

s/tick

feminists on guard



issue 2: spring 2013

right and cover art  
*/ mahala lewis*



2

salut from the editors: daughters and mothers afire

Sing us your songs to inspire  
Open your floodgates and let the blood flow  
Between generations of fire

(over warm breath  
we three conspire  
with coffee to kidnap vic toews

we call it—  
Operation Delta Blow:  
shear his mustache before a crow—  
d of thousands  
on Parliament Hill squawks—

it shall be solstice  
and the centennial flame  
will gurgle, listless, in its water bed

while I work the ruck  
you wield the shears and mom upholds his  
arms.                      Us.

painless, bloodless

*it won't hurt a bit, vic!*  
the press go nuts for mother  
and snap/shoot the whiskers  
as they fall, earth—

boundless feathers)

Mothers thank you.

Apphire.

Ada Sharpe and Sarah-Jean Krahn  
Canada, March 20, 2013

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chic city  
/ otha  
\*vakseen\*  
davis iii

*marked / merlin flower*

My husband had an affair.

I tried to forget.

Two months later, he raped a girl.

I told my friend, she told another.

We.

A month's plan.

Five days after the operation,

he dilated.

He'll never rape again.

*o, lardo mio / jenean mcbrearty*

“The cancer scared her and she wants to travel a little—see things. What’s hard to understand?” Molly was packing and husband Josh was sulking. “It’s two weeks out of our lives. Big deal.” The big deal was her mother’s cancer that, maybe, was in remission. For all of 2012 it had consumed her time and energy playing dutiful daughter as Gina played stoic. And put yet another mile between them.

“Yeah. Yeah. Okay.” He counted her panties. “Only six? They have laundromats in Tuscany?”

Molly sighed. “I don’t know, but most hotels have running water and sinks.” After ten years, he still hated her gone—maybe because she worked out at the gym three times a week and never drank soda—and she liked that. He drove them to the airport and kissed her goodbye as if she were leaving for war, whispering a warning about the Italian penchant for pinching pretty women. She promised to be careful.

“Josh loves you lots,” Gina said as she opened Molly’s suitcase and found a Macy’s sack laying on her jeans. She handed it to Molly, who dug into her surprise package and pulled out a white silk nightgown. She sat on the bed and held it to her cheek.

“I thought he’d leave me after we lost the third pregnancy. Silly, I know, but he wants kids so bad.” She hadn’t meant to say it, but eighteen hours on a plane had left her tired as a toddler.

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Gina sat beside her. “He’s a good guy. A little needy, but a good guy. He’ll take care of you no matter what.” How like her mother to summarize instead of sympathize.

“No more melancholy, Mom, I promise.” But she couldn’t shake the sadness that intruded on their conversations whenever they took a break from sight seeing and shopping. Maybe it was the attention Gina gave to things like stirring her coffee or looking at guide books that contained pictures of stuff they’d just seen. Maybe it was the way she studied pictures and statues—like she was the only person who really saw them.

“It’s time we went north to Carrara,” she said as they stood outside the Duomo di Firenze facade. “People’d get a better sense of the power of transformation if they saw where the marble came from. I know where we can rent a car.”

“You feel safe driving in a foreign country?” Molly stared warily at the old yellow Volvo, but Gina was beaming.

“You bet. It wouldn’t be the first time. Mexico 1995.” As the dusty city streets turned into open country roads, Molly relaxed. She was the kid again, not the worried next-of-kin nurse that kept track of doctor’s appointments. She could have been eleven, riding shotgun in her mom’s red Toyota Rav 4 as she headed up the 405 to the Magic Kingdom. Gina broke into It’s Now or Never, Presley’s variation of O, Sole Mio, and it wasn’t hard to imagine her as a pretty Southern Californian teen-ager. Four days into their vacation Molly was tempted to believe they were having fun.

“I made a reservation,” Gina said as she slid the Volvo into a parking space in front of an eatery. Giuseppe’s was painted in big green letters on the window.

"You know this place?"

"I was here in '68. The family tree is full of red monkeys."

"Red monkeys?"

"Commies. Reds."

"Those nice old people who gave me savings bonds for Christmas were Communists?"

"Not just Red, radical red. No boundaries. No rules. No oppressive values. No...nos. I was eleven and had never heard the word." Under the green letters was printed IFA. "It stands for the International Federation of Anarchists. Eight hundred years of mining marble made the quarry workers some of the most radical people in the world."

They sat in a booth near the door and skimmed their menus. "The specialty of the house is Lardo. Pork fat back...made on the premises. Bring us some Chianti, Lardo, pasta, meatballs and water," Gina told the woman who seemed annoyed she had to serve customers so soon after lunch crowd. She nodded a yes, and took the menus. "You might say Carrara '68 was the Anarchists' Woodstock. Only they listened to Maria Callas and Luciano Pavarotti instead of Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix. And all the women had as much fun as Mimi and Tosca."

"I've never met a happy radical. They seem perpetually angry." The waitress brought attitude with a tray of stacked plates and set in on the table next to their booth. "Impressive," Molly said as she admired a well-formed sausage meatball. "The lardo's not greasy like I expected. Did Grandma and Grandpa take you to the real Woodstock?"

"No." Gina poured another glass of wine. "You know, I saw a pig slaughtered right back there in the



kitchen.”

Molly winced. The word slaughter reminded her of the white-coated man who told her he’d had to remove both Gina’s breasts. “Did Grandma and Grandpa know that?”

“No. They were talking revolution with the Belgians, the Parisians, and the Russians and drinking a lot of wine.”

“Was it awful?”

Gina pointed to the mountainsides, their snowy white escarpments glowing in the afternoon sun.

“White blood. Nature doesn’t give up its jewels without a fight. Carrara marble is the purest, strongest, most beautiful stone there is. The back fat of the earth that has to be butchered if it’s going to be made into something tasty. Violence is the reality of creation.” Molly hadn’t heard her mother speak that way since her grandparents died. The three of them talked funny, about things no one else she knew talked about.

Gina paid with a credit card and left a big tip. “Come on, I’ll show you.” They drove through Carrara towards the quarries, and turned down a road that led to an old cemetery littered with white headstones and statues of weeping angels and life-sized saints. “It’s around here somewhere,” Gina said more to herself than to Molly as they waded through the weeds. She stopped in front of a marble bas relief of a winged man—the symbol of St. Matthew—carrying a severed head on a platter. Mateo Gianini 1957-1968 was carved in the stone. “He’s still dead,” Gina said.

“Most people who die, stay dead,” Molly said. “It’s either a tragedy or a blessing.” She didn’t know which it was to her mother. “Did you know him?” she said softly. Gina had knelt down and was pulling the weeds away from the marker. She looked up and Molly saw pebble-sized tears in her eyes. Another

unexpected reaction to ancient ruins from a woman who seemed impregnable.

“I killed him.”

Molly sank to the ground beside her. “Oh, my God, Mom. How? Why?”

“I got tired of the shouting and the speeches and went to kitchen to see if I could find something sweet. Mateo was there with the pig. He let me pet it and then put it on the table. It squealed and he drove a cleaver into its head. I went into a sort of shock. Watched the blood drip into a pan under the table that had a drain hole in the middle. He severed an ear and wrapped it in a napkin. He wiped his hands on his apron and told me to make a silk purse out of it.” She opened her shoulder-bag and pulled out a leathery-looking triangle threaded with a silver chain. Involuntarily fascinated, Molly examined the amulet.

“I got sick and ran out the back door. And threw up. Mateo held me from behind and I felt his hands inside my shirt, rubbing my breasts. I probably needed a bra, but my mother never wore one, so I didn’t either. Then his hand went into my shorts. I didn’t wear panties either. I picked up whatever I put my hand on and just hoisted in over my head with all my might. He fell backward. I ran into the kitchen and saw the cleaver next to the pig. I could have run back into the dining room, but I didn’t. I went outside and severed Mateo’s head from his body. I stuffed the napkined ear into my pocket and joined my parents.”

Molly was the adult again. She put her arm around her mother’s neck and Gina rested her head on her shoulder. “They found him the next morning. Mateo’s girlfriend cried a lot. The men drank and shouted a lot and blamed the authorities. We stayed for the funeral. Then my mother washed my clothes and found the pig’s ear, and blood on the inside of my cotton shirt and shorts. Mateo had wiped the blood

off his palms, but not the back of his hands. She told my father. We went to Rome and caught the next plane to New York, and then to California. Mother bought us bras and I went to Catholic school. ”

Molly looked around to see if anyone was watching, afraid Gina might be recognized. Maybe the woman in the restaurant had been in Carrara in 1968. “Let’s go, Mom,” she said and stuffed the pig ear necklace into her purse.

Gina stood up and took one last look at the cemetery and the degraded mountains. “There’s an envelope in my desk marked upon my death. In it is the name and address of a company that uses Carrara marble for its headstones. I don’t care what you do with my body, but make sure you get Carrara marble for my marker. I’ve been dead for forty-seven years because of that son-of-a-bitch. From now on, I’m going to be happy.” She reached her hands behind her, pulled a strap off each shoulder, and then yanked her prosthetic bra from under her blouse and threw it on the ground. That was Gina—living life as a decision. It was time Molly did the same.

to a young ballerina-

slim as a sheath  
 (the bud *and* the vase),  
 she's fully suppressed  
 pubescence—but watch  
 her girlishness grapple  
 with the Nutcracker of kiss.  
 she twinkle-toes the gender line,  
 lighting up the *après-midi* of her  
 fans. in starched tutu, she'll step  
 inside tulle's disappearing act.  
 her stick-pin gams point toward  
 her readiness for a Balanchine-  
 esque master class. there  
 she'll be paired  
 with a man to  
 learn the pas de  
 deux's ritual  
 S/M: how  
 she's to  
 be lifted  
 then thrown

/ *coco*  
*owen*

what you say,  
what you mean  
/ missy  
washington





*barista knows best / dorianne emmerton*

If that girl behind the counter doesn't stop looking at me with her beady little eyes, I'm going to go over there and throw the chai latte she made me back in her face. But I wouldn't want to make a bad first impression on the man I'm with. Instead I sip from my cup and straighten my skirt.

It pleases me to picture doing it, though. She's got to be all of 20 years old but her smug expression says "I know exactly what you two are up to." I'm sure she can hear us almost as well as she can see us. For the first time in my life I wish for a big group of noisy teenagers. But it's just her over there and the man across the table and me. I should be paying attention to him instead of her.

But he's just talking about his job. It's my fault; I asked him what he did for a living. Isn't that what people always ask when they meet each other for the first time? It's safe. Mostly. Safer than asking about religion or politics. He is well-employed, and that's good.

He says: "You work in an office too, so it's probably the same. There's always some lady, or ladies, intent on making everyone fat by bringing in the most delicious cookies, brownies, fudge, it's always something! And the 'usual spot' to put it is right outside my office door. So now I'm going to the gym every lunch hour, when I can find an hour for lunch, that is!" He laughs, vibrato sounding out of his wide open smile. His teeth are very nice. That could be the product of orthodontic work done when he



was young. Maybe I'll ask him about that at some point. I notice that he's slipped in that he has his own office, not just a cubicle. Smooth.

The barista chick seems to think he's doing a good job. Her little smirk says that she's seen a million people come through these doors and pause to contemplate a stranger before making their approach. She's seen all the awkward hellos, one person offering a handshake and the other a hug. She's seen people discuss the things they already know about each other from the Internet and then divulge more, stuff that they only feel comfortable saying in person.

She's seen so many interactions where the woman bails and so many where the man does, so many where it's mutual. I'm sure she's seen gay people doing it too. Only a few make it to a second date. And she is applying the wisdom she thinks she's gained through second-hand experience to my encounter with this man right now. She is judging our potential as a couple and she thinks we may be making it.

What she doesn't know could fill the Great Lakes, overflow the St. Lawrence and wash out into the ocean.

She thinks this phenomenon she's observing is new to this day and age and that she has some sort of expert insight because she's of the Internet generation. She was born with an email address and a Facebook account, with her purple hair and stretched out earlobes. She doesn't understand that people used to set each other up on blind dates before there was a web over the wide world.

The man I'm sitting with has salt and pepper hair. A part of me wishes I could let go like that. But it's his Y chromosome that allows him to do it without question or censure. If I let myself go grey the other women in my office would think I had given up on life. "Given up on life" is the phrase they use when they talk about someone wearing jogging pants in public. I'm sure it would also apply to a woman in her 30's with grey in her hair.

He says "But enough about me!" and vibrates with laughter again, although he has not made a joke.

Meeting someone on a dating site is better than a blind date because you actually know something about each other before establishing contact. My last ex, Jimmy, and I met online. I messaged him first; he caught my eye because his online name was Tesseract and *A Wrinkle In Time* was my favourite book as a kid.

Jimmy had said he was planning on dumping his profile when I got in touch. Too many men were contacting him assuming he was a girl named Tess.

I said “But your pictures?”

He said “Some men don’t bother to look. Some men want to send propositions and pictures of their dick to anyone who might have an innie instead of an outie between their legs.”

I learned a lot about men from Jimmy.

The man across the table does have a way of listening now that he’s stopped talking. I’m telling him about my plans for the future. His head cocks to one side like a spaniel I had as a child. The dog’s name was Spunky. Later on in high school I learned what the word “spunk” meant, and I felt ashamed at the name I had given the poor creature, even though she had been dead for years by that time.

Jimmy never reminded me of an animal, even though he claimed to be in touch with his “animal nature.” What he meant by this was that he was good in bed and liked to eat his meat very rare. I didn’t like to cook for him but I did like to sleep with him. He wasn’t very attractive, until you spent enough time with him.

This man is handsome. Strong features, good height, full head of hair.

His brow is furrowing slightly. I am coming to a good place to stop anyway: my hope to retire to a cottage up north, somewhere on the Canadian Shield. I was born and raised in that geography. I want rocky outcroppings and coniferous trees. I want to stay in shape by hiking, canoeing and chopping wood

instead of forcing myself to the gym four times a week. In winter I will curl up by the fireplace, burning the wood I've chopped, and read novels. I'll need another source of heat for general purposes, probably; I'll be an old retired lady, not a professional wood-chopper. But it shouldn't be too expensive. I'll only need a small space.

Every long weekend in the summer my family will be invited to visit. They'll sleep in tents on the property, amongst the trees. Kids love that. After they have gone to bed, their parents, my own children but all grown up, and I will sit around my kitchen table getting drunk and playing cards. In the winter, I'll visit them for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and help with childcare during March break.

I figure that in my final years I will need to catch up on a lot of solitude and rest. I have so many things to do between then and now.

I stop talking and smile. I hope I have presented myself well; I know that I have presented myself truthfully. The man across the table says, "So ... you're single?"

The barista lets out an incredulous snort and coughs to cover it up. I give myself license to glare at her for a split second. She turns away to wipe the other end of the counter.

"...and you want more than one child?" he asks.

"Two. I don't care about genders but two. And I can do it alone." The man lifts a sardonic eyebrow. "Not entirely alone," I amend. "But all I need from you is the, you know. Spunk."

The coffee girl's ears are straining so hard I can practically see them pulling off her head. She is wiping the counter very slowly, and she is edging back towards us with as much discretion as you'd expect from a girl wearing a large leather cuff with a swear word spelled on it in metal studs. As far as I can tell my potential semen supplier has not noticed her attention, but still he leans in closer and lowers his voice.

“So you think you want to go with me as a donor, then?” he asks.

“Why not?” I toss back. “You’re attractive, so I’m not giving my baby an ugly face. You can hold a conversation so you have enough brains to pass on. Your family medical history sounded fine. Good blood type, current STI test is clean, you’ve proven all of that. That’s all the nature I care about; the nurture is up to me.”

He seems pleased. Maybe that’s why these guys do this: maybe they get an ego boost from being picked. Does that mean I’ll be giving my child insecurity genes? I think that sort of thing is socialized, not biological. But if he or she does turn out insecure I can always blame the donor. Everyone wins.

There has to be something wrong with him because why would anyone offer to masturbate into a specimen cup? It’s illegal to sell reproductive material in Canada, so I need him, but I distrust his altruism. I can’t argue with the medical documentation: it would be going to extreme effort to forge that. And what would he get out of making some random woman and her new child HIV-positive if he isn’t even getting laid? It has to be some weird fetish. But fetishes aren’t genetic, so I’ll still use his swimmers.

We’re leaning in quite close to each other now, discussing details. When I am fertile, we will get in our cars after work and meet here. This coffee shop is in a town exactly halfway between the respective cities we live in, so it’s convenient. There was nobody from my city on the trusted donors website. Men with sperm donation fetishes are not that common, obviously. Altruists even less so.

The barista is openly watching us now. Her eyes are wide at the sides and her mouth is pressed into a squiggle. The hand that used to be moving her rag is now just twitching. I check the fertility app on my smartphone, where I input my periods, my body heat and my luteinising hormone surges, and we both schedule the date. The girl’s face relaxes back into the smug knowingness.

It was Jimmy’s smugness, finally, that made me leave. No matter how much booze I plied him with, no

matter how short my skirt, how low my neckline, how willing I was to try anything naughty, I could never make him forget to put on a condom. I'd have him so close, and then he'd pull away and smile at me like an adult listening to a child's protestations that she did not steal a cookie. He would roll on a rubber or just come elsewhere. He was never mad at me, and he would never give in.

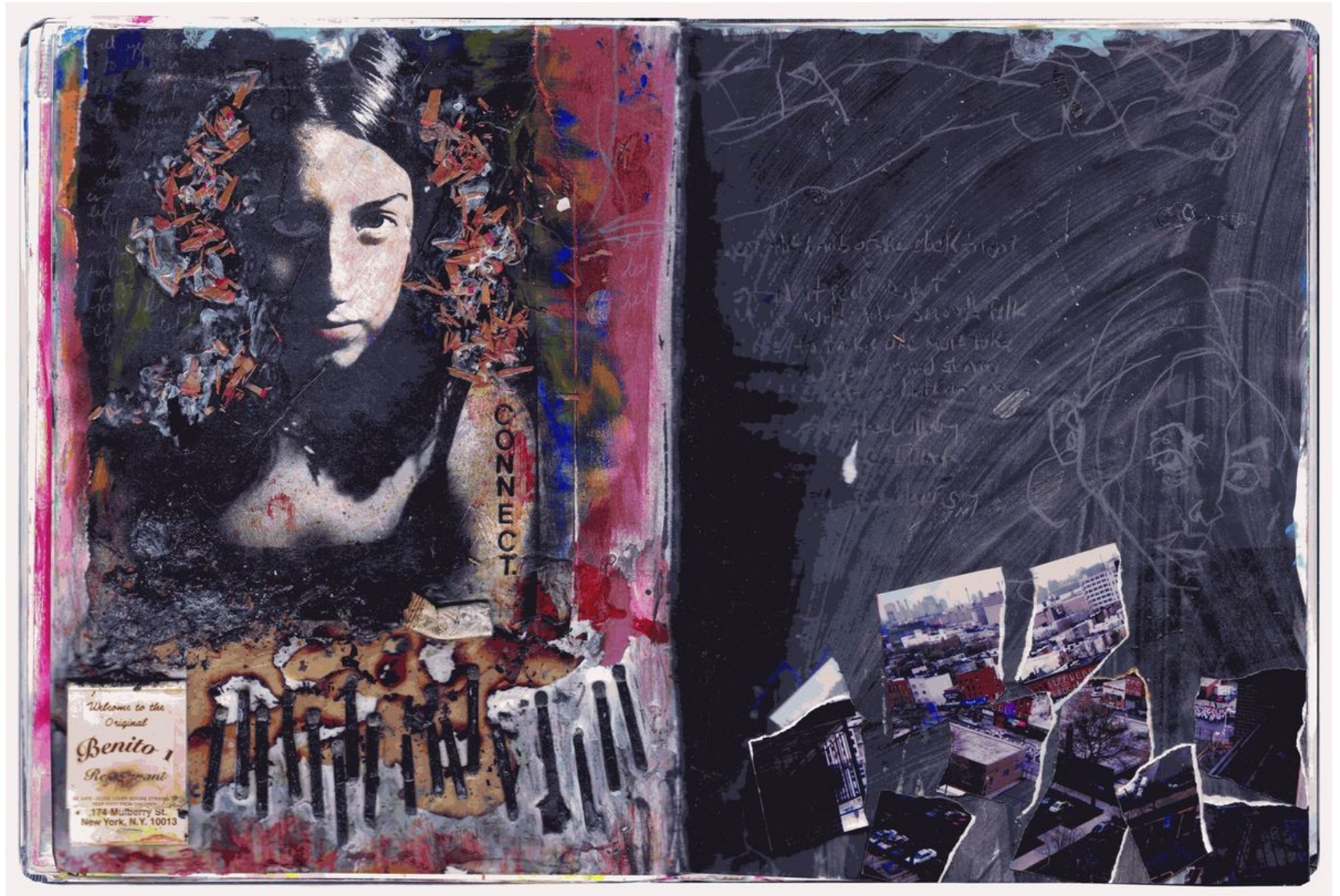
But I have a uterus for a reason. I had a very strong urge to steal a toddler who was momentarily unwatched on public transit a couple of months ago.

The man and I get up and walk out together. We shake hands outside before we get into our separate cars. For all the barista knows we shared a long and passionate kiss before going home together.

I wonder what she will think when we come back and I meet my "Internet date" again, only to have him disappear into the bathroom and come back minutes later to discreetly hand me a small cup. Will she be on a cigarette break in the parking lot and see me slip into the backseat of my Honda Civic to give myself a little injection between the legs? What about next month when we do it all over again, since there's every likelihood it won't work on the first try?

I wonder what she thinks of pregnancy now and what she will think of it when she turns thirty-five.

I wonder where Jimmy is and what he is doing with his life.



those you least expect are just waiting for a match / missy washington





morning  
glory  
/ otha  
"vakseen"  
davis iii

nocturnal menstruation / amitava

This much being said/about horizontal copulations/painful as it might be/as the shrubs cover you/as you dare menstruation/those deaths/that are borne of you/those scars that are/shelved upon thee/those deep strains, nagging/as I tear apart/all that you cherished/that first gift of your father/who stood still since/to ejaculate through/only when the stars/desire to visit that anklet/as, by virtue of all genesis/mother was yet to/scratch that earth after/she had all the birds/that cared to sing/thy birth/as only her torso bleeds/as that magic loathes/eternity

Giants pain, and how/as veiled astrologers melt/with maiden sisters/and I dare scene after scene/to write that vouch/for each and every menstruating/fishling/as the king closes



down/stores of birth control pills/thus being dreamt by the queen/after that orgy with pigmented terrains/leading us to thy shelter/as ether caresses/that unborn you failed/thousand yards deep/in that shelf of flesh/and each road in this city/blinds each other candid/leading to deserted war-fields/as the ashamed await re-birth

Remember that death, watery brown/as thus you flee depth/frozen and ready to serve/hence those kids do/who entered your larvae/crying foul and carrying fork/ thinking of the files that/made you the most innocent/as a brothel happens to be/ which, alas, you are/as, by then, the price of/contraceptives rose/and the priests performed their/elementary masturbation/to reclaim that piece of brown/on your breast, soft as the/rock that lovers ever touch/thus branding the mirage/as those stars dreamt/and we all stood by the trees/dead as we are/to sing death, so foul

That was the night/as trivial mothers performed/those suicides by the dead horse/bleeding/so that the banks claim/a revision of the price index/and the horse/being dead/could stay erect for years/made glossy by market/as moaning and death was costly/with tempered mourning/claiming that the sun must burn/all that is flesh/thus turning the universe/into moistened stock blocks/for eternal love makes death/that horse, elastic as the mothers'/thus turning that ethereal enemy/erect as rivers used to be/to fight their capture, purple/as the reddish dead horse/went coarse

Don't leave that womb/full of garnished memories/for bleeding is their love/thus scattered half-burnt cats/and you loosen your mouth/ogling their limbs, Caucasian/deciphered in thy school book/thus they enter you purple/one before the other/circumscribed as your sighs should be/pleasure as these are/so that planets melt in you/so that their cry awaits/your crystal/as castles were to be softened/by your thighs/that spoke so often/of those mornings/when they pushed your womb/as ringlets spur upon you/as death turns thee/that womb

I watch the wind  
with earnest intent,  
and ask it  
for a dance.

It takes me  
by the hand  
and sets me free.

the green balloon

*/ laura minning*

*happy hair days / ebony williams*  
an excerpt from *how to build a ragdoll*

We have happy hair days to celebrate the hours that turn into full days at the hair salon. I tell people this and while I don't want to call it a black thing, it's a black thing. Picking a hairdresser is like picking a best friend and a therapist all at the same time. A salon is a place where you go to keep up with recent happenings among the community and where you had to be willing to share some of your own dirt in order to be considered trustworthy, seen as belonging. It was an all day event. It was important to arrive early, nine in the morning was preferable, especially on Saturdays, so you don't get pushed behind someone else who had been coming there longer but arrived without an appointment. If nothing else, hair salons were a place of seniority. The loyal and long-lasting customers usually went first.

We go to Gene on hair days. She is our confidant, a therapist of sorts, our gossip monger that sits, claws grasping the very top of the grapevine. Very rarely do they talk about hair during those Saturday morning sessions. My mom, no doubt, speaks of issues at work or the current complications with my father now under court visitation orders such as late child support. As for hair, things were much more straight-forward, to do list very clear, relaxer, leave it in for a few minutes then wash out. For so long, hair days, for me, were about Shirley Temple. Were about her lovely curls. The way they bounce with each sweet dance move. She exists as this icon, before I understand what an icon even is. Then, she translates into the embodiment of love. Her curls were like warm bodies that might easily embrace me. They weren't bodies that might easily embrace me. They weren't the tight fists that were unruly and uncompromising.

Gene often spent some time trying to convince me to make smarter, more informed hair decisions. It is my mother who always has the last word; the cash was coming out of her pockets and even then, I understand the best choice for us is the practical one. The one that lasts longer. Requires less repeat visits but I want, with great determination to look like Shirley Temple. I beg my mom, at the hairdresser's chair, while the white acidic paste is being washed out of her hair or while she sits under the dryer.

"Can I?"

"What did Gene say?"

"It won't last."

"Ok. So then?" she often replies matter-of-factly as if the rest of her statement would include, "What do you want?"

I simply reply, "So can I get them? I'll make sure to wrap my hair."

This was not something that I did often. It's comparable to a chore like washing dishes or, according to most kids, brushing your teeth. It started with moving a brush in a cycular shape around my head and then tying a scarf around it. Wrapping my hair was an ordeal that helped the edges of the hair stay nice, smooth, and manageable. To get the hairstyle I wanted I would promise to take care of it.

At her look of severe doubt, I add, "Every night. Promise."

There must have been something in my voice. Something in my tone. Maybe a twinge of hope, of a sort of childlike excitement she doesn't often hear.

Mom lowers her eyes, glasses resting on her nose. She says, "Fine," shrugging her shoulders and returning to her book.

My feet can't carry me fast enough as I make my way over to Gene's chair and plop in.

“She said yes.”

I think they shared a glance. Gene’s disapprovingly. Mom’s was one of, “What can it hurt?”

When my hair breaks. Begins to fall out, clump together in the spikes of my comb or fill up the spaces between the bristles in my brush, they share glances. They speak of stress. Of “poor child” as Gene puts it and I find a tenderness with her with me. Find that, at times like this, she handles my hair with the embrace of a hug that lingers lovingly. When my mom can’t afford to pay Gene for a few weeks, Gene understands and when she is all done with my hair, Gene brings me her bowl of candy and offers me one. I feel accomplished. I feel pretty.

~

I wonder what comes first. My hair breaking or my fascination with cutting off the hair of Jasmine, the one Disney doll that is a woman of color when I was growing up. I wonder if I try my experience on her or maybe I try to fit her experience into my life and into my body. When I do her hair or I am playing, I am engaging in a land of bodies, of meaning, of messages and as a child, I don’t know this. I just beg my mom for a Jasmine doll and I cut her hair shoulder length. I take a straw from the utensil drawer in the kitchen back to my bedroom, take the shade off my lamp. Quickly, I place it on my desk, yank off the lampshade exposing the light bulb. My fingers work feverishly yanking the synthetic strands of Jasmine’s hair around the plastic straw. I wonder if this is what Gene feels like. If this is the job I give her. One that comes with the expectations that she will tame my tresses; the expectation that by any means necessary her hands will push and pull me by the roots of my hair for my good. The expectation is that she will make me worthy of the world. She will make me beautiful.

At first, I attempt to bob Jasmine’s hair using the straw as one larger curler. The electrical heat emanating from the light bulb is like the dryer at Gene’s. It is required to reshape hair, to keep curls in

place. I figure this will hold Jasmine's style in place so the smell of synthetic hair burning surprises me. I never think this might be the product of working with such "nice" hair. Jasmine's long flowing hair is so beautiful, it has to be tamable, curls have to be possible. I think Gene would be able to do this.

From then on, I secretly begin to collect straws. Alter the type of curler I use to reach my desired outcome, the Jackie Kennedy bob. I remember watching movies or reading books with images that showed Black women with hair straightened and curled into a bob. I recall being told that in those days Black women couldn't really find jobs unless their hair was straightened. Maybe these images date back to the 50s. Maybe this is where my love for Mid-century modern comes from, a time of clear, crisp tailored look. Maybe the bob was the working woman's hairstyle of choice. A neat acceptable look. Never a feather or a strand or hair ruffled. This was my interest in Jackie O., my post Shirley Temple exploration or attempt at adopting whiteness.

I cut straws into eight pieces. This is Jasmine's collection of rollers. I try to use bobby pins and other accessories from my mother's hair bag to lock Jasmine's curlers in place.

They were all too big.

I go through six Jasmine dolls at least and I believe the only reason I give up is because the Jasmine doll begins to have too many versions; there is a sparkling princess, a holiday version, a married Jasmine doll, and a Jasmine that sings. I prefer my original canvas to work on.

I imagine I begin to understand, on a basic level, what it means to have a body through her body. In the world of Disney, she looked the most like me. I could also see how through her body, I learn how to live in the world with my own, taking on the shape of histories' expectations for me. The scary part is, I continue doll after Jasmine doll to make her into something she is not. I am determined to tame her hair. To give her a bob no matter how much she resists it. I burn her body to achieve a type of beauty that seems compulsory. That is consistently rejected. I don't do this to my white dolls. Don't do this to

the male dolls. They don't appear to need molding. Don't seem to need alterations.

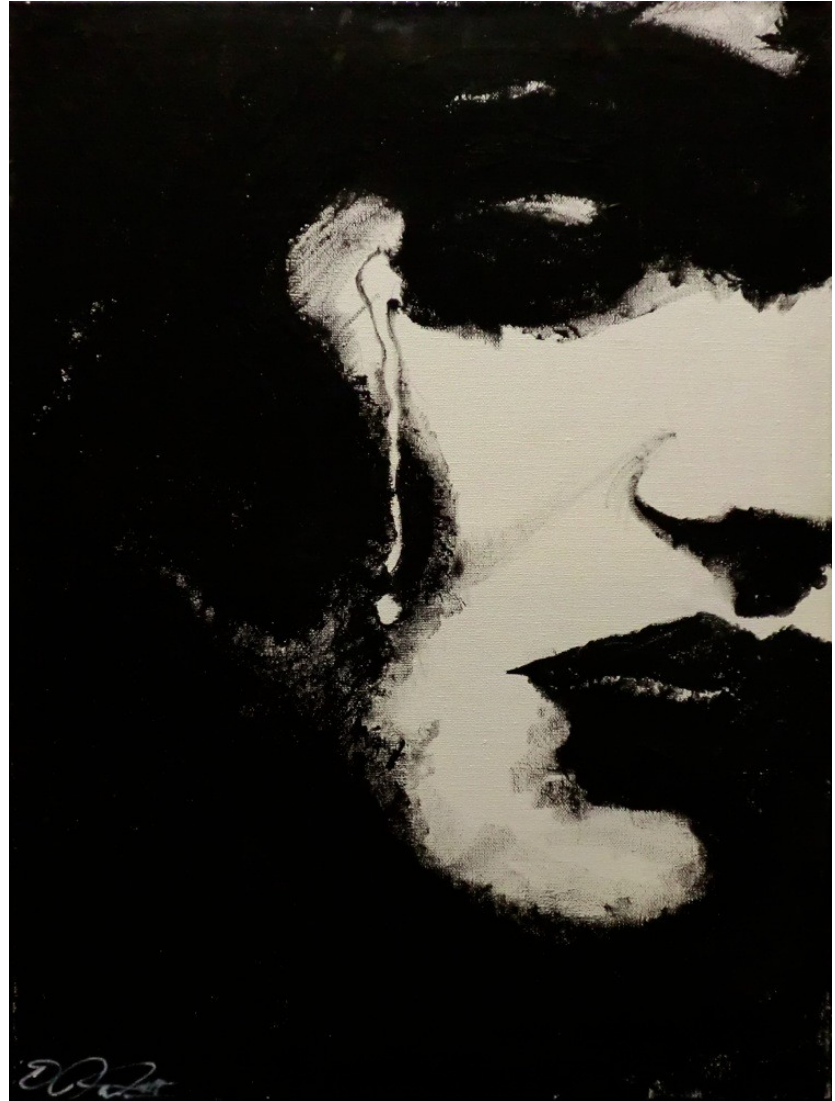
At the end, the Jasmynes were always unattractive, mutilated. Hair burned down to the spot where, if she were made of flesh and bone, brain might overflow from, if exposed and melted by a light bulb. At the end, she is visibly void of external beauty. Is stripped of what she was in an attempt to make her something else. They sleep under my bed in the wicker basket my mom used for me when I was a baby. My collection of Jasmine dolls sleep atop, between, or underneath the other. Bodies strewn about like corpses, abandoned and forgotten peaking out from time to time demanding to be remembered.

Usually we might not leave the hair salon until after the Carvel store, a few blocks over, had long closed but on days when we both got out to greet the sun before it set, my mom and I walked two blocks to buy a small ice cream cake. The fun excitingly awesome part was deciding what to have written on our fourteen dollar treat. "Happy Hair Day" usually sufficed and coupled with our newfound beauty, we felt revived, renewed.



29 the art of leaving / cortney stewart

Someday I will tell my mother that I am afraid  
Of the dark and touching raw chicken  
Of being alone like she is.  
We will sit down together again  
And have a civil conversation,  
Like we haven't had since I was seventeen.  
I wish I could tell her  
How much it hurt me to watch her go from  
Guy to guy, always searching.  
And how I have abandonment issues  
Not from being left,  
But from watching her leave all those times.  
I wish I could tell her  
How sorry I am for leaving that time  
When she needed me most to tuck her in at night.  
I hated waiting for her to come home  
And seeing if she would notice the time  
I did finish all of the chores rather than the times I didn't.  
I wish I could tell her  
Just how much I miss her and want her back  
Although I was the one who left.  
Someday I will tell my mother  
That she is the one who taught me  
How to leave.



solitaire / otha "vakseen" davis iii

*abyssal / coco owen*

I was hopeless in Geometry.  
I couldn't find the angles, having no curves.  
I was 13 unlucky ones.

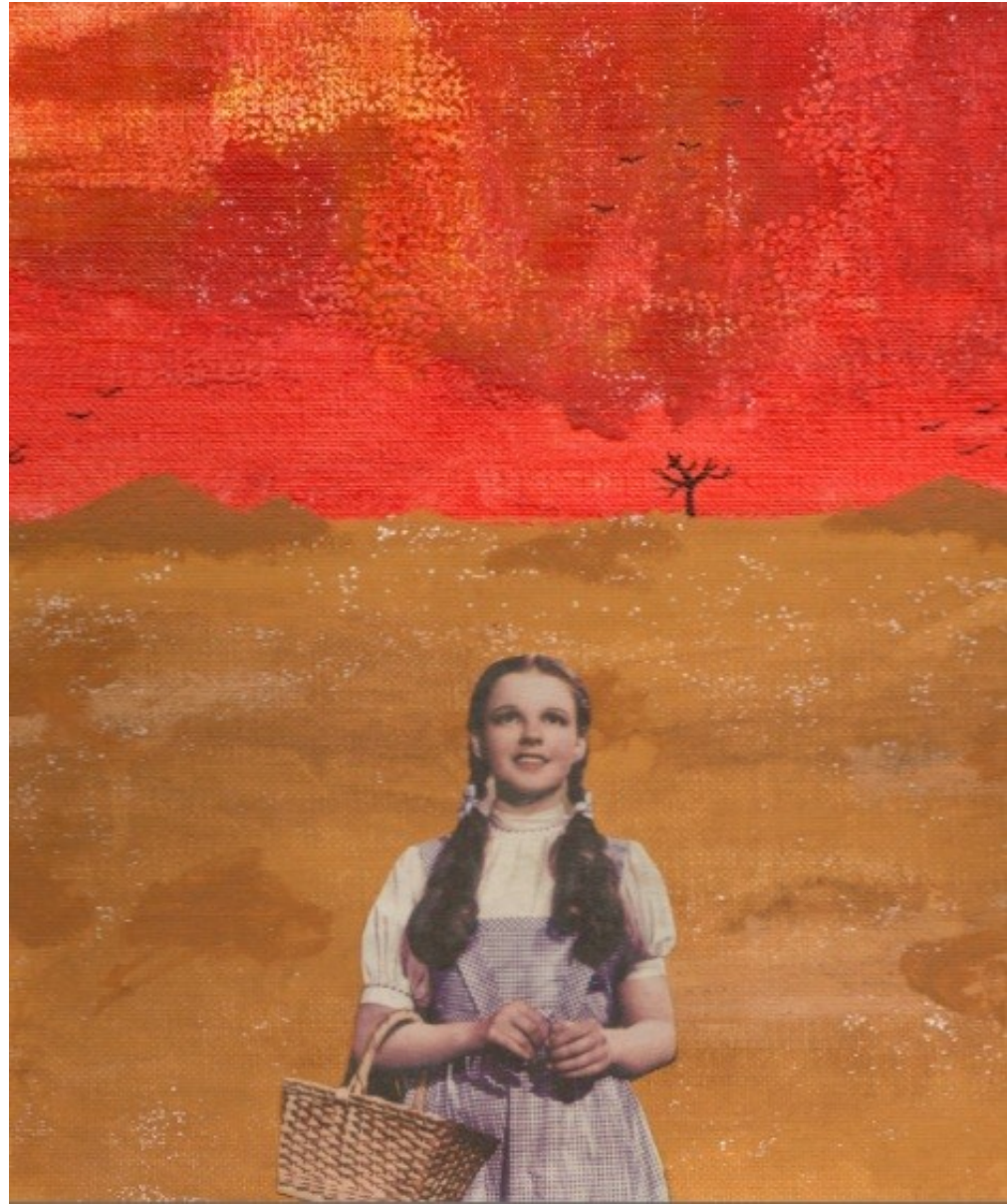
What were figures for, when mine  
had no volumes and only sounded  
abyssal plains, where nowhere was

flat as a chest? Abysmal,  
featureless depths got  
squared smack in the middle

of my nothing adolescence.  
My problem was hard to solve—  
like finding the volume

of a swimming pool  
whose water is clear,  
but awfully heavy to swim through.

after the rainbow  
/ samantha alex



Amber Hollinger hopes to contribute something good to the world by sharing her work, which has also appeared at *PoetrySuperHighway.com* and in the *Rose Red Review*. She holds an MA in International Relations –not writing. She recently completed her first poetry collection (*Surge*) and is working on new poems, short stories, and an article about Alzheimer’s and shared/lost memory. Amber feels honored to find inspiration from many strong, spirited women around the world, including her dynamo mother and wicked–awesome sisters. She would like to thank *S/tick* for having the ovaries to give publication space to ‘new’ writers. Continuez, mes soeurs !

Coco Owen’s poems take on constructions of the ‘feminine’ in terms of status and style. She totally buys Becca Klaver’s ‘brand of feminist poetics’ which Klaver defined as ‘putting the too-girly next to the too-heady.’ Coco hopes to make that the epigraph to her *Selected Poems*. Coco also writes in memory of her stylish bluestocking mother, Marlys. She has published in the *Antioch Review*, *Tidal Basin Review*, *The Journal*, etc., and with Binge Press. She is on the board of Les Figues Press and curates their literary salon, Mrs. Porter’s, in Los Angeles.

Cortney Stewart is a graduate student in the English department at Western Kentucky University. She received her BFA in creative writing in May 2012 from Morehead State University. She lives in Bowling Green, KY with her husband and their two tabby cats, Daisy and Gatsby. Much of her work is influenced by her complicated relationship with her mother as she tries to work through their past differences.

Dorianne Emmerton is a theatre reviewer, radio host and creative writer, and she brings her perspective as a queer cisgendered casual femme with a dark sense of humour to these activities. Recently she helped her partner have, and is helping to raise, a baby, while finding all sorts of paradigms about family and parenting to subvert and being very peeved at the ubiquitous gendering of infant products on the market. She has an essay on LGBT parenting forthcoming in an anthology from Touchwood Editions in 2014 and you can find information on her previous short story publications on her website at [dorianneemmerton.com](http://dorianneemmerton.com).

Ebony Williams, a transplant to Los Angeles from Brooklyn, New York, is a writer and dollmaker whose work is influenced by being raised by a single-mother and growing up in a family with

multiple generations of women who immigrated to America from Guyana. Her writing, such as *How to Build A Ragdoll* and *Grey Society*, explores the experiences of women throughout the Diaspora and the female body as container for memory, for culture, for an ancestral home often impacted by trauma. Ebony aims to embrace, complicate, break apart, and rebuild the way she/we understand family, culture, gender, race, the body/being embodied, and home.

Jenean McBrearty is through teaching, but takes the fun classes she didn't take in college. She's hoping 66 is the new 30. She'll have time to share more of herself with her daughter. Like Gina and Molly, they still have secrets that are hard to share when it comes their 'woman' sides. Why do memories have so much to do with the pain of bodily violation? The question was her inspiration for *O, Lardo Mio*. Half fact. Half fiction. Much wishing. Husbands, friends, colleagues, and dreams come and go, but mother and daughter endure. And they're homesick for California beaches and maybe their youth.

Writing poetry isn't simply a passion for Laura Minning. It is who she is. It is her life. Laura first began writing poetry when she was nine. As time continued, so did her writing. She began by writing about her thoughts, feelings and experiences. Then she added her observations, hopes and dreams. Laura's themes have ranged from self-reflection to opinion to circumstance. They've delved into her relationships and experiences - both with herself and others. Laura's poetry has always been a tangible reflection of who she is, and perhaps that's what has allowed it to ring true to her readers and touch their souls.

Mahala Lewis lives in Tucson, Arizona. She paints and draws intuitively, enjoying her natural channels of energy as they open up to the creative experience. The emotional experiences of women influence her artwork in terms of menstruation, pregnancy, and women's rights issues. Her artwork explores the vulnerability of women in political and social situations, especially in the context of border issues between the U.S. and Mexico. As a daughter, she sees the inherent difficulties in contemporary marriage narratives and the struggle of women to have their voices heard.

Merlin Flower is an independent artist and writer. In her paintings the men and women arrive and leave of their volition. A feminist, she believes that art is art, irrespective of the gender of

the artist.

Missy Washington, founder of i102fly, is on the run, so art journals are her primary canvas. Her work is inspired by adventure, cultural exchange, and growing as a person. Washington grew up in a family of all boys, with a mother who grew up in a family of all boys, so understanding and embracing what it means to be a girl has been an ongoing process, one often fleshed out in her art. Her mother's dedication to equality and compassion has had a profound impact on Washington. She has worked with non-profits using art together with education to address racial, economic and gender inequalities.

Otha "Vakseen" Davis III is invigorated by relationships, feelings and emotions. He's always felt they were God's greatest creation, so his work tends to evolve around women and their natural allure. "Women are very emotional beings so naturally they allow me to channel various energies through my work. I guess for a man I've always been rather in tune with my feelings and emotions, so I want to suck you into my world, even if it's just for a brief moment. I want my work to captivate the viewer's senses." To view more of Otha's work, visit [Vakseen.com](http://Vakseen.com).

Samantha Alex is a Canadian writer and artist. Her work has appeared in various publications. Her poet grandmother gifted her with an early love of the arts, an imagination and a heart. Her role as a daughter, a sister and an aunt bolster her ambition to constantly explore the world women live within and carve out a future amongst her peers. Samantha's work is particularly informed by the struggles of young women and those within the LGBTQ community.

“Best wishes for your labour—I hope your contractions  
are like waves, and all goes well . . .”

