it perfectly acceptable to say snotty things like “Oh God, I never watch TV, it’s all so terrible except maybe ‘The Sopranos.’ Or ‘The Wire. I just love ‘The Wire.’” (The head of HBO programming recently told me if everyone who said they only watched “The Wire,” had actually watched “The Wire” “The Wire” would still be on.)

Now there are just too many great shows to pretend they don’t matter, and television as a medium is more powerful than ever.

I have no idea how book critics decide what to review but we do our best to review all the big new shows and a lot of the small ones regardless of their popularity or “cultural significance.” Television criticism is different from other sorts of criticism in that, in most cases, you’re not reviewing a finished product. Even streaming services like Netflix rarely supply critics with the entire seasons before they go live and though many TV critics experimented with binging early seasons of, say, “House of Cards,” life is frankly too short, and even if you review a full season, it still does not represent the entire work.
It’s really interesting to think about “television” as a unified form because today it seems so diffuse. As a college student I know a lot of people who “watch TV” in some meaningful sense, but no one I know has a television. How do you think the way we engage with content associated with TV affects our reception of it? Do you, for example, as a professional TV critic always watch on a television?
Dealing with the number of new shows is an increasing problem for critics—there were something like 35 new shows in January. January! Especially since a large percentage of television criticism is overview, rather than review—stories on trends, shifts, notable characters etc. So I think we are going to see more pre-sorting and round-ups, at least until the amount of content drops off.

Nope. I watch it on every screen available, though I still refuse to review from my iPhone. As more networks move away from screeners, I watch mostly on my laptop. I think the digital change has had a huge affect on the content and our relationship with it. I wrote several big pieces about this—when television became permanent, portable and collectable, people began treating it like art, which encouraged the creators to experiment in tone and form and content. Vince Gilligan repeatedly credited Netflix with the success of “Breaking Bad”—not only did it create new audiences, they were able to watch it in a new way, as a story moving from one point to another, rather than serialized entertainment. When television became something we could own, rather than something we did, everything changed.
You wrote a really interesting article this year in the wake of the on-air killings of Allison Parker and Adam Ward. In it, you wrestled with the idea that TV and its intersecting internet culture can motivate sick people to horrifying things in order to get famous; while at the same time processing boycotts of the footage as a kind of concession to the terror of violence:

Their deaths should remind us that every act of violence, every killing, occurs in moments of disjointed horror. Just as images of police brutality against black Americans recently reignited protest and investigations, the tragic last minutes of these lives should prompt as many serious conversations as prayers. About guns and mental illness, about safety in the workplace and whatever other issues come to light as the story evolves.

Not everything that occurs on television or social media is there for our enjoyment, and when the unacceptable or the outrageous occurs, we should draw as many eyeballs to it as we can. When we’re too afraid to see what violence really looks like, or too worried that our horror will encourage it, that’s when we’ll know the barbarians have won.

Do you think we have ethical responsibilities as consumers of television?
I do, especially right now when a well-timed Twitter campaign can instantly affect what we see. Which is very cool, but requires thought and calm on both sides. I have no problem with graphic violence on scripted television if it serves the story, but I do think it is important to separate fictional violence, and our reaction to it, from actual violence and our reaction to it. Like the Ray Rice video, this terrible shooting was a perfect example of what gun violence really looks like. I certainly wouldn’t say people should watch it, but to suggest that the airing of it was necessarily exploitive, or that those who watched it were morbid, or “doing what the killer wanted” is just absurd. Journalism in particular should not be dictated in any way by the possible motives of crazy people.
In a recent review of the Netflix Documentary “Making a Murderer” you write about our present-moment fascination with true crime stories. They have always been a popular part of TV, as you note, citing “To Catch a Predator” and the Paradise Lost trilogy. But these stories have never been so widely popular and profitable as now—“Serial,” “The Jinx,” “Making a Murderer,” and now it seems “The People v. OJ Simpson.”

However, you end that article in an ominous place. If you don’t mind my quoting liberally again:

Whether or not these people, and their terrible ordeals, should be offered up for our binge-loving entertainment is a whole other issue.

Clearly, Ricciardi and Demos are on the side of justice, attempting to shed light on the dangers of imperfect police work and the very real potential for conspiracy. But when they showcase the awful thrill with which some members of the media reacted to the “great story” of Avery’s second arrest, it’s tough not to see a double standard.

It is a great story, which is why they and Netflix chose to tell it. Even more worrisome is the marginalization of the victims, and their families, in these sorts of series. Although they focus on men, “Serial,” “The Jinx” and “Making a Murderer” are all bound by dead women, who remain dead no matter who goes to jail for it.

Do you take issue with points you raise?
I am actually going to write a piece about this. True Crime has always fascinated, even before Truman Capote turned it into a literary art form. But some of the issues raised by “In Cold Blood” remain—the victims are almost always a secondary part of the narrative because, well, they’re dead; the action involves those who are not. Which is fine, but I do think those who choose to tell those sorts of stories have a responsibility in choosing their subjects—why are the victims of the stories that fascinate predominantly women?—and, in the case of fictional accounts like “The People vs. OJ,” not falling prey to the same sort of circus atmosphere that they are ostensibly condemning.
“The winner of the 2016 Oscar in practically every category is ... white men facing adversity.” This began your first article after the 2016 Oscar nominations came out. You’ve written insightfully about how the lack of gender and racial diversity is not only a matter of Hollywood executives correcting a system that overexposes some stories over others, but also a matter of these corporations being in touch with the consciousness and concerns of our present moment. Our stories—the important stories shaping our historical and artistic moment—are being overlooked to some degree. “Tyranny comes in many forms, and offering people only one tiny window through which to view the world is one of them,” you write. While that’s certainly true, a number of other, larger systems make it so that there are far more white writers, directors, actors, and other television-and-film industry people: what responsibility do you think Hollywood has beyond award shows and green-lighting?

Also, the critical landscape is also very male and very white. Do you see that as related obstacle?
The best thing about the new status of television is the conversations it provokes. Social media allows for a wider variety of voices to be heard, but critics still have the power to herd, if not quite control, the conversation, and so the more diverse the critics, the more diverse the conversation. Years ago, I wrote a piece about how it was high time HBO stopped with all the naked tits, i.e. ambient nude women who had absolutely nothing to do with the plot. Nudity, I said, was fine when it served the story, but the trope of setting all-male exposition in brothels and strip clubs was ridiculous. Well. There was not a male TV critic in America who didn’t fall all over themselves calling me out for my overly sensitive, possibly censoring ways. It was pretty hilarious actually. Then of course, some male critic coined the term “sexposition” and then all the guys were on the same page.

More pragmatically, studios need to hire a more diverse array of executives, including those who have not risen in the traditional way; networks need to cast their nets wider for writers instead of offering the same five guys multi-year contracts over and over again; established writers need to move beyond their comfort zone in their writing and in who they mentor (“He reminded me of me when I was young and struggling” maybe the single biggest problem with Hollywood, and pretty much everywhere). The onus cannot be put on the casting directors, which it often seems to be.

A LOT of people took issue with my use of the word “tyranny” in that sentence so it’s nice to see you quoting it. There are many things Hollywood can do, all of which boil down to: Stop repeating yourself, and stop telling yourself lies about why you’re repeating yourself. Conventional wisdom is its all about the bank—studios do what they think will succeed, what will make money and they base their decisions what has succeed-ed and made money before. Even though history continues to prove that this is not a valid business model! Audiences respond to good stories, well-told and there are far more good stories waiting to be well-told outside the margins of what Hollywood has done before than within them.
You wrote about Donald Trump in December, calling him a kind of fictional anti-hero to the imaginary of an American President propelled by a reality-TV sensibility and maintained (paradoxically (and terrifyingly)) by a lack of substance. Spring has come, and like his shiny office buildings Trump still looms over the presidential landscape. We know television can explain a lot about Trump; do you see Trump as revealing anything about television or our the nature of our engagement with it?

You also covered the Democratic and Republican debates. Is there anything we can or should do to restore televised politics to a kind of intellectual discourse or do you see it as permanently corroded?
Yeah, I still stand by my original point. It’s easy to say Trump is a product of reality television, certain segments of which are built on the entertainment value of pettiness, bullying and other unfortunate human attributes. But I think our recent infatuation with the anti-hero is more telling. Slowly we began to accept all manner of flaws in our fictional heroes, and in doing so, redefined heroism. Which is great, fiction being the way we work out our feelings about a lot of things. But it’s very important to remember that it’s fiction. In fact, most asinine bullies do not harbor the brilliance of Gregory House.

What are you talking about? The Democratic candidates were a model of intellectual discourse and, for the most part, civility! You mean the Republicans, anchored by Trump, which is a very specific situation. The biggest problem with the GOP debates is that there were just too many candidates for way too long. Even without Trump it would have been impossible to wrangle. Certainly there was a new attention to ratings that affected the absurdly dramatic promos, but I don’t think the onstage squabbling was the fault of the moderators. Pitting the candidates against each other was a logical solution to a logistical problem—how do you get to hear from as many candidates on as many issues as you can. And breaking down the wall between what the candidates say about each other on the campaign trail and what they say when they’re standing next to each other is legitimate journalism. So I don’t think the fault lies with television. It was this particular group of candidates.
Do you see reviewing as both a journalistic and literary act? Do you think the balance shifts depending on what you’re reviewing?
I don’t think journalism and literature are separate entities, particularly when it comes to criticism. Criticism should be informative and thought-provoking, serious and written in a way that people want to read it. My tone certainly shifts depending on what I’m writing about and what I want to say, but the writing itself always comes from the same place as anything I write. Tell the truth as you see it in a clear and engaging way. Doesn’t always work, but I always try.
78 is palm by Joshua Tarplin
80, 82 are banana & untitled by Brian Orozco
84, 86, & 88 are 2,3,5 from Jen Lu’s City series
90, 92 are witnessing!!!! and HEATSPACING by Carly Lovejoy
92 is Truth (parts 1 & 2) by Bix Archer
96 is country (work in progress) by Caroline Tisdale
witnessing!!!!
DEE: I do the same. YEAH

DO YOU MEAN THAT TO BE A SECRET?

I'M NOT SURE.

A SECRET, BUT A VERY PUBLIC ONE.