gentle reader,—

After a tumultuous summer and fall, we're excited to bring you the Fall 2020 issue of the *Yale Literary Magazine*. In this issue, we welcome poets and writers from Yale who, at the time of writing and editing, were flung all across the world. Nevertheless, they've managed to produce a cohesive body of writings and artworks. This past spring, we produced a limited run broadside alongside an online issue. For the fall, we wanted to return to our print roots and present an issue that responds to the long history of our publication.

As the weather warms—and alongside it, the political climate—we hope you'll take some time to enjoy the fall issue of the *Lit*. Inside, Lucy Gilchrist provides a sestina with island kings. Logan Klutse waxes poetic about our last days at Yale before the pandemic. Daniel Yadin writes about a painting. Kiran Masroor thinks about the value of a photograph. Yuri Bong, Audrey Coombe, Adrienne Zhang, and Caroline James provide us with visuals to feast on. Whether it be outdoors during one of your walks, or at home in a cozy armchair, we hope that the *Lit.* helps bring some piece of Yale's creativity to wherever you are.

Many thanks to the writers and editors who went the extra mile over the past few months to make this issue happen. We hope you enjoy what they've put together.

Perhaps, as it did for us, reading this work will give you solace in our troubled world.

Until next time.

a. kumar-banerjee

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. The author feels that this might make a decent first sentence. All the author needs to do is think of a second sentence that will turn the first sentence into a joke. Maybe something about a book being like a child. Potential extended metaphor? Changing the book’s diapers, muscling through its terrible twos? The author is not sure how many people read these. He will put a pin in the first sentence circle back to it later.

The author would like to thank Mrs. Perkins, who taught High School Biology and who believed in him when no one else did. The author would like to thank his superstar agent, Kimberly. You rock, Kimberley! The author would like to thank Katherine and Wanda, the fine baristas of Coffee Break on 9th, for inspiring him during every step of his literary journey. They were particularly inspirational on warm days. On warm days, Katherine would wear one of those swooshy skater skirts to work and the author couldn’t help noticing that her legs were shiny. What was that? Vaseline? The natural luster of her youthful skin? Whatever it was, it didn’t have a fruity lotion smell (the author dislikes fruity lotion smells). The author acknowledges that both Katherine and Wanda smelled nice in an uncontrived sort of way.

The author would like to thank his mother (of course). The author would also like to thank his father, but he doesn’t have the time. Or the space. There are a lot of people to acknowledge and only a few pages to acknowledge them.

The author would like to thank no. Hm. The author would like to avoid sounding petty, since he’s an artist’s artist at heart and since publishing a debut novel is a pretty big
deal after all, a time to rise above childish disputes and let
the work speak for itself et cetera et cetera. Suffice it to say
that the author has some thoughts he would like to share.
Thoughts he has chosen not to include in the acknowledg-
ments. Instead, he has written these thoughts in a private
diary to be opened at the time of his death. If the author’s
writing career goes according to plan (why shouldn’t it?
He’s only twenty-nine), excerpts from the private diary will
doubtless be included in his biography. Those who would
prefer not to wait until the author’s death to hear about
his grievances will be pleased to know that the author has
included many of them in the book. Interested readers
should pay particular attention to dialogue spoken by Finn,
the melancholy schoolmaster.

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual
persons, living or dead, or actual events, is purely coin-
cidental. The author would like to thank his superstar
agent Kimberley again, for reminding him about the legal
issues. The author would like to thank Brass & Cordova
Attorneys at Law.

The author would like to thank Wanda for pouring
that cute design in his cappuccino just now. She has a pleas-
ant face. The author is considering Wanda for a character
in his next novel and wonders if she knows who he is. Does
she read much? Girls who work in coffee shops probably
read. The author wonders whether he should offer Wanda
a signed copy of the book. No, too self-aggrandizing. The
author has decided to pull up his Wikipedia page and wait
for her to walk by again.
MAMA, TELL ME—what is history, really, after the last person to witness it has long been ferried across the Styx? Over and over as our tales of manipulation, jealousy, and revenge were whispered around hearth fires and sung in courts, our characters were painted a little differently each time. At the core, though, they weren’t that far from the truth, they just blamed the wrong gods. Still, no one ever got it quite right. But mama, the ones that angered me the most were those who claimed to know the truth—the “scholars” who labeled us falsehoods and filed us away as myths. Worse than that, became a damsel in distress, remembered only as the stolen wife of Hades. But then again, even Zeus didn’t suspect anything until many millennia later, far too late to do anything about it.

For years you and I had given the land the will to flourish. Flowers and crops, forests and swamps, everything growing because we told it to, allowing their farms to feed their families and their villages. I will admit that I liked to make it more difficult for the ones who forgot to sacrifice and pray to us—soil too dry to let crops flourish and weeds that choked the life out of anything that tried. However, the humans were growing lazy and the gods had forgotten how to be thankful. Yes, mama, even you. We were the ones who gave enough so the mortals could make sacrifices to the others, and yet no one seemed to care. You were always far too content with your lot, telling me not to argue—“This is how things have always been, blossom. You’ll understand when you’ve lived a few thousand more years.” Of course, that was easy for you to say when I was the one blessing the fields while you communed with the...
DEAR MAMA: A LETTER FROM 
PERSEPHONE TO DEMETER.

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*

HELIOS SWEARS that I was just picking flowers, because what else could a harmless girl be doing in a field of narcissus besides that? He claims that he saw me from all the way up in his chariot that pulls the sun across the sky. After years of boasting that he knows of everything happening on earth during the day, he couldn’t admit to the gods that he is usually asleep on his trip across the sky so he can fraternize with his cows at night. He didn’t know that I was looking for an entrance to the underworld that was known by the local dryads to appear there occasionally. After I found it, the stories always mistook my laugh for a scream, because no one knew I was ready for the fall.

I wonder how the mortals would change their stories if they knew. I wasn’t cast out like their Lucifer, though I’m sure they would prefer seeing him over me in the Underworld. Many of them come expecting gnawing and gnashing of teeth, but soon they wish that was the worst thing they had to endure at my hand. No, at my command their teeth usually cover the ground at my feet after they pull them out with the bloody stumps of their fingers. I always thought the Fields needed more decoration. Sometimes they even think I’m the one they call Satan. Sometimes I wonder if
the Jews and the Christians wrote of him while thinking of me—a liar and deceiver, one that comes only to steal, to kill, and to destroy. Can you see the resemblance, mama?

* 

CHARON AGREED TO ferry me across the Styx easily enough. Once I showed him a vision of thorns and roses blooming in his lungs causing him to cough up blood and flower petals for the rest of eternity, he happily obliged. The River seemed to swallow every bit of light that dared touch it. Even the boat sat far lower in the waves than it should have, the water whispering for it to disappear into the blackness. It should have terrified me, but instead, the golden ichor in my veins thrummed with vitality. The Styx was ancient vengeance and resentment incarnate; even those on Olympus knew to respect, if not fear it. The rest of the Underworld was filled with moans and screams of agony, but the River seemed to swallow those too. The silence was harsh and deafening, but after centuries of hearing every insignificant prayer the pathetic humans poured over their fields, it was welcome. I almost considered jumping in and letting the quiet swallow me too if that meant shutting up the ungrateful demands of those in the world of the living. But I had come here with a purpose and I intended to see it through.

* 

I WILL SPARE YOU the details of how I brought him to his knees, mama, but I promise you Zeus would have been proud. I learned how to take his inky darkness with golden words and golden kisses. We easily drowned out the other moans of tortured souls and by the sixth night, the Lord of the Dead was whispering sweet nothings in my ear like this
whole thing was his idea and not mine. He isn’t like his brothers at all. Instead of an arrogant, posturing god whose ego I was expecting to have to stroke, I found a lonely, broken man who just needed someone to share his burdens. After that, love came easily to him and it still does to this day.

The pomegranate seeds that I let drop by the bed on the first night had grown with his budding love for me. Things don’t grow easily in the underworld, but that never stopped me before. On the seventh night, we picked the fruit and laid it on the tongue of the other as he asked me to be his queen. My lips and fingertips are forever stained red with blood and pomegranate juice. He likes the color and the taste, and, mama, I’ve grown to love it too.

* 

It’s been decades since I’ve stepped foot into your world; I stopped bringing Spring long ago. I have far too much to enjoy down here. It’s amusing how your brothers and sisters still call me “daughter spring,” “little blossom,” and “fair maiden,” as if they don’t know the things I have done. My flower crown is dry and rotting; Hades says they’re for the dead anyway. Instead, bones sit on my brow and decorate my throne, a promise to those who forget that springtime left my body long ago. The fields of punishment have become my special project. Even my husband can barely stomach seeing my handy work on the poor souls that are sent here. Oh do not worry mama, I’ve made every Homer who wrote me wrong pay dearly for their slander. They will not forget my real role down here. They will not forget to call me Queen.

By now the mortals have nearly forgotten what it means to give thanks to the Earth and to the Sky; Olympus has
all but crumbled. Soon they will take away your immor-
tality, just like they took your tarnished throne. As new 

souls flow in, so does fresh gossip. They tell of Poseidon 
crying ocean tears on plastic beaches and Artemis’s fading 
glow as mortals replace moonlight with street lights. The 
forge of Hephaestus has gone cold and his hands have got-
ten stiff while machines in the factories whir throughout the 
night. Even Ares has grown tired of the faceless wars where 
no one wins and everyone loses something. I know it won’t 
be long. But mortals still fear death, still fear me. Mama, 
I’m so ready to see you again and I promise in time, just like 
Hades, you’ll learn how to bow. Everyone does eventually.
THE ROAD BETWEEN YOUR HOUSE and mine was never the same length twice. On nights when you gave me a lift back home, I would count the time between the trees, quietly recording how their distances changed from earlier in the evening. Between the Johnston’s dirty-white birch and the willow on Lincoln—around 30–40 seconds. The willow to the elms by the church—typically only 10–15 seconds. Typically.

I recognize the trees as their silhouettes swing past the crack in the windshield of your dirt-crusted Chevy. It’s the same one we once did doughnuts in while outside the Walmart near town. I recognize these trees: the birch, the willow, a couple of elms, one of them dying and falling, as if it were melodrama, into the limbs of the other. I have their locations mapped out in my head, along with the image of their swaying and their slouches, all of it burned into memory from the thousand times I’ve made the trip down our shared stretch of road, then returned. And, sitting here again in the passenger seat of the truck that I doubted would last into September, I drowsily remember to count—count the time between the trees. The road stretches longer underneath headlights. Then, at a particularly sharp bend, our progress is cut short. We’re still moving, but the trees disappear before they should. The pavement shifts against us, as if the path between our houses had become a giant treadmill.

“You still haven’t told me why you even came back,” I say. I’m not trying to be bitchy, but I can’t help the words from coming out that way.


“At four in the morning?”
You don’t respond. I shift my head away from its position against the window.

Other than the headlights before us, the only light in the world seems to be coming from your sweatshirt, the fabric so neon that I imagine, if there were other drivers on the road, they would see only your green torso as they passed us by. Dark splotches of oil line the rolled-up sleeves, from which emerge two lean forearms, both tensed in their grip of the wheel.

It’s only been a few weeks since I’ve gotten a good look at you, but it could’ve been at least a year by my eyes. Your hair is longer, the brown waves almost crashing against the dark shoreline of your brows, which appear to be in perpetual furrow. I remember how your eyes used to bounce across your face, shifting in quick, elated bursts, as a reflection of your unrelenting thoughts. Now, they sit still and are focused only on the endless road ahead. Perhaps this is no change at all, and you’re just not thinking, acting only as a matter of survival. Though I can’t see them, I am sure your palms are calloused from work. You look stoic, as if carved painfully from the stone of yourself.

“How’s your Dad?” I ask. You snort forcefully out your nose.

“That fucker.”

“Did he…?”

“No. Jus’ him drinking. And me drinking. We’re a couple ‘a hot-headed drunks. That’s all.” You snicker as you say this. “The new place is small. So we can really get into it sometimes. But you remember that.” My eyes suddenly start to burn.

“And the job?”

“It’s jus’…It’s whatever. Y’know?”

I’m tempted to press you further on this, but I know it’s pointless, so I let the question linger in the air. You
have no desire to be a mechanic’s assistant, let alone your father’s. I think you told me just that about a thousand times this summer. I had only hoped that in talking, you might accidentally let slip the nature of your abrupt return to my life, but of course you’re too stubborn for that. I check the clock on the car radio out of habit before turning back to the window. It’ll be close to sunrise by the time you get back to Carbondale.

“You must be movin’ into the dorms pretty soon, huh?”

“Yeah, I guess I am.”

You smirk at this and almost look like yourself. “Hot-shot college girl.”

Even with your eyes fixed on the bend up ahead, I know you know that I’m resisting a grin. “God, you know how much I hate that.”

“Where’s Yale again?”

“Out east. Connecticut.”

Your voice following the truck, gaining momentum, you say, “Prolly get straight A’s an’ become a rich lawyer or somethin’”

“Yeah, yeah. I guess that’s the idea.”

“An’, an’ you’ll probably meet some rich med student or somethin’ and get married in a couple ‘a months.” You’re showing me your big white teeth now as the truck accelerates past a solitary dogwood. It’s the one we used to walk to late at night after smoking your Dad’s pot. I turn away from you and look for the spot of flattened grass that had grown used to our lying there, but I can’t find it.

“Cut it out. You’re acting like an ass.”

“An’, an’, an’ that ri—”

“Would you shut the fuck up?” I say, both of us stunned silent by the crack in my voice.

A roar of the motor fills the void. The truck is still accelerating. It’s passed the open field, and I realize now that
we’re racing towards the final curve before your drive-way. The road hurdles us forward, having lost all sense of time. I look for you, and your face is frozen. Your body is ice. You look just like your father. “Jesus Christ, slow down Wyatt!”

You don’t hear me, so I start to scream.

For just a moment, you manage to escape from the statue of yourself, shifting your weight down and away from me. Your hands twist out of their stiffness, and with languid motions, turn the wheel in skillful throws. I can see in your eyes the green that they had in the summer, imitating the green of a pond we once went skinny dipping in. And as the truck swerves, steadies, then swerves again, finally heaving in a halt on the edge of a familiar ditch, I watch as your teeth grit, acting only by instinct, the way they did whenever your body received some new, profound pleasure.

Neither of us says anything.

You let out a sigh, let your arms harden once more, then carefully lift your weight off of the break and turn into the empty driveway.

“C’mon, let’s go inside”

“Wyatt,” I say, remembering my exhaustion all at once. “What the hell are we doing here?”

“Come on.”

It was never a pretty house: small, one-storied, the yellow paint slowly fading, then chipping. But now with unraked leaves beginning to blanket the lawn, your old home looks almost uninhabitable. The grills of one of the window frames are cracked and slouching, as per usual. “It was like that when we got it,” you told me months ago.

Inside, the house is stripped bare, and it seems even smaller that way. Only the carpeting looks the same in its filthy greyness. The whole structure, I figure, is now
really only a house in the sense that a barn is a house for animals. A taste of stale bread and cigarettes lingers in the air. As we walk through each room, I strain to imagine where everything is supposed to be. The couch facing away from the window. Your bed in that corner. The dresser against the far wall.

At last, you lead me into the kitchen. In slow, deliberate motions, you run the faucet, lean your head into the sink, and poise your mouth beneath the cold stream, gulping at it madly. I watch then as you tilt back, letting the water soak your hair, the droplets running down your neck and back as you rise from the arched position. You don’t seem to hear me calling your name as you turn off the faucet and rest with your eyes shut and your back against the edge of the countertop.

“It’s better here…the water.” You finally say, your lips shut and smiling in a painful sort of way. “The family moving in has no idea how good they got it.”

This makes me laugh. “When’re they moving in?”

“In just a few days. Sometime this weekend, I think.”

I stand there awkwardly for a long time, wondering where you’ve gone to, before feeling myself reach out to touch your wrist. You open your eyes, unsurprised at this, then close them and draw your hand away.

“We should get goin’. I gotta work in the morning.”

“Don’t be an ass.”

“I’m not.”

“Why did you bring me here?”

You open your eyes again, and this time they stay open. They’re mostly grey now, but I can still pick up on the specs of green that line the rim of your pupil. And when you talk, I can hear your voice. For the first time tonight I can hear your voice when you speak, though it’s muddled with sobriety, the kind of tone that you never needed in the summer.
“I had this dog once, when I was real young. Like eight or nine or somethin’. It was this big, loud Mastiff dog. Anyways, we were all on a road trip together. Me, my Dad, my Mom—she was still around then. And the dog was with us too. And we spent one ‘a the days swimming in Lake Michigan. You ever been there before?”

I nod rapidly, and you continue.

“Well the dog was swimming there with us. He would always run into the lake, then run over to me. Always that way. Into the lake, then over to me. And when he came over, he was always jumpin’ on me and licking me and knock-ing me down like he hadn’t seen me in months. Then he’d shake himself off, gettin’ everybody wet, and run back into the lake.”

You pause to take a breath.

“When we got back to the house though, this house, the dog got real sick. He slept all day and wouldn’t eat, and my Dad told me we were gonna put him down. I didn’t wanna let the dog die, so I started wailing on my Dad and yelling, ‘I won’t let you! I won’t let you kill him! He was fine in the lake! I saw him! He was fine!’ See I thought he was dying because we only ever gave him hose water. My Dad only let him drink the hose water, he’d never let him drink from the tap. And I thought if he had just had some of that Lake Michigan water, he’d get up an’ start running again. But my Dad wouldn’t take us back there. He wouldn’t take us. He said I was jus’ a dumb fuckin’ kid who didn’t know what he was talkin’ about and that the lake wouldn’t save the dog. But I knew it would. I knew it would, so I walked. And I know what you’re thinking, that I’m dumb or crazy or that I’m makin’ this up, but it’s real, I remember it. So I walked to Lake Michigan with the dog bowl, and I walked the water all the way back. It took me weeks to do it, but I did it, and I got the water to save him. I remember it.”
You pause again, collect yourself, and continue. “But by the time I got back, they had already put him down. They didn’t tell me that they did it, but I knew it as soon as I walked in this house. I could tell he was gone. My Dad had already put him down and I didn’t even get to say goodbye, and there was nothing I could do about it. I had gone all that way for nothin’. I wasn’t really sad or anything, I jus’ set the dog bowl down right here, and I went into my room and cried. I wasn’t really sad or anything. I jus’ cried because I was tired and because it seemed like the right thing to do. My Mom got him just after I was born, so I had known him all my life, so it seemed like the right thing to do—crying and all. And for a while after that, I would only drink the hose water. Not my juice, not the tap. Just the hose water. I would go outside with my cup and fill it up with water. Even in the winter I went out there whenever I was thirsty. Then one day my Dad said ‘enough is enough, you can’t be drinkin’ that dog water, boy!’ So I started drinkin’ from the tap again, because in the end I was only eight, or maybe I was nine. Because in the end you can’t really do anything about anything.”

You pant heavily to finish the story, but seem sated at its close, like a runner sprinting to the end of a marathon. Somehow I had already forgotten that about you, how much it pleased you to tell stories, to hear your own voice in all its breathy slurs. I remember that now. How you always sounded drunk.

As you catch your breath, I reach out to touch your chin. You don’t move at all, so I work my way up your face, holding it between my hands, hoping to see something recognizable in your eyes. They are a lively ochre now, nearly orange, like old clementines in the center of your face. The skin on your cheeks is still damp with tap water, smoothed by it. I think about kissing you. I know
I want to, and perhaps you want me to, but I don’t. I just hold you here, as if to say “There was nothing you could do. There was nothing you could.” And you responding, silently and unequivocally, “I know, I know, I know.” But we don’t say any of this aloud, so who knows if that’s really what’s happening?

When I finally pull away, I ask “What was his name?”

“I don’t know. I can’t remember. I had forgotten that any of this happened. I forgot about the dog, and I can’t even remember when I remembered it. But I know it’s real. I remember it now.”

I tell you I believe you, and I really mean it.

Before we leave, you search the cupboards for an empty bowl and, finding none, pick up the bottom half of a broken beer bottle from the trashcan in the garage. You fill the shallow glass with water from the faucet, then set it carefully in the center of the kitchen floor and leave without looking twice. I have no desire to remain in or leave this place myself, but you have work in the morning, and the new family will be moving sometime this weekend, so I walk out with you and climb back into the passenger seat of your Chevy.

I try to count the time between the trees on the drive back to my house, but I’m too tired to do so. Even if I could, it would probably feel pointless to verify what I already know about this road: that it, like all back roads, has a habit of distorting itself when nobody’s watching. So I turn to you instead. You look comfortable and handsome, your hair tousled and wet and bouncing with the bumps of the road. The sight makes me smile, and my eyes have started to burn once more. It’s too dark to tell what color yours are.

“I never even wanted to go to college in the first place. You know that, right?”
You glance at me and smile, though not like before. Your teeth flash then disappear quickly. This smile is real. This is what you really look like. “Of course, stupid.” You sense my surprise and continue, “I may not be a hot-shot like you, but I’m not a total idiot.”

I’m exhausted. Earlier, when you first called and told me to be outside in 10 minutes, I was already awake and sitting on my bed. I hadn’t even changed out of my jeans from yesterday, because I had that feeling where you know you’re tired, but you also know that you couldn’t sleep if you tried, so you don’t try, you just stay up and wait. Facing forward now, I doze off as soon as we reach the field with the single tree, and I dream that you are next to me and that we are in that field again. It’s the night that you told me you were moving, and you say that it won’t really make a difference, since I’ll be going to college in the fall anyway. I try to tell you that I hate you for saying that, but the words only come out as a whisper, and it’s just as well, since I don’t mean it. Both of us know—though we don’t yet know that we know it—how all endings are resistant endings.

I dream that I grab you by your face and kiss you, and I savor the vague aroma of weed that still lingers on both of our lips. We have sex against that tree again, your back damp with a cool, rolling sweat. Only now, I see far behind you a little boy walking down the road, dressed only in his swim trunks and carrying a large metal dish. He does not stop. He does not take notice of us. Each step he takes is so small and cautious, so as to not spill any of the dish’s contents. I try to call out to him, though I don’t know why. It doesn’t matter anyway, because his name becomes a moan in my mouth; it’s a sound he doesn’t yet recognize, perhaps does not even hear, so he continues onward.

When we finish, we lie back on the flattened grass and look up to the stars behind the shadows of the branches.
The boy is out of sight now, hidden by the green trees that rim the border of the field, like the green that sometimes rims your eyes. I start to cry.

I start to cry because your dog is dead. Your dog is dead, and it has been some time now since he died, but the little boy is walking; he is always walking in this dream, a dream that feels like it’s endless but is not. Eventually I will wake up, in your truck and then later in my bed, and I will have my jeans on from the day before. And when I wake up, I will not be crying anymore because I will have already done that in this dream. If I cry again it will not be because I am sad, because I will not be sad, but because I am tired. I will take a shower then and let the water soak my hair and drip down my back. When I wake up, this will not be now, it will be a past. A past that I will not remember right away, until one day when I do remember, when this dream rolls forward like the waves of a lake that I’ve only been to once before, several years ago.
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“Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Nature.

BE, FOR A MOMENT, a “transparent eyeball” in a modern landscape Emerson never could have imagined. You are heading to Millennium Park. As you gaze at Home Depot, Penske Truck Rental, and Uno Restaurant Holdings Corporation, crest the chain-link-fenced overpass of the railway and glimpse the chain-link-fenced sports fields and adolescent trees of West Roxbury Education Complex, you do not sense the sublime presence of Millenium. Not yet. It is only once you summit the sweeping hills ahead—mounds of freshly-mowed grass ribboned with pavement—that the feeling registers. You stand on decades of Bostonian trash, converted from a landfill to a park at the turn of the millen-nium. You gaze at the skyscrapers; the West Roxbury water tower; the cemetery; Brook Farm, the nineteenth-century transcendentalist commune, the cell towers flashing their beady red eyes from miles away, the woods and the river once home to the Wampanoag tribe, train tracks, I-95. You are an eyeball atop an anthill, feeling you have inherited incomprehensible vastness.

I have tried, for the past six years, to articulate the awe I feel at Millennium. When Emerson said that “all mean egotism” vanishes in nature, that we become nothing and
see all, he was driving at a paradox of human significance. In our small bodies we contain such a grand human nature; cosmic Nature contains our infinitesimal selves. Amid hills, valleys, and horizons, we can’t help but revere these paradoxes of scale: “In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.”¹ But this horizon is not an untouched Emersonian wilderness; Millennium is a green-wallpapered landfill. The grassy trapezoidal slopes of Millennium orient and congregate everyone—joggers, dog walkers, lovers, soccer players and friends—in an irresistible veneration of a new horizon. Skeins of geese accompany commuter trains that slide down the far-below track. The Prudential Tower, almost sky-colored, peeps out from miles of woodlands, and I can eclipse its fifty stories with my pinky. The quiet metal roofs of Home Depot and Penske Truck Rental shimmer with the same sunlight as the Charles River. Headlights and brake lights, beacons of a human nature that has seemingly overstepped all natural limits, pulse from I-95 through the distant leaves of the trees that moat my landfill-turned-sanctuary. But these lights aren’t any less natural than stars or sunlit beads of dew. How else could they engender my Emersonian exhilaration, my gladness to the brink of fear?

I discovered both the park and my best friend, fortuitously, when I was very small: thirteen, just two years younger than Millennium itself. It was a summer as short as my first anxious weeks in middle school and West Roxbury were long. My parents suggested that I “go hang out somewhere” with a friend before school started. I emailed Chris.

I was already surprised to find this email, but confounded when I found the long exchange preceding it, in which Chris and I discussed classical music and computer programming with lingo such as “That’s too OP, mate” and “Life is legit :P lol.” That we already knew each other shocks me to this day, because I so vividly remember us meeting at Millennium. Biking around the foot of the mounds, we shared a fascination for the insouciant ducks waddling along Sawmill Brook, the clovers poking out of the dusty concrete, and the canoe launch where a rusted white bridge carried train tracks across the river. We walked our bikes up the hill and chatted about video games and Trump’s laughable appearance in the GOP debate, the words hovering ephemerally in the air through which canopies and rivers spread out for miles and distant cell antennas hung from the clouds like threads.

I am often tempted to conclude that the intangible yearning that Millennium brings me is just nostalgia—a longing for the moment of discovery, levity, or innocence that Chris and I felt on that day. But it was something in the nature of Millennium itself that brought us together. How else would I remember our friendship as having truly started there? At Millennium, I became Emerson’s transparent eyeball. My eyes absorbed the brick-red specks on distant hills where my family, my friends, my teachers...
and I lived and interpreted them as a communion of souls in a vast universe. Whenever I was overwhelmed with what was right in front of me, as if studying my hands so closely that I saw only darkness, Millennium made me recall the horizon.

In West Roxbury, I went to a renowned private boy’s school called Roxbury Latin. The workload made everyone want to quit at some point, and in my first years, I stewed between many windowless walls. My friendship with Chris, if anything, sustained me. We goofed off in French class and late-night chamber music rehearsals, he helped me with algebra, and we emailed jokes about ducks (our favorite animal ever since the Sawmill Brook scene). Then there were the exams, where you just wanted time to pass. Chris and I made a tradition of biking to Millennium at the end of midterms and finals. But by high school, Chris was contentedly busy with math research, and I would go alone, staring at water-darkened stones and stretches of sun-beaten reeds.

In junior year, Elias, a sleep-deprived German truant with a knack for military history, joined me. Feeling drained after the Calculus BC exam, we attempted a shortcut into Millennium via the moat at the bottom. The moat, dividing Millennium’s Emersonian fields of “sanctity and decorum” and “perpetual youth”² from stretches of cemeteries and abandoned lots below, consisted of swamps, vegetation, and Sawmill Brook. Elias and I entered at a point when all three elements of the moat were the thickest. We heaved our bikes through brambles, soaked our shoes with filth, and bloodied our ankles with thorns, only to find that Sawmill Brook, unusually wide here, blocked us from the rest of the park. Millennium didn’t look beautiful

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². Ibid.
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Trying to cross the moat may have been futile, but then why did I trudge studiously through my exams, glimpsing paradise like Tantalus all to sink back through the muck of another school year? I kept seeking Millennium throughout those years because it suggested a deeper sense of purpose beyond rigorous intellectual labor. Even diligent Chris, in moments of resentment or ennui, seemed to turn to Millennium for solace. In one such moment, he joined me after midyear exams.

“Wanna go night-biking?” he asked.
“Uh, neither of us have bike lights.”

Chris, who not only coined the term “night-biking” but casually engineered things from scratch, too, said, “I built some flashlights.” He, too, was clearly longing to transcend intellectual monotony.

It was a snowless night of New England briskness. We glided down Centre Street, its Dunkin Donuts lots and crumbling apartments no less ugly in the darkness. The flickering ghosts of Penske Truck Rental and Uno Restaurant Holdings Corporation gave way to the gates of Millennium, dimly lit by lamp posts. We went first to the canoe launch, holding our breath as a rumble approached from the distance. A commuter train, devoid of passengers and bathed in its own red, green, and yellow glows, drifted across the bridge, its apparition mirrored perfectly in the river below.

We turned to the grassy mounds. With my nocturnal imagination, it felt like we were climbing the belly of a dragon bulging from beneath the earth. Up above, we watched the distant roar of headlights on I-95 beyond Millennium’s barren boughs. It’s lucky, said Chris, how
the universe led us to the point where we can sit together and look at these trees.

* 

THE RELIEF WE SOUGHT from intellectual striving, the transcendence we sought in nature, was perhaps never so explicitly embodied as in the site of the transcendentalist utopian experiment Brook Farm, which lay beneath the trees. There, in 1841, Unitarian minister George Ripley and his wife Sophia, an academic, founded Brook Farm on those lands. They aimed to create a communal farm withdrawn from the flawed institutions of partisan politics, marriage, slavery, factory work, and cities. George Ripley believed in the “divinity of labor” and wanted participants to balance their labor between scholarship, manual work, creative pursuits, and spiritual community. In a letter to Emerson, he wrote:

“Our objects, as you know, are to insure a more natural union between intellectual and manual labor...to guarantee the highest mental freedom, by providing all with labor, adapted to their tastes and talents, and securing to them the fruits of their industry...thus to prepare a society of liberal, intelligent, and cultivated persons, whose relations with each other would permit a more simple and wholesome life, than can be led amidst the pressures of our competitive institutions...I wish to see a society of educated friends, working, thinking, and living together, with no strife, except that of each to contribute the most to the benefit of all.”

Brook Farm attracted intellectuals and farmers, as well as craftsmen, who erected a shop building with a steam

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engine, a print shop, and carpentry tools. Inspired by the Phalanx system of the socialist philosopher Charles Fourier, who believed that the corrupt societal constructs of science, liberalism and civilization robbed us of our basic “passional attractions,” the farm changed its name to “Brook Farm Phalanx,” founded an influential Fourierist publication called The Harbinger, and created overambitious public buildings.

Rocky soil, a smallpox outbreak, misgivings in the broader community about socialism, and fires that destroyed the expensive building projects doomed Brook Farm. That, and the fact that by design, the community neither cared about money or earned any. Ripley took the blame for Brook Farm’s massive debt and the community shuttered in 1847, after just six years of existence. Still, the experiment not only lived on in intellectual life but also continued in different forms on the same property: as a poor farm, as the Civil War training site Camp Andrew, and as a Lutheran orphanage. In 1974, the orphanage closed, and now the only active use of the land is the cemetery.

What strikes me the most about Brook Farm was the excellent boarding school its members established. Like Roxbury Latin (which had been around since 1645), the school delivered a comprehensive generalist curriculum, was praised by Harvard, and engaged students in intellectual, athletic, civic, and spiritual life. But the Brook Farm school was unusual, especially for the time, in its collective and progressive spirit. Students performed two hours

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daily of manual labor for the community. In classes, teachers avoided discipline and allowed students the freedom to choose their own classes and determine their own study hours, instilling a sense of personal responsibility. Teachers lived on the same grounds as the students and shared in their experience on the settlement. I could imagine them discussing Plato while picking apples together. This idyllic environment is unimaginable today, but I wonder if it is exactly what Chris and I sought in the Millennium horizon. In any case, the aspirational experiment, which Emerson summarized as “a perpetual picnic, a French Revolution in small, an Age of Reason in a patty-pan,” collapsed, leaving traces of rubble under the trees where the Brook Farm children congregated.

* 

CHRIS AND I BIKED down the belly of the Millennium dragon into its lair: the thick woods of Brook Farm. (I nicknamed the woods Narnia long before I learned that Ripley, Emerson, and the Brook Farmers had viewed them as a paradise, too.) Our bikes shuddered over the dirt trail, which was often composed entirely of tree roots, in the dark.

“I would be scared if you weren’t here,” said Chris.

I don’t think he meant those words existentially, but it sure felt so as we lay side by side in the tall, healthy grass where Brook Farm once stood. Here we were, pulled by gravity into the earth, surrounded with ruins that felt eternal but screamed impermanence. From the farm there was

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a replica of the print shop, the Margaret Fuller Cottage, and puddingstone. From Camp Andrew there was a cannon and an armory used to store corpses in the winter. Truly eternal was the cemetery, the moon painted into the sky, and the ceaseless cars—shining emblems of our endless impatience with nature—whooshing past it all.

I patted Chris’s shoulder for a second, and he patted mine, and then I said, “We’re not even touching each other. Atoms don’t have hard boundaries. Even if you ignore that, what does the proximity of atoms mean?” He felt the same way (although he didn’t botch the physics principles like I did). It was just so strange that children had worked and played here, ages ago, living all the fullness of a life now erased. At the end of every day, Brook Farmers performed a “symbol of Universal Unity,” standing in a circle, joining hands, pledging “truth to the cause of God and Humanity.”

And now, in our six years together at Roxbury Latin, a blip in time as short as Brook Farm’s existence, we had our turn to join hands.

“I have to go finish some homework,” said Chris. We returned to town. I remember little from the rest of that night, or from the months after, or from the months before. Just the poignant momentary suspension of impermanence, which I will remember forever.

The view from Millennium and Brook Farm expands our spatial, temporal, and existential horizons. Humans built Millennium as an escape from nearsighted urban panic; the park fills our minds with millennia that we have never lived and shocks us with our impermanence. We sense the latent ethic in Brook Farm’s swamps and boulders; we fear the verdict in its rubble. These places

are both a testament to our agency in shaping nature and a humbling proof that nature shapes us. There is no distinction between nature and human nature. We struggle against mortality to enlarge our power and wisdom under the same sovereignty as the trees, our blossomings and communions both perennial and ephemeral. If we strut and fret our hours upon the world’s stage, Millennium hosts the intermissions. I have lived many lives in those intermissions, comforted and sobered by the horizon.
TUCKED ONE WINTER night in a corner of his college library, several months after his older brother’s springtime death, he tried and failed to prepare for an exam about artistic depictions of Biblical prophets. The words on the page of his art history textbook all seemed made of chewing gum, sticking to each other and to the soles of his shoes as he did his best to forge a path through the pages. He wanted to sleep; he wanted to watch TV. He was missing All in the Family.

Suddenly, without warning, his eyes reached the fifty-six words that would end his life:

DANIEL IN THE LION’S DEN.

“In his early medieval masterpiece, Traumspecher depicts a vivid scene of terror and deliverance. The prophet Daniel, condemned to death in a den of lions for praying to the Hebrew God, encounters his would-be predators in abstracted lines and heavy brushstrokes, previewing by centuries subsequent movements in Western art.”

PAUL TRAUMSPECHER

An electrifying image for him to contemplate. He nearly buzzed.

No picture accompanied the text. He leafed through the surrounding pages and flipped to the back of the textbook but discovered no image of the painting. The dense paragraph stood alone on the crowded page, offering nothing but itself.

He felt suddenly queasy, as if he hadn’t eaten all day, and when he raised his gaze to the air around him he caught, for a moment, the black text’s white afterimage. Without consciously thinking to do so he rose from his chair and
walked out of the library for the night, leaving the book open on the table.

The next day, after class, he asked his art history professor about the painting. He wondered if he might find a reproduction anywhere on campus, perhaps in a museum or a reference library, but the old woman shook her head and said she’d never heard of Philip Traumspecher, much less his early medieval masterpiece.

From class he walked back to the library, which stood atop a modest hill in the center of campus, and he made his way to the floor which contained the bulk of the university’s art history books. Squinting at their spines, he snaked through the rows until he found the area broadly concerned with Central Europe, twelve shelves in all (twenty-four, counting both sides of them), each containing roughly three-hundred items. There, he thought, in that mass of words, might be the two which most intrigued him, Philip and Traumspecher. Reaching up to the top shelf, he grabbed the first four books in the row—written by Abbas, Abbe, Abegglen, and Abel, respectively—and shepherded them to a table by a frosted window, one of many rusted desks scattered around remote corners of the library that served late-night readers. He opened the first book, flipped to its index, and hunted.

No luck with the first four. He tried again: Alleman, Allers, Arnhold, and Auls. No luck again.

He spent five hours in the library that night, and by the time he hauled himself home he had only reached the mid-Bs. He came back the next day, which brought him to the high Cs.

Over the ensuing months, his devotion to finding the painting grew in proportion with the difficulty of the task. He spent several dozens of hours searching for the painting in the university’s cavernous library, reading through
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It soon seemed as if the textbook he’d read on the first night of what had become his obsession contained the world’s only morsel of information about Traumspecher or his work. Often he would dream of the painting’s revelation to him, and always in the dream when he opened his eyes he saw nothing and understood it perfectly. But awake he could make no sense of its absence.

Late one night in April, he felt himself close to finding the painting. Scrutinizing the bibliography of a small monograph about one of Traumspecher’s contemporaries, the engraver Wilhelmina Blau, he sensed the presence of the image hovering near the pages of the book in his hands. The thrill of that nearness compelled him to motion, and he finished in record time his hunt for a trace of the painter.

When he returned to his dorm near midnight, his search unsuccessful, he looked at the calendar hanging in the common area and realized that it was the anniversary of his brother’s death. He called home but no one picked up, and he felt relieved.

Several days later, he found the name “Traumspecher” included in the index of a book on Nazi art in the Americas. His eyes darting, pointer finger quivering, he located the spot of the artist’s mention in a terse sentence on page thirteen: “Prominent among these works are paintings by Wilkerson and Traumspecher.” The excitement drove him nearly delirious. He took in the surrounding text and learned that Traumspecher had enjoyed a certain vogue among high officers in the Party, that dozens of his paintings followed their owners to South America after the war, and that several now hung in the fine art museums of cities around the continent, including Santiago de Chile, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires.
The following February, after several dozen phone calls to museums in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina, he learned that the painting sat in storage at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes on Avenida del Libertador in Buenos Aires. He arranged an extended visit for the following fall as part of a year abroad, and when he landed in Argentina in September, a few months after the coup, he inexplicably felt the ancient recognition of returning to a place he had once known well. He stepped off the plane into a smoke-filled terminal and immediately began to dream of a visit with the painting.

He lived three months in the city before he could convince a conservator to show him Traumspecher’s work in the museum’s basement, and he had spent his time up until that point in a state of anticipation that brought him intense and narrow pleasure. The wide avenues and plazas of Buenos Aires seemed electrified with promise, the secrets of art, as if under every patch of grass or asphalt hid a long-sought masterwork. On his evening walks, taken after class each day, he meandered, circumambulating his neighborhood, trying to feel the city as if he’d been born there, which he was beginning to feel he might have been.

On the hot December day when he would see the painting he woke up at dawn and promptly vomited from nerves. He washed his face in the enamel wash basin of the apartment he shared with three unfriendly students (two Canadians on the same program and one unlucky Argentine), then he brushed his teeth and dressed himself in a black polo shirt with corduroy pants the color of mustard. The previous night had been difficult—a phone call with his mother had gone poorly, and he felt so excited to see the painting that he could barely sleep—but after vomiting he felt serene, as flat and full as a bowl of heavy soup. He treated himself to a cab, and when he arrived in the city.
at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes he threw a glance toward the building’s facade and pushed his way through the glass doors.

Once inside, he approached the conservator, a bald man in a thin suit, at their designated meeting spot, and the pair walked down a flight of stairs and entered the basement. The walls and floor were covered in slabs of the same gray concrete.

“You came all the way for this painting?” asked the conservator as they walked through the central corridor.

He chuckled, trying to sound casual. “No, I’m here on a study-abroad program. I go to college in the US.”

“Yes, I remember that from the phone call. What’s your interest in the painting? If I’m being frank—it’s very plain.”

“It reminds me of someone I knew,” he said, unsure why.

The conservator said nothing in response and instead stopped his visitor in his tracks with a raised hand. The pair stood before a door made of thick chain-link.

“The painting is in this room, but before we go in I need to remind you that you cannot touch the work, and you cannot stand any closer to it than I do, okay? And if you have gum, swallow it now.”

He didn’t have gum, so he nodded and agreed to the rules. He took a breath.

In the room on an easel stood a sheet of canvas. On the canvas stood eight curved black lines and eight fat black dots. Daniel was there, in the lion’s den. So were the lions.

“There you are,” said the conservator. “Traumspecher’s treasure.”

He stared and stared at the painting, at first seeing just the vague outline of a human form, then the silhouettes of three lions, then the longer he looked the more the picture unraveled into a scene, the prophet and lions alive and together. He saw them frozen, the four figures,
their abyssal eyes filled with thrill and fear, Daniel staring at his tormentors and the beasts beholding their prey, and he realized with dread that in this moment of first encounter Daniel does not yet know he will survive. The lions hope to feast and the prophet hopes to live, and there they stand, kept forever ignorant of their future that is now the past, trapped in the world of symbols like flies in amber or stones in earth. He began to feel queasy and he squeezed his eyes shut and when he opened them he saw again eight lines and eight dots.

“Let’s go,” he said weakly. He began to walk out of the room.

“That was quick,” the conservator said. “Boring, no?” He didn’t answer, nor did he hear.

A few minutes later, standing on the steps of the museum beneath the pounding summer sun, he began to sob, a few gravelly heaves escaping his throat without his permission, each one carrying some soggy and decayed remains of a long-buried feeling.

At the first hint of evening over Buenos Aires, he called his mother and told her he wanted to live in Argentina after graduation. Her voice on the other side sounded as dead and distant as a star, and when he finished the conversation he walked home, the setting sun filling the city to its brim.

And as he fell asleep that night, he realized that everything onward would be just denouement. He accepted that grave and freeing news silently, in stride, and when vacationing some months later at a ski lodge he met a dark-haired woman and the two fell in love. After graduating with his degree in art history he returned to live with her in a small apartment on the third floor of a building in the capital city’s old garment district. He learned Spanish, found odd jobs with Jewish groups, and made a career in the public arts division of a local Jewish center, and when
he and his wife had a son they named him after his deceased brother, following their custom of passing down the names of the dead. When the center was bombed in 1994, already eighteen years after Traumspecher had delivered him to Argentina, he died, either in the initial explosion or in the building’s subsequent collapse. And during the eternal, excruciating moment between his awareness of his death and his experience of it, he found solace in the modest knowledge revealed to him then about immortality, which was that someday someone somewhere would dream him anew out of a mess of symbols, that once conjured in the mind of an unwitting vessel he would live on for as long as you do.
Island kings hold court every morning
toss back canteens of black coffee at the
Great Cranberry store,
gossip in their downeast drawl about summer
people and the lobster haul of years past.
My father counts himself their lowly vassal, attends to
men who speak slow as the saltwater tide.

Butter light melts over mountains, tide
pours into the cove, roaring to a boil. Morning
comes, orange oil slickered lobsters drop two
at a time below deck, store
bait in the boat belly, motor past
rusticators cozied in yachts. “Summer”
is not a verb, Mainers know. Summer
sums to profit, a countertide
to winter debts long past
due. Lobsters molt in the morning:
exchange exoskeletons, discover places to store
soft slick bodies, slither into
chitin halfway homes. Twin
claws and adolescent summer
brawls. A lobster mother’s store
of red roe futile against overfishing’s tide.
“Maybe this morning
will yield a scavenged repast!”
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of red roe futile against overfishing’s tide.

“Maybe this morning
will yield a scavenged repast!”
salivate mute bottom dwellers, past
dignity. It’s unfair, too!
We passers-by can catch the morning
ferry back to the mainland, bid summer
adieu. Not so for creatures chasing the tide—
lobster and lobsterman alike. Both set store
by the lobster gods, entreat them to restore
relics of a simpler season. I wouldn’t put it past
an island king to swim against the tide
to save his sinking ship. He knows there’s much to
do (retouch buoys, repair lobster pots) before summer
kicks the bilge bucket one morning.

Island kings calcify at the general store, sprout
double skeletons.
In a past iteration, all men wore claws, worshipped
summer’s eternal grin.
Tide turns, mourning the passing away of old ways.
You read the room wrong and thought that maybe there was a reason your English professor had assigned you this love poem but the unfortunate castration scene (or whatever!) proves the love decidedly and disappointingly male.

When listening to sputtering music on the old Dell you yank the cord and blow air into the headphone jack: try again.

When you try to read the poem a second time you imagine Eloisa has sprouted another head, talks circles to herself because (doesn’t Abelard sound like a girl name anyways?) because

self love!

That’s the thing you say you like and never do except on the night you admitted you enjoyed the poem anyways crunched the wrapper of a peanut butter cup into a tiny swan and another tinier than its mother.

You took pictures in the bathroom mirror and admitted you enjoyed it anyways.

And saying you like it sounds yucky But saying you love it sounds yummy. Delicious even.
taffy-like hands pull serrated flesh sack
onto riverbank against a shelter of sunlight

how does a son reconcile with a mother’s death
the way she jumped and was blown through

backroads of mississippi sweet-water grown to love
the taste of blood from generations of suffering and

how it can make a man break back down to boy
stiff to the strike of each hour

he still breaks his bones for
some forever unfathomable god because

the river that once ran unopinionated colors
now runs maroons tainted iron

from all the things we don’t talk about
like billy

does he know the reason why
mama will become a myth

old people tell children to scare them
to sleep on stormy sundays. maybe

this is what happens in
the books

we weren’t allowed to read
when we were young
to say it out loud. It finds itself in
sparrows like chestnuts that split in
ceremony
and cabbage ribs flayed veil-like. You were
born in the year of the Rat, which means
to be proud and clever, which means that
the vegetables we eat don’t come with dirt
anymore. I can’t count how many china
sets you’ve broken on both of my
hands
but they linger under skin and in floorboard
cracks. On days you cut our hair I hold
my breath and watch the blade circle orbits
around my face, guard the no contact zone,
which means to be quivering like china,
which means that I only rise when the
kitchen kettle stops its kitten crying, pour
tea into four perfect circles, wait.
Some days you are waterless. You say you
wish your cheekbones weren’t born knives.
Most days, you ask me if you’ll be missed
in death. Mother, I can only see your heart
bowing its head like a dying dog. It will still
slowly and give one last whine to say
JUST WEST OF NOW.

Just West of here, early morning. Minivan speeds down a blind divergence, near erasing lanky black-haired boy, unconscious curling comma by the cul-de-sac.

At the same time, my cousin elopes, with him she met while the effigy burned, a week since they whirled like tops—

  eclipsed each other
  —psychedelic suns.

At sunrise, the service. Those lover-souls skip desert stones, swear a breakable oath.

Now further West, to California. Grandma baptizes oatmeal, stirs with boiling water. “Not hungry!” (it’s the only thing she’ll eat today) Her one companion: brother James (a portrait). He was just eighteen and doomed to die. Scars reopen on the Western Front. *Deep regret. Killed in action. Body unrecovered.*

Battle of the Bulge. She too will fall in time and slice her chin. The nurse who tends to her called Jimmy.

  “Go West, young man!”

All the signs speak in tongues. Travel East again, forget horizons, they will only grieve you.
LAST DAYS.

I.

on our last day here,
we order tropical smoothies
walk around gulping them
until our teeth freeze into chipped ice in our mouths

joy tastes better all at once
when it’s constantly reminding you of its presence,
when it’s mixed with something familiar,
so we wheeze out love songs
sing and set them to trap beats
let the streets swell with the sound of triumph gilded by
our laughter,
laughter being something precious enough to hold gentle
between your teeth
and a breath
and a mourning—
mourning being a skyward burial of
all the beauty you would have noticed the next day
and the next
and the next.

I would never bury a precious part of myself in silence,
in earth that does not know how to hold it
without crushing,
and that is why we are singing up and down Broadway
like something free and Black and reckless

I think this is the kind of joy
I cannot savor any longer
without breaking it.
I think it may now have to live as an echo, 
as a patchwork memory 
as a hook and a bomb flow 
until we can again fill the sidewalks with verse 
and walk only where the sun shines warm enough 
for us to bask in.

II.

in New Haven
I built my home from people 
and they made a city into more than just a place to live. 
I think theirs is the kind of love 
that pulses from bluetooth speakers nestled in backpacks, 
hears noise complaints and raises the volume, 
lives in the summits and smoothness of an 
Ari Lennox song, 
can sing truth and pain and glory all in one note 
something you can hear the smile in just by listening 
spills runny and sweet from styrofoam cups 
until it is threaded into all the unbroken beauty of this day 
and the next, 
and the next 
I’m not demanding to have it all back 
I would just like 
to sing with you again 
to build us a new home 
to write us a new poem 
and cry out 
carefree 
in joyous vain 
for all the notes we know we cannot reach
MUTE METAMORPHOSES.

A glut of river water spills over
the embankment pooling like oil spills
I skip two paces ahead of you marveling
at the cool wetness salivated
on wicking sidewalks
imagine sundown’s jeweled
footpath prostrates itself for our
muddied trainers
I attempt to capture
droplets on my fingertip
squirming silverfish
we sun ourselves like cats
stretch out the length of the futon
fuse together like
an induced fit enzyme
I am the puzzle piece floating
above your right ear
I watch you sleep
eyelid flutter like a
membranous dragonfly wing
you regale me with
drosophila genomics
your vocabulary boils over
like an incantation
reverse PCR eclosion reconstitution
you spend lunches in the lab
caring for death-doomed creatures
carelessly dumped into vats of
suffocating goo I make you
a sandwich peanut butter slathered
on both bread slices so the honey
won’t seep through.

You have an ant problem.
I’ll bring Borax and honey
saccharine and toxin.
a broken metronome  with staccato pulse  its call-and-
response  as if trying to appease

iron in the blood  but all he finds  is this red delicious
drop of *me*  something conserved  the way it dries  and
tints his cheek

*suck it up  be a man*  a father says  but really he
means *this is the way it works*  he is a father to the
boy  and to the boy  a father of the world  *nothing stops  unless acted upon*  and yet also  *you have to
learn  to save yourself*

four fluid globs of self  *but no more damnit*  the fifth hangs,
tenuous  blood unwilling to bleed  this is the fruit  acting
upon itself  an apple that  rolls against the skin  because
falling is just proof  that you can be pulled apart

the moon  itself a red blood cell  trickles out when the
boy, the father  wraps his finger in a six-year-old’s
bedsheet  because  *i haven’t bought band-aids since
you were a kid*  because  *a man is a body at rest*  like
a hooked weight  defining itself  in resistance to being
moved  the inert hanging thing

through the bedroom window  the stars are metal
spheres  and it’s impossible to rest  with the static
*clack clack clacking*  so they watch for patterns
start over  stop  sleep  drop it again  the metal
hums  when not quite still

like virile crickets who  in a fit of repressed daylight
scrape at the music  between their restless limbs

50

V. GOEHRIC
ON THE PICTURE YOU SENT ME FROM YOUR BALCONY.

Tell me, what is fall in Arizona like? The red in your pictures flashes like a burn but I haven’t heard you speak in weeks. To walk outside is to practice disarmament, to duck around the hedge on High Street and see the sparrows crying. They are grownish now—can hunt now—can dip into the soil and come up still alive and fluttering, dancing like a pan fire.

How do you define collateral damage? The noodle bowls they serve at the corner store are still hot and greasy, though I see faces in them now. To miss the taste of pineapple mooncakes means eating them first. To pretend I can still hear the books you lent me yawn open—pages coughing in the wind—means I replaced my broken windowpane months ago. Asiya Wadud. Solmaz Sharif. They have definitions.

What is Arizona like? I trust your words like I trust my own eyes.
ONE PLAGUE, THEN MORE.*

The blue above is bleached out.
Anemones dapple the meadow, red and green.
So your days are painted, as if at the edge of sleep,
While your brother’s blood cries, mute, from the earth.

The frogs—everywhere, in everything.
An unbearable croaking.
Can we seal our ears against the flood
That deafens with its babble of guilt and sin?

Lice conquered you, Land of the Deer.
And sucked your blood. Everyone failed.
There’s no coming back. Wail.
You put the parasites in power.

A swarm of alien Hebrew. Anything goes.
Who’ll decide what’s right and wrong?
Only among hardliners does justice
Still pierce the hill. We’re free—hooray!

Yesterday, the potential. Today, the plague.
One slain, another slain for days upon days and days.
What we believed to be whole—shattered.
We are stunned, then adjust, adjust then are stunned.

The heart boils. Dirty blood gleams.
You, me, she.
Not even God, full of Mercy, forgives what we’ve done.
Anguished we flee through a city of terror.

* By Truvia Ruebner. Translated from the Hebrew.
Air became balls of ice.  
Ash froze in little flakes.  
Choked breaths of the dead will slowly  
Cover all in the ash of ice.  

So much has happened, and happens,  
Which can’t be undone. Even if we’d change our nature.  
As after locusts, the hidden was revealed  
To the eye of the sun. Our city is naked.  

If only darkness would cover our eyes!  
Our heart cries—*didn’t our hands*  
*Spill our blood?* Can we flee from that sound?  
Can we flee from ourselves?  

We didn’t want this, no. Who are we  
Without them? What are we for?  
No, we never thought it’d go like this,  
How the land opened its mouth, to devour.
TAKE NOTE.

Loud voices get boom-bapped,
Waste scrapped,
Kneecapped
Or sheet wrapped.

Presidents are nonfactors,
Paid actors for masters crafting vernacular
Designed to make Black widows, turn husbands
into bachelors
Who’s matching you but all of us?
Who captured us with angel dust?

Food desert embezzler
Takes grass, burns it up like Nebuchadnezzar
The lesson learned: that crack rock beats scissors,
Black lock, they can enslave them when they make
them prisoners,
Practitioner wields .44 like time signature
Cuts down night visitor like Grand Inquisitor.
Loud voices get boom-bapped,
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Them prisoners,
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Picture me: little black boy, morose teenager
Confused, musing on the world of ruthless money changers
These Texas Rangers walk the earth in Chucks,
Escort us to the coroner,
Ignore us, talk of wealth like they’re preaching
to the chorus,
Voluntourists in the Continent / selfie sticks
Instead of switches / Now
The poorest with the richest / Now
The jurist to convict us
Tries to take a picture with us.
Now the litmus / test is stained red with acid blood
From Brown bodies in the street,
Red meat for tiki torchers who switch red cap for
White gown.
is a photograph of my father
in my hands.

His ghost of a smile,
quiet, severe. His skin,
wrapped in white.

When I was twelve, I was scared to say
Prophet Muhammad
out loud. Shame

has always howled
into
the hollow of me.

Tonight, my fingers are dusk-
heavy on your
temple.

Who named a bone a temple?
Who could be that kind?
Dear God, sometimes I swear I see you in the sky, the way fish see us in the abstractions of light dancing above them. Dear God, last night, I heard a fist of wind knocking at my window, asking to be let in. Was that you? Dear God, my dad visited you once, and then came back. I think if he tries to see you again, you won’t let him go so easily.
There is no neuter gender in Arabic. Allah, the God, is male. Many of his attributes are feminine. It is beyond my understanding. Why do we assume that we could ever be able to understand all things?

I AM.
He asked me, “who are you?” and I could not respond. What I’ve done in the past is not the answer; that is who I was. What I will do in the future is not what I Am… yet. When any moment is identified it has already passed. Everything is in a state of constant change. I AM thought. I would tell him but I didn’t know who he is.

PRISON.
The rules of my confining vessel are illogical, unclear, and constantly changing. The journey holds lessons which teach things better left unknown. The destination is a futuristic alien world. The chance to disembark from confinement is awaited with fear and hope.
Circles.
Answers to the perennial questions have molded the institutions of humanity. In some creation accounts the first man was banished to Earth after his disobedience. Similarly, when a negative judgement is cast upon an individual they are frequently relegated to prison. It should come as no surprise that when the mirage of control and distractions are obscured a revolutionary light illuminates a new path. The contributions of those who have traversed this voyage are not limited to the personal development, but have sculpted many communal shows. This makes it imperative that the helmsman be scrutinized, and held to account.

* Peter is a student enrolled in the Yale Prison Education Initiative. He is incarcerated at Macdougall-Walker Correctional Institution.
SHAWARMA ODE.

60

A. ZHANG
MOON MOLD.

61 Y. BONG
AFTERNOON.
CITY WALL.
I first met Peter Gizzi in a coffee shop in upstate New York, by way of a mutual friend. He was booked for a reading that night—a reading that would be introduced by Mahler’s Songs of a Wayfarer and poems by Jack Spicer of the San Francisco Renaissance (Peter co-edited the definitive anthology of Spicer’s work, *My Vocabulary Did This to Me*, published by Wesleyan in 2008). But it was Peter’s most recent work at the time, *Archeophonics* (Wesleyan, 2016), that took center stage, and I give it center stage in this syntax, too, because Peter said very little in the silences between poems. He read them through his body, not out in front of it. There was no excess of breath; the poem had said itself completely, or as completely as it could. Its world, its community, was sealed.

And community is at the beginning of Peter’s story, a story with many beginnings and as many people as absences. Behind him hangs a canvas by Trevor Winkfield, and next to it an etching by Jasper Johns, a gift from the artist in return for Gizzi’s most recent book. Upstairs, I’m shown around his favorite room, whose shelves hold almost every major work of twentieth-century American poetry, and just about every volume of every major name. These, too, are friends, spiritually and, in many cases, personally. Some from very early on. Allen Ginsberg, for instance, at whose apartment a 20-year-old Peter used to work on his Latin homework. Others were friends from later on, such as the time he spent as a recovering heroin addict, waiting tables and sleeping on a palette in what otherwise served as a janitor’s closet. Books of poetry lined...
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the giant sink above that bed, from which Peter wrote to, among others, Robert Creeley, John Ashbery and Keith and Rosemarie Waldrop, editing and publishing one of the most important journals of contemporary American poetry, o·blēk. Although Peter is an inveterate and lively talker, the poet in Gizzi has always lived a “solitary” and “haunted” life, sometimes among words, sometimes far from them. It was this tension—and what it means for where we locate poetry, the self, reality and meaning—that I hoped to learn from.

JESSE GODINE.
Could you speak to that disjunction, the fact that much of the “writing life” is not writing? How does that charge the experience, when it does come?

PETER GIZZI.
Indeed. I just don’t write all the time, so that when I do, when I’m working on a poem, I feel I’m the right size: I can deal with anything that’s coming at me, any hassle, this, that and the other thing. When I’m writing, I feel I’m neither bigger nor smaller than anything; I’m the right size; I fit perfectly with the world. The only other way I can characterize it is, when I was a boy—and it’s still this way, but the skies aren’t as dark,—as a boy, looking up at the night sky in the Berkshires and seeing that entire milky band above me, I really felt as though I fit: I was neither bigger nor smaller. I was part of this vast, unstable multiplicity: I was a piece of it. Weirdly, that’s the only correlative I have.

JESSE.
I’m thinking of Blanchot who, after Hegel, calls the writer “a nothingness at work”—I wonder if that phrase resonates?
PETER.

That is a lovely phrase. In fact, I titled my selected poems *In Defense of Nothing* (Wesleyan, 2014). When I gave the collection to the Belgian filmmaker Luc Dardenne, he said, “Ah, the best defense!”

But it’s interesting, right, because to say nothing is to imply something, but what that something is in the act of writing is still a mystery to me. I guess the three things that I value most, the three things I’ve come to value over the last decade, from *Threshold Songs* (Wesleyan, 2011) to *Now It’s Dark* (Wesleyan, 2020)—or I guess I’ve always valued them, but I’ve only now identified them—: The three things I value most are (1) mystery, (2) presence and (3) intimacy.

Mystery as in not-knowing, and not-knowing being a useful tool to understand and accept the world in its parts, which can’t be fully apprehended, so that not-knowing is a form of knowing. That particular way of thinking is one way my poems behave.

Presence is that one creates something that is alive: it’s to catch something: a circuit, the carrier frequency that moves through one, and to make this present, to make something alive on the page with sound and with sensation.

Intimacy is really important because I want the voice to be speaking directly to and with a reader. I want it to be intimate, and that’s done by the way in which I use idiomatic speech and everyday language, even though it’s slightly bent and the usage is always strange—but it’s a way to intimate that I’m...that the voice in the poem is speaking directly. Mystery, presence and intimacy. I think the lyric is a useful and sensitive tool, a valuable tool. It’s been with us forever. As long as there have been soldiers, there have been poets, and it’s a long, sad, venerable tradition. Back
to that idea of the night sky and of being the right size, I feel that I’m just a piece of this story, a piece of the song.

**JESSE.**
So who came first, the soldier or the poet?

**PETER.**
I would say the poet came first, because of lament: the beginning of culture is the burial of the dead. In our oldest texts, we always have an account of the hero going into the underworld. I would say that lament was probably the first song.

**JESSE.**
And lament is so often the tenor of your work, the presence, mystery and intimacy of death, as well as, or even through, its idioms, that “everyday language.”

**PETER.**
Wallace Stevens has a lovely quotation in one of his essays. He says,—sorry about the pronoun: “The problem of the poet is the problem of his mind and nerves.” And I feel that my mind and nerves were formed very young. I was the youngest by many years in a family that was already far ahead of me. I was born in the third chapter of the novel, forever asking what had happened in the beginning—

**JESSE.**
I have to interject, because that reminds me so exactly of a line of yours from the title poem of your new book, *Now It’s Dark*. Something like, “The rhythmus is blooming...
PETER.

...at the beginning of the way back when.” Like, I was 12 when I saw—when I learned of my father’s death on television...

JESSE.
You “saw”…?

PETER.

On the tv. I mean, the crash had just happened. I was watching a movie with my mother, waiting for him to come home, and they interrupted the program. It was in Albany. He was flying from New York to Albany, a small craft, and they just interrupted and said, A plane has crashed in Albany. And they showed the crash and the house it took out. And that basically devastated my family and my early life. To witness that, and to realize that the world does have profound sorrow and inexplicable occurrences that have irrevocable consequences—I think that’s one of the things that set me up to always be aware of the periodicity of a life form: that everything is here for such a short moment. We’re here for such a short time; we’re gone for so much longer. I have a poem in Now It’s Dark called “The Present is Constant Elegy.” It kind of says it all: The present, where we are, is constant elegy. You and I are talking, but right now languages, animals, people are disappearing. I’m always aware of that, and I always want to be aware of the fact that it’s a mystery to be alive...Why am I here? What are its terms and its features? And then, I actually want to speak about the world, the political world, every world, in relation to the fact that we have this shelf-life, this time-stamp. For me elegy is a fierce form and when I am in it I can’t quite tell if the voice is
coming from a broken heart in a fierce world or a fierce heart in a broken world. Maybe both?

So, I’ve come to understand *Threshold Songs*, *Archeophonics* and *Now It’s Dark* as a kind of trilogy. When I began writing *Threshold Songs*, I was taking care of my dying mother; my brother Michael, the poet, died of alcoholism; and one of my most beloved friends, who I’d known since the age of 16, the visual artist Robert Seydel, died—: all of them in a 14-month period. The lens was turned outward in *Some Values of the Landscape and Weather* (Wesleyan, 2003) and *The Outernationale* (Wesleyan, 2007). But I then brought the lens closer and began looking inward. *Now It’s Dark* was composed while I was caring for my brother Tom who was dying of ALS. That was a sad journey that would have only one ending. So, yeah, I feel there’s been a change in my work, and I see these three books as a kind of a set. Though I’ve given you some of my personal backdrop of the periods in which I composed some of my work, it’s not that I narrate my biography in any of these poems. I don’t really write about my life, I write out of my life and where I am at a given moment of thinking and feeling. I mean to say, you don’t need to know my story to get the work, i.e., to fully engage with it. I’d like to call it a feeling intellect. I feel it’s more useful, and more honest, to interrogate rather than explain away an ungovernable, complex emotional state. I favor sensation over autobiography. It’s like I’m an ethnographer of my nervous system.

**JESSE.**

You’ve begun to understand your work as a whole, it seems.

**PETER.**

I think that happens from having written for many years now...I feel more seeing the world through the lens of the
fiction of Peter Gizzi, and looking through that lens allows me to understand the fiction of Peter Gizzi, because what we’re finally writing in a poem, or in any art,—what we’re discovering—is our personhood. I think that I’m made entirely of poetry now, because that’s the lens through which I choose to see reality. I’m interested in a lyric reality, or a lyric of reality. That’s what I mean by my personhood. I’ve developed a voice that is mine, built by me and this alterity, the carrier frequency that moves through me when I write.

JESSE.

So that your ‘I’ has become a kind of third-person, and your self is now, or has become, a string, no—a compact mass—of quotations. But where exactly do you locate your own poetry, then?

PETER.

I used to locate it in myself, but I’ve realized that it’s not in me. It’s just next to me. It’s like breath on a mirror. It’s there, and then it evaporates. And that’s part of the agony, because I like it when it’s there. I can work when it’s there. I don’t always control it. Sometimes I can coax it.

The pronoun ‘I,’ the first person pronoun—I don’t think it belongs to me. I think it’s much bigger than me. It’s much older than me. It doesn’t live in me, I live in it. We all do. The ‘I’ is wound and compressed with so many affiliated voices and so much consciousness that to me it’s a really dynamic character. The ‘I’ in my poems is built out of a reading experience, but it’s also an opening. It’s where I realize that I don’t own the language: the language owns me. It’s like Spicer says: “Words turn mysteriously against those who use them.” I don’t think it has to be a total battle, but it is a struggle, a mystery. I am open to a voice that
comes to me, as opposed to coming from me. It’s more generative, it’s richer. I’m made from experiences—reading—but also from friendship, from intimate love, from loss—they flow through me, too. And all the things I’ve read—when I write, they speak to me. It’s not as though I’m quoting, or thinking about Blanchot, or about anybody. The ‘I’ is simply wound with these voices; I don’t need to distinguish who or what they are.

When you start writing you get hooked up to something. The question is: Is it already made, is it that the language is dictating to you? Or can you interrupt that signal and somehow insert a being? And I feel that I’ve figured out a way to put these two things together. That is to say, my poems couldn’t be anyone else’s, but it’s also not entirely me who writes them. I don’t have an answer. It’s like what Philip Guston once said: “When you’re in the studio painting, there are a lot of people in there with you—your teachers, friends, painters from history, critics…and one by one, if you’re really painting, they walk out. And if you’re really painting, you walk out.”

JESSE.

I, too, am a bit of a quotation collector, and if I can return to your Spicer, it reminds me of this from Goethe, who goes in a slightly different direction. He says, “Words often know each other better than those who use them.” Or a phrase, by way of the poet, Peter Cole, from the late novelist, Dan Tsalka, who speaks of “all the little weddings between words.” And I wonder, when you speak of a signal and a carrier frequency, whether that happens on that word-to-word level, too. Whether the language revises itself mid-creation, or if the nuptials are arranged even before the letters are set?
PETER.
I can only say that “revision” is the place where I most discover myself. I most discover myself in the text by what I take away. Not what I lay down but what I take away, is really how the poem begins to come forward—as I take myself away. But as I take myself away, I also grow from the experience, because the horizon of the poem becomes larger than what I’d thought; and from that discovery I enlarge my understanding of personhood. How to live, what to do.

JESSE.
Taking away, growing. Is the author most real in revision?

PETER.
To author is to authorize, to authorize a text. Choosing. The authority of choice: it can’t be this, it has be this, this and that. We choose. And this choice is curatorial. Writing is also curatorial. I’m definitely a poet because I think in lines, I think in phrases; prose is very difficult for me. Poetry is sound before sense, sensation before prosaic meaning. I think that poems can open up the prosaic read of the world to a more unstable yet honest reading of not-knowing. That instability is where something is found. I’ve learned to trust that.

You see, I’m interested in meaning always to be cresting; each line is cresting, it’s cresting with another meaning, it doesn’t always have to land, it just has to keep cresting. By putting these ideas out there into a sonic pattern, you create an integrity of sensation, and from that you begin to create an integrity of meaning. “Call down the inherited / phenomenal world / when it’s raining in the book, / lost to the world / in an abundance of world.” That’s from “Speech Acts for a Dying World.”
JESSE.
I hear Rilke there.

PETER.
I loved Rilke when I was your age. I remember when I first picked up the Duino Elegies. I was living in the Village then, and I thought I’d made this incredible discovery in the used bookstore. Nobody knew who this guy was! I felt that the book was written just for me. Of course, everyone knew who Rilke was. But when I was young, I often had that feeling that every book I read was written just for me. Now I don’t feel that way. Now I feel that they’re written for a community of people who live their lives and do their thinking through poetry. I think that many of the poems I most love are about poetry. So much of Williams is about poetry, so much of Stevens is about poetry, so much of Spicer, so much of Dickinson is about poetry, about the threshold experience of writing. She calls it her “flood subject”—death and immortality. But when she speaks of immortality, she’s talking about Keats and Donne. She’s talking about the immortality of a writer.

If I had to name a poet who has profoundly affected me in the last decade, it’s Dickinson. She always understood the mortal world as a perspective—: this is why I’ve come to feel so coeval with her. She writes the majority of her poems during the Civil War. Many of them her best, which demonstrates a critical imagination for the political realities of her time. And while she’s writing during a Christian Revivalist period, she chooses not to accept Christ as her savior. Poetry is a salvation in her work, what a poem can know. She says, “This World is not Conclusion. / A Species stands beyond – / Invisible, as music – / But positive, as sound.” I think, like any great poet, she held poetry to be the ultimate art. In “After great pain, a formal
feeling comes”—: “The Feet, mechanical, go round –/ A Wooden way / Of Ground, or Air, or Ought”—and then, “This is the Hour of Lead –/ Remembered, if outlived.” For me that “hour of lead” is the experience of despondency, but also the lead of her pencil in the act of writing.

At any rate, it may be because I live and work near Amherst, and her house is here, and her grave, and it’s like this great occult tower sending signals to me…It’s a pretty psychotropic conversation we’re having.

JESSE.

I like what you’ve said, that Dickinson “understood the mortal world as a perspective,” and that this perspective was the result of “a critical imagination,” an imagination which extended beyond the Civil War, so that the poems continue to absorb and criticize it and moments like it, today. I’m thinking of a recent interview, in which you spoke about just this kind of movement, though in a different context. You spoke of the sly way in which capitalist discourse moves through your poetry, sometimes to positive effect, but often in that you’re obliged to recycle the language of the elite.

PETER.

That’s right. It’s particularly evident in a poem like the long “Now It’s Dark” (the longer of the two). It’s also true in “Speech Acts for a Dying World.” It’s true in “That I Saw the Light On Nonotuck Avenue.” It’s also true in “Ship of State,” which is the body becoming a corpse in capitalism, that we’re already corpses in this system. But it’s not didactic, it’s more that it’s impossible to uncomb the political-economic system that we live in with our being-here. It’s like the wind in a storm: it’s part of what composes our daily life. Do I want to dwell on it? No.
Do I touch upon it? Yes. Does it bend the voice? Yes. But is it ultimately what I’m interested in discussing? Not really. I think it’s there, unavoidably. It’s not that you learn to speak to power, it’s that the language is bent by it. I don’t think I’m speaking to power,—but maybe I am, maybe the act of writing a poem is a form of civil disobedience, because you do not respond in kind to what’s coming at you. But I chose very early on that I didn’t want to be a mere ‘trumpet,’ to use a current metaphor. I didn’t want merely to react. I felt that there was a spiritual program. There’s an outer inside...

JESSE.
The outside inside, where language begins, or where it encounters itself. We’ve talked, off-tape, about your time in France,—a country you often return to—and about what that meant for your language. Another origin, the beginning of a “rhythmus.”

PETER.
In Marseilles, in ’99.—I had a residency at the Centre international de poésie, cipm. Three or four months. They gave you an apartment and a stipend, cash every week in an envelope. That was incredible. I couldn’t even spend the amount of money I was getting. There I was in Marseilles with my baby French—I was actually buying children’s books to practice, which they thought was hilarious. ‘But that’s how you learned!’ I would say. But in Marseille in ’99 few people spoke English, so my signal was very much reduced. I was no longer in my native language, and I had to find another. In the end, it was a transformative experience for my art. Being out of my context allowed me to find a context for the poem. It was a watershed moment.
Jesse.
Outside your language, and perhaps run out of language—: Where, finally, did that lead you?

Peter.
It led me to reduce my signal further, intentionally. I began to use repetition, anaphora. Take “Chateau If”—“If love if then if now if the flowers of if the conditional / if of arrows the condition of if / if to say light to inhabit light if to speak to live, so…” The title of that poem was a mis-reading of a sign for Château d’If—the ‘d’ in the sign had been pitted, and all I saw was ‘If.’ I call this repetitive form litany: catalogue. You’ll see it in “Plain Song” too, or in “A Panic That Can Still Come Upon Me,” or from my new book, “That I Saw the Light on Nonotuck Avenue,” where every line begins with “that.” I’m happy with the opening line of that poem: “That every musical note is a flame, native in its own tongue.”

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Peter Gizzi’s most recent collection, Now It’s Dark (Wesleyan Poetry Series, 2020), can be found online or in local bookstores. His previous collection, Archeophonics (Wesleyan, 2016), was a finalist for the National Book Award. He has published some eight books of poetry, receiving honors early on, such as the Lavan Younger Poets Award from the Academy of American Poets, bestowed by John Ashbery. He teaches in the MFA program for Poets & Writers at UMass Amherst.
this issue of the Lit. is typographically inspired by archival issues of the magazine from the early twentieth century. Unlike those issues, however, this one is typeset in Sabon Lt Pro, a typeface designed by Jan Tzschichhold. The cover is 140lb. Muscletone from French Paper, in the color Kraft, and the interior is 80lb. Smooth Text from Accent Opaque, in the color Warm White. This issue is printed in an edition of 850 copies in Long Island City, New York, and it was designed by Rudd Fawcett in Austin, Texas.
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