Chestnut Review

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 4 SPRING 2021

FOR STUBBORN ARTISTS

Chestnut Review

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COVER ART

Lucille Miao
"Expressions in Waterfall"
(Detail, full image on pp. 36-37)
11x15 inches, acrylic on paper, July 2019

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FROM THE EDITORS

Introduction

The springtime brings a sense of renewal: feeling the sun beginning to heat up and shedding the cocoon of cold winter nights. Spring offers the opportunity to get out and discover something new, whether that's changes in the natural environment or a new direction for the self. At *Chestnut Review*, we are also experiencing a turn, a closing our second volume and anticipating our third.

Spring brings with it a kind of fervent yearning. Nature is on full display, each and every organism, humming in unison. And while we hope you experience this bliss, we also hope you fight for broader revitalizations for yourself, your loved ones, and your community. In this issue you'll find more than enough fuel to dig in and do this work. You'll find poems and stories about love, about courage, about deep want. We hope that you reflect and take action--our world needs those who hold empathy and compassion to show up--so that we might all one day live in a renewed world.

We are also excited to mark this May 15th as our second birthday. Watching the magazine grow from an idea to a robust publication has been pure joy. We cannot thank our contributors and you, gentle readers, enough for supporting our venture. You are what makes us great. Thank you.

Stay safe, enjoy the springtime, and remain stubborn.

CUTTER STREEBY

Cloud Land

the mind is its own place : *do you really mean what you do* : i'm opening with this : a man visible from his thick thighs up : off the coast of winter breaking through snow

thigh high and the moon is a huge mirror strapped to his back beating white into everything around him and there's a song i can't hear playing in his mind : and that music is his alone : as yours is : : and mine :

and we build what we will under that moon whether we admit it or not : *weather* : : the world spins and it snows : the world spins and it's spring : *change* : and the song changes too but slowly and knowing that : herein at last we should be free from the maelstrom : seasons : *years* : change

that's the only constant right : but there are events that happen rarely : *rara avis in terres* : a rare thing that shapes the melody or the horizon inside the moon-man's mind : we call it *death* or *pandemic* sometimes or once when i was in college there was a kid who'd never seen the snow and we took him to a mountain there and found it : i remember him getting out of the car to touch it and he moved so slowly like he was in a movie or something : and i was surprised when he started to cry : we were young then but still male : still : *marble*

: and the word i need comes from architecture and describes the raised space between the channels carved in a triglyph : *femur* : still tied to muscle and limb and founded on the brittle strength of bones : *we were both rapt weren't we* : wrapped

in tendon and tears and even writing that i feel too maudlin : but i watched him bend : *femural : it's the largest bone in the body and the hardest to break* : ephemeral : and his thighs were roped and too big and when he bent it opened a dark sea between the waist of his jeans and the unstained anatomy of his lower back and i was lost between his sweatshirt and his name : : *Carlos* but i called him C and he turned then : and now i see his hand forming an ampoule for storing liquid : medicine : a glass carafe and i see a clear medium tinged with white and frozen clouds becoming a solid thing between us and he said : *in my country we can't have this* : how water becomes geometry when it freezes : *and i came here to learn it* : how i said : *in my country we can't have this*

GRETCHEN ROCKWELL

Ode to Wikipedia

Acacia trees. A truth: I don't know what I did
Bubonic plague. before Wikipedia existed. I suppose I
Catacombs. crawled through libraries and
Deep-sea gigantism. dictionaries and research books and
Erhu. encyclopedias and reference materials
Fiddlehead fern. fishing for information, for facts, for any
Goblin shark. gulp of information I could get, about anything,
H. H. Holmes. hoarding knowledge as if it was the hidden
Indigo. illumination of a flashlight under the sheets, a
Jewel wasp. jubilant song from the throat of a thrush, a
Kellogg's Cornflakes. key to some enormous locked
Laika. library just waiting for the door to open, for
Moirae. me. But now I can type and click and scroll and
Nonbinary gender. never run out of pages, always find another thing to
Ophidura. open, another life to thread through, another
Panamanian golden frog. puzzle to unlock. And it's limitless, one
Queen Kristina. quintessential encyclopedia, a compendium, a
Rho. resource for anything and everything. It's
Snapdragon. stunning: I am left dazed as if slapped by the tail of a
Thanatology. thresher shark, tumbled as if by tornado. I can spend hours
Unicorn tapestries. unraveling my own twisted travels; I can only re-
Velociraptor. verse and revisit so many times. I'm always on to the next
Whaling (history of). wisp of knowledge. I rejoice in how quickly results, like
Xenolith. xebecs, sail across my screen. I can spend hours spiraling.
Yuri Gagarin. Yesterday's search history is the start of a new journey: the
Zero gravity. Zvečan Fortress, the scarab beetle, the endless possibilities.

REBECCA POYNOR

Reactivity

On every visit, the breast cancer wing tries to trick us,
potted plants and skylights filtering
afternoon light. But the truth is exposed
by the waiting room chair;
hard, textured plastic that dots the backs of my thighs
beneath the pale blue examination gown
that pools in an excess of fabric around me.
It ties in the front and I clutch it
closed with a fist.
I have been waiting a while,
passing time with inconsequential things like
biology homework. My mom quizzes me with flashcards,
I insist. We break the stark silence,
A cell is the basic unit of life. It contains—
I don't think I'm reacting to this in the right way. There is
no textbook
on how to respond
to the moment
the ultrasound shadows black on the lump,
lonely, lying in the dark room.
Across from me, my mom watches. Her discomfort
manifests in the incessant bounce of her knee.
The cell regenerates,
differentiates.
She looks at me as if she mistakes my quiet for bravery, but
I have just been waiting for someone
to tell me if I should be feeling gut-empty,
neck-pricking fear, or blood-thrumming courage. I cut it
down the middle, feel nothing.
I am apathetic. I am inconsolable,
only none of us know it yet. I make notes
—prophase, metaphase, anaphase—
off the paper, the cells won't stop dividing.

ZACKARY MEDLIN

Landscape with Mother and Police

Looking up from damp grass
while wine-drunk on someone's lawn,
I watch the birch leaves spin,
the wind twisting the stems.
Unspoken is the threat of tearing
free, unfastening one's self
from the whole. The oscillations
rippled the dappled canopy
like a pond rocked out of sleep
into a heaving wake preparing itself
to break against the green shore.
Or perhaps the point is all
the points above breaking
into moments of light, more
like the peachleaf willows dotted
along the bank of Seurat's Seine
where mothers stand looking,
mostly, away. What I see between
the blurred dance of lights and leaves
is you standing in the kitchen
smoking a Kool Filter King
between the small hours of night,
waiting for the phone not to ring,
waiting for the police not to knock
again. I see you pretending not to
see me as the artist standing outside
the frame, painting, with red and blue
lights, another scene on our window
panes. In the bottom right corner,
proud scratches spell out my name.

LORETTE C. LUZAJIC

Four images, (clockwise from top left)

"Believe," "Love," "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?"
"Bluebird on My Shoulder"

12x12 inches each, mixed media on canvas

My signature square collage paintings are driven by eclectic curiosity and the joy of juxtaposition. I hoard images that intrigue, then position them in ways that resonates with me aesthetically and poetically. Recurring motifs have formed a lexicon of personal and cultural symbolism over time. My art places itself easily in pop art, surrealism, abstract expressionism, and street art, so I often refer to my creations as "urban expressionism." They are also filled with references to literature, art history, religion, fashion, cinema, music, memory, icons of human creativity, the places I have travelled, and more. My imagination feels like some kind of machine: I am constantly consuming everything around me, then conjure a random combination and work it into something special. It is my way of processing the world and my experiences and maintaining equilibrium in the madness, finding the raw snippets of hope and poetry, making a beautiful mess.

SATYA DASH

In the throes, my only resolution is not to have one

what compares with the soft notes of a beloved's confession
dark crush of grapes
on the ocean's gushing skin perhaps I blame my
imagination for heartache at times
ambition wrecks me you say your celestial mouth
overcome by the acreage of face

thought is no silk petal my mind no ilk metal glints metal
spark owned
by light us owned by reception I console quote Plath for a
noble distraction
despite its fundamental veering illuminates not in light but
sensation for years

in the face of bafflement I looked at my mother for distraction
now in the immediate
aftermath of shocks a kitchen burn seasonal
disenchantments minor (major)
anguishes I call her to receive the great pleasure of classifying
wounds christening

a site offers a chance to return as tourist later if you're
fond of lurking as a ghost
you'll start loving white hairs soon I don't think I'm there
yet the milkman leaves
a happy birthday note at my door & I'm left with milky
tears for a caterpillar's bath

what one chews is the holy harvest of another in nature neu-
rons scatter longing
that delight so often masquerades as embarrassment
saddens me am I wrong
to think I would eat more fruit if I knew its source
perhaps could knowing lie

not in measure of a pendulum's amplitude but in the
hypnosis of a bob's swing
perhaps incantatory your gravity beckoning mine here's my rest-
lessness drinkable
as an after-dinner poison even saints drink their own
sweat for a promotion

to God my mother fasts for my father's long life good health
sharp mind
my father snores deep for exactly the same reason to
explain any of this beauty
you must lie comatose in wonder nearing orgasm I see in the
distance the belly's

delicate lilt a wave about to break into tide a limb
quivering like a bamboo leaning
towards a cyclone's name it's you my eyes rumble for for you're
a thousand parts

& each of you strokes a thousand in me & oh god what a
stark million my calibration

the roof scrunched like a bedsheet at dawn look how infinite
screams infinitesimal
all communion obliterates sense collapsing into new sense
when stars overhead
complain of a gelatinous exhaustion the eyes wake like
marbles in daze & read

the text you've left
I think you mean some kind of grace
when you say *last night I died*

FATIMA MALIK

The House on Shaheen Street

The first time I saw it, I thought it was a palace. Average-
sized and gray, it seemed to me the most beautiful house

in the country. My parents searched far and wide to source
wood for doors and windows, snowy marble for countertops.

They lovingly commissioned each carving on the dining table.
The staircase had to be rebuilt, not because they were exacting,

but because the first crumbled under the feet of four excited little
girls running up and down before it was ready for them. When cash

ran out, they shelved plans to build the two additional rooms upstairs.
Still, the place never felt small, nor unfinished. Theirs was the tallest

house on the block, but that wasn't what made it special. In the summer,
we gathered in the garden garnished with limes and guavas and mangoes,

flowers of many kinds. In the winter, my mother holding forth in front
of a little gas heater in her bedroom was the center of our little universe.

MADRONNA HOLDEN

Sunset Talisman

With her rattle
and her brilliant headdress
woodpecker holds the door
of the horizon open
for the coming and going
of certain shamans.

If we could get her to fly with us now

she might take us to where
sunset wraps up the day
with its red and purple scarves

boxing away everything
we have done
and not done

on this road where
we are pedaling
hello and goodbye
at the same time—

before the light of the stars
falls into the arms of the river—

and my words become water.

DAVID WOLFERSBERGER

Overleaf:
"Sunset on Willamette River Bank"
7 x 20 inches, watercolor, 2016
Painted in field notebooks bound with wire comb

The artwork and text on the previous page is one in a series of poem/painting duets featuring poems written to accompany watercolors painted on David Wolfersberger's 3500-mile solo bicycle tour of the US West. Certain visual images in this painting caught the poet's imagination, giving rise to word images in turn. The melting atmosphere of this composition reflects the river, the watery landscape, and the horizon where our days dissolve into our nights. And then there is that pileated woodpecker smiling his knowing smile back at us from his home ground. These images inspired Madronna Holden's poem which reflects both the allure and the poignancy of that road of our lives on which we are truly pedaling hello and goodbye at the same time.

SNEHA SUBRAMANIAN KANTA

Ghazal with Praise for An Ocean

for nani

An ocean is concavity. Again, I evoke the nebulize of ocean
folding into ocean to bless our feet. Give me a widening ocean

before a thousand names for God. The songbirds are passing
over a prospect of blue prayer despite gravity. Say an ocean

may become a holy carriage for feet. I want to move towards
the direction of my ancestors. The trace of lineage in an ocean

in flux from Karachi into swift waters is ceremonial. I praise
motion by wanting to be a part of nautical miles. An ocean

lingers in the body of my grandmother like the sounds in a conch
shell. The folding of hands like a cusp of two tides in an ocean

is an offer of prayer. We arrive at our destination by the smell
of a proximate ocean. I want the singing to carry us as far as ocean

currents carry nutrients to organisms underwater. My grandmother
makes paper lanterns with shapes akin to waves in the ocean.

To be saved from elegy means being saved by an ocean.
We name the intimacy holding our beloveds an ocean.

BRITTANY WHITE

Baldwin, Boğaz, ve Ben

Of all the neighborhoods in the eclectic patchwork that is Istanbul, Rumeli Hisarı is the one I love most. Located in the city's northernmost district—far from the undulating domes of Süleymaniye Mosque and the Byzantine mosaics of Ayasofya—it's named after the 15th-century fortress that sits at its center. Built by Mehmed the Conqueror in preparation for the siege of Constantinople, the fortress must have once been terrifying and intimidating. For the Ottomans, a symbol of power and God's favor. For the Christian Byzantines, a painful reminder of their incredible and violent loss.

But now, all these centuries later, the fortress is more like an ornament. Its walls stretch down the hillside and to the sea, hugging a grove of trees; its towers are smooth and cylindrical, reaching up towards the sky with grace. The rest of the neighborhood is quiet and nostalgic with narrow, tree-lined streets complete with Ottoman-era wooden mansions, the kind that I tell my friends I'd buy if I ever won the lottery.

It's easy for me to talk about how much I love the city. But the word "love" is more like shorthand—a sanitized and muted way of explaining a feeling that can't be contained in one word. What I really mean to say is that, in many ways, I'm like one of those trees harbored within the fortress walls. Istanbul has allowed me the privilege of rooting a part of myself within its grounds. Fed and nourished by its soil, I draw from my experiences there and continue to grow from them, forever grateful to the city for what it has gifted me.

Perhaps, I seem a strange match for Istanbul, my love random and out of context. How in the hell did the universe match a Black American girl with an ancient Ottoman city? I've asked myself that question for years. If I had to put my finger on why, it'd be that Istanbul is a city of coexisting dichotomies. It's a predominately Muslim city with deep, tangling roots in Orthodox Christianity. It's both ancient and modern, with four-lane highways running underneath the arches of fourth-century Roman aqueducts. The Bosphorus Strait, which splits the city into its European and Asian sides, has two currents; one on the surface, flowing from north to south, and an undercurrent that flows in the opposite direction. Over the centuries, the tension created by all those opposing forces has brought about devastating violence and stunning, unforgettable beauty—a bittersweet tension—that I wish everyone could experience and one I feel internally.

I had resigned myself to the idea that there were no other Black people to share my interest with. So when my mother sent me an email with a link to Magdalena Zaborowska's book, *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade*, I was a bit confused. I had to read the title twice because the words didn't make sense together. "James Baldwin" and "Turkey"? As a voracious reader and someone with a degree in Africana Studies, I knew of Baldwin's French years, and I had read him, admired him, but like with most legends, I had placed Baldwin on an inaccessible pedestal—far away from his humanity—and even further from mine. Yet with this discovery, the seemingly insurmountable space between Baldwin and myself began to dissipate. Suddenly, it was Baldwın, Boğaz, ve Ben: Baldwin, the Bosphorus, and I.

In 1961, James Baldwin showed up, unannounced, at the home of his close friend Engin Cezzar. The two had met three years earlier in New York City when Cezzar was cast to play Giovanni in the Actor's Studio production of Baldwin's second novel, *Giovanni's Room*, and they became fast friends. When Cezzar left New York to go back to his home in Istanbul, he extended an open invitation to Baldwin to come and visit whenever he should find the time.

When Baldwin finally decided to take his friend up on the offer, he was spiritually and emotionally in a very dark place. He had barely any money and was suffering from a particularly debilitating bout of writer's block. The pressure of growing notoriety, his burgeoning role in the civil rights movement, and the crushing weight of American racism and homophobia were too heavy a burden. He needed an escape—a safe place to bear witness to the turmoil and unrest happening at home—and Istanbul offered him refuge.

In the years to follow, Baldwin built a supportive and loving community in Istanbul. His Turkish family included an eclectic cast of characters. He made friends with the novelist and Kurdish activist Yaşar Kemal, both men using the power of the pen to bring attention to the plight and marginalization of their people. Bertice Reading, a Black jazz singer from Pennsylvania and fellow ex-pat, was also a regular. Though based primarily in London, Reading owned property in Istanbul. Throughout the decade, Reading and Baldwin would become close companions, who found comfort and a sense of "home" in each other. Folks like poet Cevat Çapan, journalist Zeynep Oral, and actor Ali Poyrazoğlu were also part of the group that made up Baldwin's social circle. And of course, Cezzar and his wife Gülriz Sururi were ever-present.

Baldwin's social life in Istanbul was robust, and by all accounts, he was always the soul of the party. Like his days in Greenwich Village, people from the Turkish art scene would gather around Baldwin to hear him prophesize late into the night. While he spoke on pressing societal issues like the ongoing civil rights movement in America or the Algerian question in France, Baldwin had a talent for mixing gravity with levity—dancing, telling jokes, and drinking lots of whiskey. He was no stranger to Istanbul's nightlife and frequented the Divan Hotel bar where his friend, Avni Salbaş, served up the city's best drinks. His uproarious laughter and dazzling smile could light up a room and anyone who may have been intimidated by his commanding presence would be put at ease.

Unfettered by life in the States, Baldwin's writing practice flourished within the nurturing confines of his new community. He had the habit of working through the night and the early morning. Cezzar and Sururi would just be getting up when Baldwin was finishing his work. All fired up, he'd read what he'd written and ask for their opinions. After workshopping his passages, Baldwin would sleep for half the day before waking up to start the process all over again. With clarity and the space needed to express his ideas on paper, Baldwin wrote some of his most critically acclaimed works. *Another Country, The Fire Next Time*, and *No Name in the Street*—Baldwin's quintessentially American novels and essays—were all birthed in Istanbul.

In 1967, while trying to finish his fourth novel, *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*, Baldwin moved into a red, wooden villa that had once been the personal library of Ahmet Vefik Paşa, a 19th century Ottoman intellectual, credited with having written the first Turkish dictionary. It was the perfect place for a man of words to live and write. Situated on a cliff with panoramic views of the Bosphorus's Asian shore and a 15th-century fortress below, the home was located in Rumeli Hisarı.

When I left America for Istanbul, unlike Baldwin, I didn't have a sophisticated sense of self. I was a 22-year-old recent graduate

and hadn't taken the time to consider why I felt the impulse to move halfway across the world, to a place I knew little about. I know now that I was looking to be immersed in something wholly unfamiliar. But at the time, I told myself that working abroad was just an adventure, something fun and interesting I could do while my student loans were in deferment.

Istanbul was so different from anything I experienced back in the States. The view from my apartment balcony was a vast sea of red-tiled roofs, with minarets rising out of the urban landscape like lighthouses. Five times a day, you could hear the call to prayer echoing across the city, each muezzin professing the greatness of God in beautiful euphony. And then there were new scents, which were a delight for the olfactory senses—the savory spice of döner kebab, fresh bread from the bakery, and the sweet smell of salep, a hot winter drink made from the tubers of an orchid, and my personal favorite.

Even my work as an English teacher was new and exciting because it was the first time I'd ever had a full-time job. I taught advanced learners Tuesday through Saturday. My students, many of them close to my own age, were kind and patient with me, always willing to gently coach me through a cultural faux pas or my butchering of their language. On my days off, I'd wake up early and explore the city, taking the train from my neighborhood so that I could reach the historic peninsula. I'd walk down to the Eminönü docks, buy salep to warm me up, and settle in for people watching. I'd see tourists and be delighted that, unlike them, I would get to enjoy Istanbul for more than just a few, fleeting days.

I found friendship in two other teachers at my school, Anika and Darcy. Both were from England but with roots in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Darcy was around my age, had an entertainingly foul mouth, and wit as sharp as a knife. She had come to Istanbul after falling in love with a soft-spoken Kurdish man. Anika, who would later become my roommate, could also charm with her quick wit and astute observations. About ten years my senior, she quickly became more like a sister to me. She'd make me a proper cup of tea when I wasn't feeling well, take me with her to social gatherings, and scold me when I didn't do the dishes or take out the trash. She was the closest thing I had to family in Istanbul, and to this day, I call her abla, meaning "big sister" in Turkish. Anika and Darcy were my main support system, my very own Engin and Gülriz. Woven into my first memories of the city, they shaped my experience and helped make Istanbul feel a little bit more like home.

It's strange to grow up in a country where you're socialized based on race and then to suddenly find yourself in a place where the color of your skin doesn't matter as much, or at least in a different way. As Black Americans, we grow up learning to navigate the world by understanding how society perceives us, ever vigilant and hyper-aware that someone always has their eye on you, ready to police your Blackness at any given moment. Moving through white America, you feel that energy—that 400-year-old tension—and try your best to walk that thin line.

If I wear my natural hair to this job interview, will it hurt my chances of getting an offer?

If I express my opinion in this room full of white people, will they take me seriously?

Is my co-worker dismissive of me because I'm Black or because they're simply an asshole?

If I call the police, will they help me or will they murder me?

The stream of questions that runs through our minds is a perversely natural part of our existence. And at the core of all these thoughts is the question: Do I belong here? It allows us to fall into

the trap of othering ourselves—to buy into the idea that being Black means you're only tangentially American.

It took a while for me to even realize that I was carrying that extra baggage. But after a few weeks, when the novelty of it all had worn down, I started to notice something: Turkish people didn't really react to my Blackness—at least not in the ways I was accustomed to. When they did, it was almost always in or around Sultanahmet, Istanbul's tourist center. I'd be amusing myself, perhaps, by walking through Mısır Çarşısı, the old spice market, its energy, lively and chaotic. Throngs of tourists and locals always funneling through long and winding halls. Endless barrels of turmeric, sumac, mint, and rose petals creating a Pollock-like pallet of colors. Shop owners calling out to tourists in all kinds of languages, trying to convince them to buy their wares: "Miss, do you speak English?" or "Noi parliamo Italiano!"

And the one I heard the most: "Oui, oui mademoiselle! Je parle français!" because most shop owners assumed that I was from a francophone West African country.

Around and about Sultanahmet, my Blackness was mostly acknowledged by excited and curious little kids. They'd usually run up to me and say, "Çok güzelsin sen." ("You're so pretty.") They'd ask to take a picture with me and their parents, who were often embarrassed that their child had created such a fuss, would usually apologize for the interruption before moving on. And for the most part—save the days where I was in a bad mood or feeling particularly homesick—I took this attention in stride and indulged people in their curiosity because it was infrequent and mostly unobtrusive.

In the residential parts of the city, my Blackness largely went unnoticed. I'd walk into the bakery or butcher shop and prepare myself for the question, "Nerelisiniz?" ("Where are you from?") But it almost never came. Most shop owners never even registered surprise at my being there, treating me like any other customer.

And that's how it was. My Blackness was either regarded with genuine curiosity—at times, even deemed beautiful—or it wasn't regarded at all. This was something that I accepted with relief. Yet always a part of me remained wary, braced for American-variety racism to rear its ugly head.

According to Baldwin biographer James Campbell, Baldwin once told Yaşar Kemal, his friend, and fellow writer, 'I feel free in Istanbul," and he would repeat this sentiment many times over in the public record. Baldwin said that for him, Istanbul was: "A place where I can find out again—where I am—and what I must do. A place where I can stop and do nothing in order to start again." And I have to say that the way I experienced my Blackness in Istanbul allowed me to feel the same way. Istanbul was a place where I could just stop and be.

This isn't to say that anti-Black racism and discrimination in Turkey is non-existent or that my American privilege was a non-factor. Afro-Turks—the descendants of enslaved Africans from the Ottoman Empire—and more recent African immigrants living in large urban centers certainly experience this. Microaggressions and individual acts of racial violence occur; stereotypical depictions of Black people surface in popular media and print advertising. And if anything, both groups are victims of systematic invisibility, with their unique, lived experiences and challenges obscured by a mainstream, monolithic cultural narrative. Looking back, I'm sure my nationality was a factor in the way I experienced race in Turkey. But at the time, with my limited global experience, I was just beginning to think about what it meant to move through the world as an American citizen. The weight, the power, the privilege of it. Still, the fact remains that the history and racial dynamics in Turkey are very different than in the United States.

My lived experience as a Black person in America meant that a

large part of my identity had been formed within a very particular scope. Most of the baggage I carried and behaviors I learned that helped me navigate everyday American racism didn't always make sense in Turkey. At times, it was like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. For the first time in my life, I was in a place where I didn't always have to think of the world in Black and white. And though it felt peculiar, it was also liberating and refreshing. I didn't have to be consumed with how society might police or stigmatize my identity. I could, from time to time, set my baggage down and just be.

When I think about that feeling, one day stands out most:

I was taking the vapur, or public ferry, from the European side of the city to the Asian side. The vapur functions like any other mode of mass transit. It's an important part of the city's rhythm and not just an experience for tourists. Everyday Istanbullites use it to commute to work, visit family and friends, or to go to bars and restaurants. It's no different than commuting from Manhattan to Brooklyn. But it would be uncommon to see a Black person on the vapur, especially if it wasn't tourist season.

Though winters there aren't as harsh as they are back home in New York, that day the air had a bite to it. I ordered hot Turkish tea from the vapur café and sat by a window so that I could watch as we passed by the wooden mansions and Ottoman palaces that dot the city's shores, an experience that is somehow both quotidian and exciting. After about twenty minutes of losing myself in thought and watching from my window, I looked up and realized that I was the only Black person on the ferry. It may not seem like a lot but in America, it's damn near impossible to go twenty whole minutes without considering your Blackness. The reminders are constant and ubiquitous. At home, when you walk into a white or non-Black space, you immediately sense your difference. You might scan the room for another Black face in the crowd and if there isn't one, you resign yourself to the fish-out-of-water discomfort that almost always follows. But that day, I stepped on to the ferry full of Turkish faces dissimilar to mine, and I hadn't even noticed—and it seemed that they hadn't either.

I was surrounded by women concerned with their children playing too close to the railing, couples huddled near to each other for warmth, and others who, like me, were looking out and taking in the vastness of the city. With no one staring at me out of curiosity or surveilling me out of some perverse sense of racist vigilantism, I leaned into the relief. Like when you walk into an air-conditioned store on a hot sticky day and your body immediately eases into the comfort of the cool blast. No longer laboring to breathe through thick air, your body loosens and sweat dissipates. You may even mutter a "Thank you, Jesus" because the reprieve is that sweet.

There's a documentary that gives us a glimpse into Baldwin's life in Istanbul called *From Another Place*. Shot in black and white by Sedat Pakay, the film is only twelve-minutes long but it's remarkably intimate. It starts out with a shot of Baldwin getting out of his bed; he is almost nude, wearing only a pair of white underwear. He walks over to his window, opens the curtain, and looks out over the Bosphorus. He then walks towards the camera and off-screen, to put on a black, thigh-length robe before lighting a cigarette and getting back into bed.

Baldwin, finally ready to begin the day, starts to move about the room while the soundtrack of his voice plays in the background. Cutting in and out for the duration of the film, it's an extended monologue where he describes his status as an episodic expatriate.

"I leave and I go back . . . and then I leave and I go back," Baldwin says. "The last few years that I'd been in America, I'd really done very little writing. I scarcely even tried to . . . the pressures

are too immediate and too great. And once one gets off the plane or the boat, one knows that in two or three weeks, it's gonna be impossible to close one's door and to concentrate."

In classic Baldwin eloquence, he lays out the importance of writing from outside of the States. He's aware of the criticism he faces, with some saying that he has a responsibility to be physically present in his country. But he defends his absence by asserting that in leaving, he can write about America with a clearer perspective. Liberated from the onus society has heaped on him as a Black man, a gay man, a writer, and an activist, Baldwin could focus on his craft. But more importantly, he could find space and time to just be.

In the film, Baldwin is a pensive yet curious observer of the city. He strolls through Eminönü and Mısır Çarşısı and feeds the pigeons outside of Yeni Camii like a regular tourist. As he browses through Sahaflar Çarşısı, we get a glimpse at the books displayed on one of the stands: Kara Yabancı, the Turkish translation of Another Country; and Düşenin Dostu, the Turkish version of John Herbert's play Fortune and Men's Eyes, which Baldwin had just directed for a local Istanbul theater. In Taksim, he finally breaks his pensivity and gifts us with his broad, spectacular smile, and you can't help but feel endeared to him. The film offers us a few precious moments with Baldwin, the man. Not the literary giant, not the prophet or the voice of the American civil rights movement—but with Jimmy, the Black boy from Harlem.

In my favorite scene, Baldwin headed up the Bosphorus in a small boat. His voice-over monologue has since faded and been replaced with mellow jazz instrumental. You can see only his profile and it looks as if he has returned to his completive mood. Looking out over the side of the boat, Baldwin admires the yalı and old palaces as they pass by, quiet and serene. And though there's no way I could ever know exactly what he was thinking at that moment, I sense that I'm watching a man who has laid down his burdens and surrendered them to the sea. Because as one who has been on that same journey—traveling up the churning waters of the Bosphorus, watching the cityscape go by, and allowing myself to get lost in thought—that's how I felt.

My last visit to Turkey was in 2019, just a couple of months before the global COVID-19 pandemic rocked our worlds and halted virtually all international travel. I spent a full week touring the Black Sea Region and another four days in the city of Izmir, visiting with members of the Afro-Turk community. The remainder of my time, I spent in Istanbul, doing all the things I had missed the most. I wandered through the Mısır Çarşışı, drank a nice hot cup of salep in Eminönü, and treated myself to a morning at the hammam, saving one day so that I could make a special pilgrimage.

Thanks to an English literature professor at Boğaziçi University, I had the exact address of Baldwin's home in Rumeli Hisarı. That morning, I set out early, making a pit stop to fill up on menemen before continuing. Getting off the train, I followed Google Maps, passing through a crowded bazaar, down a long steep road -until I finally came to a quiet cul-de-sac. An old lady was sitting in front of her gate who watched me with amusement before she asked me what I was looking for.

I told her that I was looking for a big red house and she pointed in what I believed was the wrong direction, saying a string of things that I couldn't understand, my Turkish still basic. I wandered around for a bit more until I found a pathway leading down a steep staircase towards the boardwalk below.

I remembered that the professor had told me that Baldwin's home, often referred to as the Paşa's Library, was now a private

residence, in part protected by a tall stone gate and that the only way to see it would be from below. I started walking down the staircase and after passing the few trees that were blocking my view, I saw the Paşa's Library on my right-hand side—lording over the cliff with its grand panoramic windows. Its rich, rusty color making it impossible to miss.

I stopped and stared for a while, satisfied that I'd been able to find the place and allowing myself a moment to take it all in. My "discovery" of Baldwin's Turkish Decade had validated my love for the city and made me feel seen. And here I was in-person—in Baldwin's presence—and I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude. I snapped a few pictures, whispered a reverent "thank you" under my breath, and continued down the stairs.

That morning the weather was absolutely perfect, 72 degrees, sunny, with a gentle breeze. People were out at sidewalk cafés, eating a late breakfast and others were taking their Sunday morning strolls. The fortress of Rumeli Hisarı, with its abiding magnificence, at the center of it all. The weather was too beautiful for me to pass up. I couldn't resist a leisurely walk along the churning Bosphorus, a panorama of Istanbul in view, letting the whole of it pull me forward once again.

JEANNINE HALL GAILEY

I've Been Burned

Like the forests, charred and then blooming furiously into the spring air, bluebells and yellow plumes, doomed to disappear. Like skin healed over, never quite the same to the touch. Foxfire ablaze in the dark. In the air this spring it smells like gasoline, despite the daffodils in the yard. We're waiting for rain. My scars are the kind that sing. Sometimes god speaks to you from a burning bush; sometimes he allows you to be burned at the stake, still singing. The mind of god is difficult to discern, especially these days. Why is there smoke lingering in my hair, still? You can't escape the feeling that we're all marching into the flames, even when the sky is so blue, that the horizon holds a fire we can't possibly contain.

MILEVA ANASTASIADOU

Everybody Knows

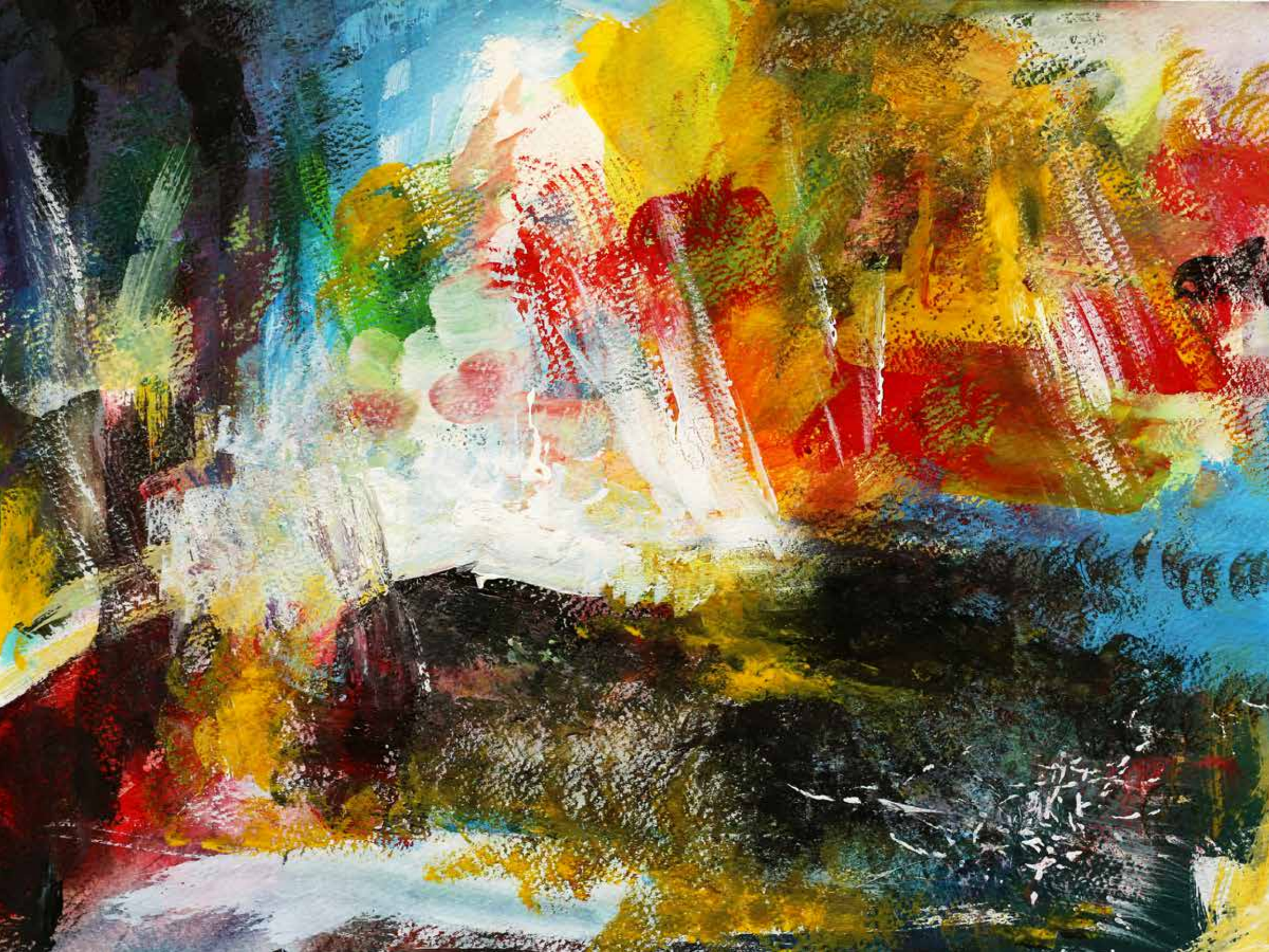
Dad wonders what he did wrong, what made me end up a dolphin. He wants me out of the sea, away from my pod, he wants me to grow legs and walk. He doesn't know what it's like; you float, you jump, plunge into the depths, you're underwater, you're up, you're down, but dad has always walked on solid ground, has always been a man of the land.

Dad talks and talks but I can't hear him. He feels like he should save me, I'm fine dad, I tell him, but dad doesn't listen, like there's a barrier between us, like sound doesn't travel between worlds. He rubs his eyes, like he's never seen a dolphin. I want to tell him, being a dolphin is not that bad. It comes with benefits he can't see or understand. He drags me out but I keep slipping back and he can't see I'm different, I need water to survive. The world is overwhelming, the world is a bad place, when I step on the ground. I beg him to leave me alone but dad keeps dragging me out of peace, into reality, like he did when I was born.

Dad says he didn't teach me this way. I say he's wrong. His people take the easy way up, they're like us, only we don't share the same goals. They're after money, success, we're after pure joy. Try it, dad, you'll never have felt this happy before, I tell him and he's almost ready, desperate for happiness, but he steps back, like he wouldn't dare.

Dad falls down on his knees, he's talking about war, the good guys lost, he says, as if this was obvious, expected, as if informing me of things and facts everybody knows but me, but I'm done with the land, done with his people, done, done, done, for I'm a dolphin, jumping high, in ecstasy, then I dive back into the madness, the madness all over, madly laughing, watching the world burn, or flood, or fall apart and I don't care, it doesn't hurt, not anymore, not like before, to see the world disintegrate.

Overleaf:
Lucille Miao, "Expressions in Waterfall"
11x15 inches, acrylic on paper, July 2019



XUEYI ZHOU

Faith

The first time mother tasted religion was when she was seventeen, dissatisfied with the men her father arranged for her. She prayed under a tree that Yue Lao would lasso her an adequate husband with a red string. The Yue Lao she talked to was not the real Matchmaker God, but an old village man who claimed that he had sacrificed his eyes for desperate people, for the service of hunting their missing halves. His fingers slipped from mother's palm to her wrist like an eel on an oily floor, his nail-lines black as his teeth. When he had swum mother's hands, he glossed his lips with the scent frozen on his forefinger and said, "A pretty bird like you would fly out from the mountains and find home in a rich house." Mother paid him and used that to shield against the butcher's son, the tailor's son, the fisherman's son, and the farmer's son. At thirty-one, pregnant, she married a factory owner who thought his wealth justified his temper.

The second time mother picked up religion, she was kneeling inside a temple, smoky with incense, tearing red candles with golden engravings. Three kowtows, in the proper way of her forehead kissing the cushion violently. She wore long relaxed-fit pants and long-sleeves: the former to hide the maternity fat, the latter to cover her bracelet of bruises. She requested a remake of her drunk husband, who, by that time, was constantly absent, who was harder to put up with when present. Sitting in front of the monk, an authentic one this time, she waited for the explanation of the stick she drew from the bamboo cup. She left before the monk could find the page in the book of fortune. Mother was scared that Guan Yin couldn't hear her among the Namo-Amitabhas, more scared that Guan Yin might have heard her. After all, what she had asked for was her husband's death.

The third time mother tested religion, her own mother was shrinking on the hospital bed, tubed and unconscious, a barely breathing lump. The doctor tried to lay out the math of the experimental treatment for her: a couple painful months, at best; decades of debt, for sure. Mother had stepped into every temple she could reach for the god of longevity, and returned with two silver Guan Yin statues and five tortoise-shaped talismans. That night, after she prayed to every god in our home, she opened the only bottle in the cabinet, Nu Er Hong, the rice wine that parents keep intact until their daughters' weddings. The flashing kaleidoscope aurora from the Buddha chanting player failed to color her face. The liquor she swallowed down flooded back out from her eyes. "What's the good of living long, Bao Bei? What's the good of living long?" She was jealous of her late husband, her sick mother, her young daughter. When I moved her to her bed, I heard her mumbling, "Sorry, Mama, I'm so sorry." The plot she splurged on was approved by a master of Feng Shui, in a cemetery cradled by green hills and unnamed lakes. The master said that it was a good place: the mountains were palming it by forming a bowl, and as water meant money, no drop of fortune could escape.

The fourth time mother wielded religion, she begged to have the man competing with her hit by a loaded truck, so she could secure the promotion. The fifth time, she tried to use religion to do what legislation failed: free her new boyfriend who was arrested for a pyramid scam. Two years later, she wanted him to stay and rot in prison like a forgotten fruit. No successful woman would carry a fifty-year-old ex-con, though she would love to keep the Cadillac he left in our garage. She prayed when she felt the fever on my forehead; she prayed when she saw depression gushing out from my wrist. She always prayed for what she needed. I asked her what she told Guan Yin last night. She said, "Bao Bei, I wished us a long, happy life."

RUI-YANG PENG / 彭瑞阳

Haigui

Father's Mandarin name is min, meaning sensitive or alert. He says he was destined to be a light sleeper—even though he turns his window shades the opposite direction as everyone else in the house, he still wakes every morning to the light strolling across his face, tickling his nose. He stumbles out of bed without his glasses like a tortoise searching for its missing shell.

Before he was let go, father always followed the same daily routine. In the morning he would nibble our leftovers, from crusts of garlic bread to the skins meimei peeled off her wontons from the previous evening's dinner. Regardless of the weather, he donned his heavy black jacket, then waved me and meimei into our minivan. Father drove almost lying down, with the radio sputtering a scratchy rendition of *Butterfly Lovers* and seat laid back at a 120-degree angle; meimei liked to kick his seat for taking up so much of her leg room.

Father and I worked in the same building, he in the huge marine bio lab at the end of the second-floor hallway, me in the oncology lab by the second-floor elevator. When I was meimei's age, father would take me to his lab instead of the aquarium on school holidays. He'd take me to see the giant tanks bustling with turtles and crabs and lobsters and fish of all colors of the rainbow. He'd take me to the imaging room upstairs where the lights were off and the windows were blanketed with black cloth, where I peered through an electron microscope for the first time and saw coccolithophore

algae floating around the petri dish like little armored soldiers.

At lunch we ate in the same room at the far end of the second-floor hallway. It was a potpourri of flavors and languages—father's PI and the three spectacled postdocs from his lab feasted on chilled kimchi while chattering in bright Korean at the table beside the window, the two Indian master's students from my lab grumbled under their breath, and father and I made small talk in slow English with the PhD student from the downstairs chromatography lab who just arrived from Japan the previous month. There was an elderly Chinese lady who sometimes came by (still gowned in her lab coat) from the neighboring building to microwave her food, staining the air with aromas of salmon and roast duck and ma po tofu. Last March her lab was using pigs as their animal model and, when they were done with the experiment, it took four of us to help her lift the carcass into the back of her van. The following day she came to pass around chunks of roast pork belly and sugar and soy sauce marinated ribs and browned dong po rou bristling with fresh steam.

Father was always the last to leave the lab at night. He'd finish around 6 or 7 and then wait for me to finish, usually around 8. Sometimes when my professor's office door wasn't locked father would sit back in the cushioned swivel chair in the empty office and kick his feet up on the desk, pretending to be the CEO of some lucrative company. Occasionally I'd found him perusing the posters plastered over the walls outside my lab, silently mouthing the words to himself like a prayer, tongue stumbling over the hurdles of unfamiliar jargon. Some days he'd pull out a pocket-sized dictionary, faded golden letters spelling *Chinese-English Medical Dictionary* in both languages adorning the tattered cotton spine of the gray book. Other days, he'd doze off in the lunchroom or on the bench next to mine. Those last hours each night were the sweetest—when it was just the two of us, father's breath coming deep and slow, the two of us surrounded by the moaning and squeaky exhalation of the incubators.

We'd arrive home when meimei and mother were still finishing their last meal, when they'd finished and mother would be slumped on the couch watching TV while meimei did the dishes, when meimei'd already be tucked in bed and on her second dream. The latest we ever got home was when I had to prepare slides for both my experiments and it was 3 AM by the time I'd finished my staining. Most days when we returned and meimei was still awake, we'd be welcomed home by the thunder of mother's words. Father would pull up his hood and the words would come trampling over his makeshift carapace, and he'd bow his head as if kowtowing to mother. It was always some variation of *why didn't you come home in time for dinner* or *why didn't you help me make the dinner* or *meimei had to do the dishes again because you two weren't home.* But by then, we were both tired and father would melt into the futon. Meimei joked that father was a pile of mud, his bottom was glued so tightly to the back of the couch.

On weekends we'd all go for runs, and father would always lumber around at the rear, swiping through a journal article on his phone. We were told that he was born in the year of the rabbit but we all believed this must be some mistake, that he must have been born in the year of the turtle.

*

One day two months ago, I heard loud voices arguing in tinted English at the end of the hallway and I stopped to peek inside father's lab. Father was silently cleaning out the fridge by the doorway, throwing cartons of old microfuge tubes in the trash, while his Korean professor and a Russian lab tech were going at it, threatening to sue each other. I caught some of the words as they

were being dished out: an almost pleading "lost grant" and "not enough funding" morphing into a "and what have you done for me this year" that rattled the walls. That night as I was buckling my seatbelt for the drive home, I caught a glimpse of a brown cardboard box in the back seat.

*

This summer, one of father's former students asked him to present on his behalf at an international zoology conference in China. The conference organizers arranged for us to stay at a luxurious hotel in Shanghai, a few train stops away from father's hometown of Ningbo. As father checks in, meimei fiddles with the porcelain teacups and crystal paperweights in the hotel lobby shop. There are slabs of chicken-blood stone for sale and traditional souvenirs, fans and opera masks and laminated bookmarks of pressed dried butterflies. There is a large restaurant in the main hallway; half a corridor down there is the dining room where the three of us eat breakfast. The morning of the second day, as I drink suan mei tang and father slurps his porridge of rice and sorghum, meimei points out to us the paintings on the dining room wall. It is a mural of sea turtles and jellyfish adrift in a blue background. Behind our table is a giant crocodile, its mouth open to reveal a breakfast of large white eggs. A striped sea snake, its jaws parting in mid-hiss, chases one of the turtles. "That is called a loggerhead sea turtle," father says to meimei. The loggerhead sea turtle, father explains, is his favorite species of turtle. They are highly protective, not only of their own young, but also of the full ecosystems of barnacles and small fish they shelter within their shells.

That day, we take the train to Ningbo. Father reads a journal he snagged from the waste pile outside my lab, while I read the paper father is scheduled to present. Meimei and I take turns sitting by the window, watching as the squares of ochre and viridian farmland evaporate into the distance. There are muddy rivers snaking across the land, small villages falling into disrepair like the leftover kindling of old bonfires, and meimei and I listen intently as the train rumbles deep into the belly of many a mountain, the trees so small they look like moss, before emerging on the other side to the splatter of rain against the windowpanes or bright sun scorching our eyes. Meimei buys roast duck from a cart and peels off the crispy skin, leaving me with the bland stringy meat underneath.

On the hundred-kilometer taxi ride to nainai's house in the muddy weather, meimei falls asleep with her head on my thighs. Southern China is sweltering— the humidity coils in my lungs like a cross-legged monk. I wonder if it is this heat that dissolved father's shell long ago. Father and the taxi driver converse in an unfamiliar dialect. Father's voice lilts, bouncing up and down with an energy that's staccatoed out by his accent when he speaks English or pu tong hua. At nainai's house, meimei and I take the outside bedroom while father takes the inside bedroom. For half the day the house is occupied by silence; when I go to peek in the other bedroom father alternates between wordlessly typing on his computer and hurriedly leafing through an oncology textbook, his neck retreating into his hoodie, the light flickering off the folds like ripples of water off a turtle's back, deflected. Nainai doesn't disturb him, only shuffles into his room every hour to refill the glass of water on his desk. Meimei and I watch as nainai hunches over in the small kitchen, stirring a pot of shredded vegetables. At three she dispatches meimei and I to buy some spring roll wrappers, and the two of us peddle to the market street in her rusted rickshaw, returning with the wrappers, a bag of small oranges (a kind of delicacy that was formerly reserved for the emperor, nainai explains), and a bag of sesame coated hard candy wrapped in rice paper that is half empty by the time we return.

In the evening we take a taxi to the coast. There are men in straw hats wading in the slender knee-tall weeds and hauling nets impregnated with perch and shrimp and bass to the fish market. Meimei buys jello from one of the street food carts on the boardwalk and the breeze sifts it and her dress in different directions as she walks. As the sunset dims father lapses into a meditative mood.

"Your yeye was a fisherman, and nainai was a chemistry teacher," father begins, recounting the story he's told meimei and me countless times. *When you were in middle school you read all the books in the county library,* meimei says. *Your parents wanted you to go to college and be a doctor,* I finish.

Father had left mainland two decades ago, a few years following the June 4th event. He was in medical school then, and his classmates had gone to Beijing to protest. One of his friends was arrested and imprisoned by the communists. Father's best friend was shot and died in the hospital a week later. Father, being the scholar who was well versed in politics but never one to wet his feet in the action, had stayed home. After the incident, his adviser encouraged the cohort to flee the country.

Armed with the Chinese equivalent of his MD and a PhD in oncology, father thought he was qualified to practice medicine in America. His parents sold their house to pay for his plane ticket. Father came to the US with eighteen dollars in his pocket. For years he couldn't afford his own house, so instead he bunked in the on-call rooms in the hospital where he did his internship.

After meeting an attractive Chinese girl on the subway and marrying her, it was clear that he was on borrowed time to pass his board exams and match into a residency program. *The defining character of an honorable husband is one who supports his family,* mother'd urged him. And so father began his search for a job that didn't require another ten years of education. He applied to jobs that required MDs and PhDs, then the jobs that required master's degrees, and finally those that required only bachelor's degrees. "I once received an acceptance letter addressed to a guy named Viktor," father says. "The resume was still attached. When I opened it, I saw that the guy had just gotten his bachelor's the previous year!" He finally received an offer ten years ago, working for a marine biologist twenty years his younger with a freshly minted PhD.

"By age 40," father laments, "it is beyond the mind to memorize and retain knowledge. Do your studying while you're still young," he says, shaking his head at us.

Father scattered his dreams like empty wheat husks.

*

Nainai is waiting for us when we return, baskets worth of food splayed over the table in the dining room that is really only large enough for two. There is steamed tilapia and spring rolls and pi pi shrimp and crabs and fish sauce. Nainai shows us how to break apart the crab, how to peel armor off the spines of the pi pi shrimp (which look like caterpillars with thick tails) and pluck away the lilac-colored meat underneath. We roll spring rolls on the bare tabletop, the wrappers so thin they are translucent. Meimei is greedy, stuffing hers so full of chicken meat and bean paste that the tail end gives way, splattering all over the table.

After dinner nainai makes father take off his jacket, and when she does, the dandruff on it snows to the floor. She chuckles and scoffs. *Look at your hair*, she wags her finger at his almost bald scalp with the numerable few hairs stitched upon it, *can you imagine how much dandruff there'd be if you actually had hair!* Nainai scrubs the jacket out by hand, and father towers over her helplessly, asking every few minutes if she needs help. Nainai instructs him to shave his nose and ear hairs.

We arrive back at the hotel the morning of the conference, the

lobby brimming with people clad in suits and ties and business casual. I expect father to congregate with the zoologists, but coincidentally we discover a large poster labeled *ICCR, 21st International Congress of Cancer Research* set up at the opposite end of the room. Father weaves in and out of the crowds, emerging at the other side, and the people nod to him and greet, *hey, Professor Peng,* or, *how's research*? *Are you ever planning to return to mainland? How does it feel to be a haigui?* "Fine, fine, how is Xiao Long" comes the answer, and the opportunity to confess unemployment is dismissed with a careless fling of the wrist. "These are my daughters!" and meimei and I are thrust into the spotlight as a sort of human shield against humiliation. "The eldest is getting her oncology PhD next year," he says, gesturing to me, "and this is the youngest, she goes to the best middle school in the US." *Wow!* they exclaim. *You must be proud.* "You two must be here for the ICCR then?" a man with wispy white eyebrows directs at father and me, and I curb my tongue to avoid unfurling father's secret.

I think this must be the family reunion we never had, because everyone is related to father in some way. There are roommates from China, roommates from Texas, friends from New Jersey, classmates from Germany, former students from Switzerland, CEOs of successful startups and professors and PIs. Meimei and I gape in awe at the nameless relatives from months, years, decades ago, trapped in this web with father at the center by some class or mutual friend or WeChat messaging or LinkedIn connection or shared meal. "If only I'd stayed in China," father used to sigh in private, "I surely would've been professor or dean." Now, we believe him.

Father's lecture is on amphibian development. We are split into rooms, and father's has three presenters and some ten or twenty audience members. Meimei and I take our seats at the back of the room, and meimei doodles on a pad.

Father is the last to present. He pauses on slides, staring bleakly at the figures, "so here's the gene expression profiling..." and "this is the western..." he rummages for the right words. At the end they pepper him with questions *how does the vitelline layer specifically affect development?* or *I don't think you can use this method to determine significance* and father shrugs his shoulders mutely in reply. "It's beyond the scope of the study," he manages to squeeze out, "my student's group did research on this in a previous study, you can look it up in the references." The last comment comes from a white whiskered gentleman, who introduces himself as a Nobel prize laureate. *I don't think you can use this technique to measure mutation rate,* he declares.

"Mitochondrial DNA is the correct choice in this study," I interject, and feel the piercing of a dozen pairs of eyes turn in my direction. The words skitter out of me faster and faster until they meld together, each word elevating my confidence until I am unaware of anyone else in the room. "mtDNA is maternally inherited and mutates more quickly than rRNA, which makes it suitable for the time span of interest. And hardening of the vitelline layer by pH or salinity alteration increases likelihood of mutation. It's a previous study this group did in the paper in ref 8." Father's eyebrows lift in half questioning, *thank you* spelled within his gaze.

*

On the plane ride home, father remembers all the sea creatures he left behind. His favorite, he says, was the loggerhead sea turtle they rescued off the Florida coast that had lost a large piece of its shell. They were about to sacrifice the turtle, as it looked to be in quite a bit of pain, but father had told his Korean professor that he would take care of the turtle. They put the turtle in a tank with a few small white fish. In a month's time, father found that some of the fish had latched onto the back of the turtle and was depos-

iting a network of calcium carbonate. After about a year, before plans of 3D printing a prosthetic shell for the injured turtle could come to fruition, father discovered that the shell had grown back completely with the help of the fish. In return, the fish used the turtle as their home, burrowing in and out of the shell they helped to build.

"Oh well," he says, sighing himself out of his sentimentality. "I guess it is time to try returning to cancer research." Deep somewhere in his heart, I know, he must be smiling.

HOWARD SKRILL

"Dallas Lee Removal"
30x8 inches, ink, gesso, gouache, pencil on torn paper, 2019

After Charlottesville, monumental presences such as statues of the Confederate general Robert E Lee that have stood in places of memory and identity such as Lee Park in Dallas were being removed. To many residents of Dallas, monuments such as *Robert E. Lee on Traveler* have for decades communicated what the Mellon Foundation President, Elizabeth Alexander, describes as "instructions in non-personhood." Statue removal is extraordinary to behold as with these yellow vested workers scampering over an oversized Lee and horse in a work on paper from 2019. Since the Lee removal pictured here, removals, splashings, toppling and defacing of monuments that instruct in "non-personhoood" are multiplying exponentially and I am dedicated to follow where they lead in my art project, the Anna Pierrepont Series.

CONTRIBUTORS

Mileva Anastasiadou is a neurologist from Athens, Greece. A Pushcart, Best of the Net, Best Microfiction and Best Small Fictions nominated writer, her work can be found in many journals, such as *Litro, Jellyfish Review, Ruminate, Okay Donkey, Open Pen* and others.

Satya Dash is the recipient of the 2020 Srinivas Rayaprol Poetry Prize. His poems appear in *Waxwing, Wildness, Redivider, Passages North, The Boiler, The Florida Review, Prelude, The Cortland Review* and *The Journal* among others. Apart from having a degree in electronics from BITS Pilani-Goa, he has been a cricket commentator too. He has been nominated previously for Orison Anthology, Best of the Net and Best New Poets. He grew up in Cuttack, Odisha and now lives in Bangalore. He tweets at: @satya043

Jeannine Hall Gailey served as the second Poet Laureate of Redmond, Washington. She's the author of five books of poetry: *Becoming the Villainess, She Returns to the Floating World, Unexplained Fevers, The Robot Scientist's Daughter,* and *Field Guide to the End of the World*, winner of the Moon City Press Book Prize and the SFPA's Elgin Award. Her work has appeared in journals such as *American Poetry Review, Ploughshares*, and *Poetry*. Her web site is www.webbish6.com. Twitter/Instagram: @webbish6

Madronna Holden is a folklorist and has published four dozen poems in twenty literary journals since her recent retirement from university teaching. In addition to her collaborations with painter David Wolfersberger, her poems have appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor, American Writing, Equinox Poetry and Prose*, T*he Bitter Oleander, Clackamas Literary Review,* and many others. Her first chapbook, *Goddess of Glass Mountains*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. She lives in Eugene, Oregon, where she keeps bees, oversees an eccentric organic garden, and gets happily lost on nearby wilderness hikes.

Sneha Subramanian Kanta is a writer from Canada. She has been awarded the inaugural Vijay Nambisan Fellowship 2019. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Waxwing Magazine, The Normal School, Muzzle Magazine, Quiddity*, and elsewhere. She was the Charles Wallace Fellow writer-in-residence (2018-19) at The University of Stirling. She is the founding editor of *Parentheses Journal* and reads for *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*. She is the author of the chapbook *Ghost Tracks* (Louisiana Literature Press).

Lorette C. Luzajic is an award winning mixed media artist with collectors in over 25 countries. She has travelled to Mexico and Tunisia and beyond to create and exhibit art. Her collages have appeared in dozens of literary journals and on the covers of small press anthologies. She is also a widely published writer, and editor of *The Ekphrastic Review*.

Fatima Malik (she/her) is a fundraiser and poet with work published or forthcoming in *Door is a Jar, diode poetry journal, The Georgia Review, The Margins*, and others. She is working on her first full-length collection of poems, an excavation of grief after her father's sudden death. She has a BA in English Literature and Creative Writing from Dartmouth College and a joint MA in Journalism and Near Eastern Studies from New York University. While she currently lives in NYC, her heart is forever in Lahore. Find her on Twitter @FaZeMalik.

Zackary Medlin is from South Carolina but still thinks of Alaska as home, even though he lives in Utah. He is the winner of the Nancy D. Hargrove Editor's Choice Prize, the Patricia Goedicke Prize in Poetry, and a recipient of an AWP Intro Journals Award. He holds an MFA from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and is currently a doctoral student at the University of Utah. His poetry has appeared in journals such as *Colorado Review, The Cincinnati Review, Grist,* and most recently in *Tinderbox Poetry* and *The Boiler*.

Lucille Miao is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. She works in the mental health space. Her artwork has received accolades from the International Space Foundation, International Aviation art contest, and so forth.

Rui-Yang Peng/彭瑞阳 is a student at Princeton University. She is a nihilist, biologist, visual artist, and writer, not necessarily in that order. She believes that love as we know it is nonexistent and has made peace with the fact. Her work lives online @linaria17.

Rebecca Poynor grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. She is an emerging writer and MFA candidate in the creative writing program at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her work can be read in *Rogue Agent*. Currently, Rebecca lives in Richmond, Virginia.

Gretchen Rockwell is a queer poet currently living in Scotland; xer most recent publications include *perhappened mag, Whale Road Review, Emerge Lit Journal*, and *Poet Lore*, as well as the micro chapbooks *love songs for godzilla* (Kissing Dynamite) and *Thanatology* (Ghost City Press). Xe enjoys writing poetry about gender, science, history, space, and unusual connections.

Howard Skrill creates plein-air and studio works on paper of extant monuments, attacks and toppling of monuments and monumental absences in order to explore their role in the erasure of public and private memory and construction of identity. Works from the series have been published worldwide standing alone and incorporated into pictorial essays and also exhibited frequently, including a solo exhibition at the Fairfield University Art Museum's Bellarmine Galleries in 2020. He is an artist/educator living in Brooklyn, NY with his wife and began the Anna Pierrepont Series in 2013. Follow him at howardskrill.blogspot.com and https://www.fairfield.edu/museum/skrill/).

Cutter Streeby is an entrepreneur (https://graylingagency.com among other businesses) and holds an MA in English literature from King's College, London and a Master's in poetry from the University of East Anglia. He has poetry and translations in many journals including *LitMag, The Cincinnati Review, The Chicago Quarterly Review, Hayden's Ferry Review* and more.

Brittany White is an emerging writer with one previously published piece, found in the July 2020 issue of the *Bosphorus Review of Books*, Turkey's first English-language online literary magazine. She holds a BA in Africana Studies from Temple University and enjoys writing about identity and belonging across the African Diaspora.

David Wolfersberger and his paintings are summer friends, sometimes seen walking the land as they feel and remember it and want it to be again, before fences, where people live and care for the earth and each other. Watercolors he painted on his 3500-mile solo bicycle tour of the West Coast have appeared in conjunction with Madronna Holden's poems in *Cold Mountain Review, Puerto del Sol, Leaping Clear, Slippery Elm Literary Journal* and many more.

Xueyi Zhou is an emerging writer in mainland China. A native Chinese, she enjoys the challenge of writing in English, a language out of her parents' reach. More importantly, she enjoys the eye-rolling of her family when they demand to know but can't. She currently works full-time in a stainless-steel company in Foshan. She is on Facebook and is figuring out Twitter @xueyizhou.

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Chestnut Review

for stubborn artists