



Nelly Sanchez

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Issue 13 Editorial Team

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Untied *Ben Groner III*

It was the first day of the road trip, and halfway between our nation's capital and the site of the 1927 Bristol Sessions we pulled off the highway, passing an abandoned sanatorium which loomed above the town like a scab on the flesh of the land.

A few minutes later, we found ourselves on the dusty paths of the Frontier Culture Museum, ambling backwards through time among traditional dwellings from England, Ireland, Germany; deconstructed and reconstructed on this land. A West African compound of clay buildings and domed thatched huts crouched

off to the side. The architecture of American houses from the 1740s, 1820s, and 1850s sang of how the cultures intertwined, how everything stems from something else—Irish women grew squashes, okra, black eyed peas. As we walked, we speculated

on the loneliness of the first man to hike from Pennsylvania to this soil through an unforgiving winter, surviving without shelter until he threw together a tiny primitive cabin of logs sandwiched between thick layers of red mud, disheveled and flared boards for a roof that didn't help much against the rain.

Chuckling, we passed a sign that read: "the Untied States" while espousing the merits of spelling books in early grade schools. Even now, with this country stitched together by train tracks, bridges, interstates, generations, trauma, societal norms—

there's still a risk of unraveling, of neighborly conversations fraying around the edges. We found the 1850s house inhabited by an elderly museum worker clad in a blue dress and white bonnet, and as I studied its spacious whitewashed interior and brushed an antique German *scheitholt* on a desk that would morph into

the mountain dulcimer, I heard my friend asking the sweet lady a string of questions. Upon striding out to the porch, she was explaining how as the West opened up in the 1800s, settlers

sloughed off their native nationalities and started wearing the word “American.” Can a single word mean everything and nothing? We smiled goodbyes and set off across the lawn, but something compelled me to look back. The old woman was leaning against the doorway, waving and wishing us well on our journey, and for a moment I felt as if I were her restless

son leaving the homestead in search of a country I’d hardly seen.

Passing the schoolhouse, that adjective scrawled across my mind—*untied, untied*—then there was only the clear brightness of the September afternoon, the wind rippling the woman’s blue dress and white bonnet, her hand waving us on and on and on.

Ben Groner III (Nashville, TN), recipient of Texas A&M University’s 2014 Gordone Award for undergraduate poetry and a Pushcart Prize nomination, has work published in *Whale Road Review*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *The Bookends Review*, *One, Still: The Journal*, *New Mexico Review*, and elsewhere. He’s also a bookseller at Parnassus Books. You can see more of his work at bengroner.com/creative-writing/.

Now Hear This *John Milas*

after Operation Odyssey Dawn

The Navy deglamorizes alcohol, but we all black out on purpose in Rota and Catania while tracing circles over the Mediterranean. Our ship targets Libyan anti-air

defenses. They wake me up hungover in Sicily to some news: *They killed Obama. Oops, I meant Osama.* We go ashore and get so drunk at a strip club we have to remember

the E3s have a curfew after those nimble Romanians help us forget. So we take a taxi down the hill to make it back in time for MIDRATS in the enlisted galley. Now I'm

confident I could teach you about surviving aboard the *Kearsarge*. Lesson one: be sure of where your assigned lifeboat is. Don't get lost in officer's country. If you're

green, don't wash your uniforms during blue's laundry time, don't lift weights during blue's gym time, etc. But I would be lying if I said we never threw paper leafbags of our

garbage overboard. Actual jetsam, not a metaphor in some poem. And another lie if I told you it took me less than a week to stop zigzagging down hallways after we

crossed the heaving Atlantic. We finally sober up. The captain throws a shore party and the porta johns overflow with urine. My job is to post up and stop the sailors from

pissing on the side of a Spanish army building. Then we play card games while the ship vaporizes some other country. I teach my friends to play Euchre and

I lose to them nine times in a row. None of them will pronounce Euchre correctly. They keep saying *yogurt*.

John Milas grew up in Illinois and studied creative writing at UIUC and Purdue. His writing appears in *The Southampton Review*, *Superstition Review*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, and elsewhere. Learn more at johnmilas.com.

An Accident *Brittany Ackerman*

When the car hits his body, it's kind of funny. It doesn't seem real. Skyler holds the Burger King bag, two single patty burgers with ketchup only, two small sides of fries. My Sprite spills in the backseat.

He was on a bike. But the bike is gone now. I only know there once was a bike under him. It's snowing, but I sweat in my coat inside the car.

I was looking out the window. I had "Say You'll Be There" stuck in my head. I saw a boy on a bike and another boy walking beside him. I saw his butt hit the car. Mom was saying something, her voice like feathers. She was telling us something.

I felt the car vibrate. I felt the weight of his body on the hood of the car. I imagine a purple bruise forming on his backside, a lump the size of an apple. People get hit by cars, I think. This is something that happens. *How will we get home?* Skyler asks the air in the car.

Mom gets out and tells us to stay. She collapses next to the boy. The boy is crying, hunched over. He won't look at her.

The air in the car smells like fried potatoes.

The boys walk away like a movie, out into the rest of the day like it hasn't changed their lives. They pass under a bridge and are gone.

We wait for our mother. She will know what comes next. I think about forever. It's either not long enough, or it's too far away. Mom comes back and she is different now. She is still our mother, but she is new.

Brittany Ackerman is a writer from Riverdale, New York. She earned her BA in English from Indiana University and graduated from Florida Atlantic University's MFA program in Creative Writing. She teaches Archetypal Psychology at AMDA College and Conservatory of the Performing Arts in Hollywood, CA. She was the 2017 Nonfiction Award Winner for Red Hen Press, as well as the AWP Intro Journals Project Award Nominee in 2015. Her work has been featured in *The Los Angeles Review*, *No Tokens*, *Hobart*, *Cosmonauts Ave*, *Fiction Southeast*, and more. Her first collection of essays entitled *The Perpetual Motion Machine* is out now with Red Hen Press. She currently lives in Los Angeles, California.

trigger warning: suicide

Jumper Tamara M. Baxter

The San Jose Airport recently added a west runway that ends one hundred yards from our back door, and now we must endure the unbearable cycle of airplanes taking off and landing. All day the cabinets rumble. All night the ceiling screeches above the bed. The air traffic lulls between 9:45 and 10:15 in the evening, so we tape the six o'clock news and replay it then. That's when we learned that a woman flying into San Jose had jumped at two thousand feet. She was on a commuter with other DE Crane Aircraft workers flying back from El Segundo. A co-worker tried to prevent her from jumping, but she bit his hand. Authorities are still searching for her body somewhere around San Jose. My husband Raymond wonders if she jumped out of an airplane that she helped to build.

Raymond and I have lived near the airport for twenty years in a split-level with an adjoining garden. Raymond is devoted to planting historically significant vegetables like the giant Mangel-wurzels, a British variety of rutabaga. Each year on November 5, Raymond carves them into Guy Fawkes heads to celebrate the defeat of the man who tried to blow up the British Parliament in 1605. He grows purple potatoes from the Aztecs, red and green striped butter beans brought by slaves from Africa, Lady Godiva Pumpkins, and Good King Henry Goosefoots that Raymond prefers to spinach. Raymond has a formidable plot of Jerusalem artichokes said to have been a favorite of the Sunni Muslim warrior, Saladin. Raymond has always found solace in his garden. These days his gardening is ruined by jet engines rumbling in his hoe handle and vibrating in his chest like a gong. Huge metallic airplanes arise from the garden in an illusion that Raymond likens to the ancient Egyptian Phoenix rising out of its own fire and ash. Cross-shaped shadows sweep warm wind across the lawn and over the roof. Raymond is certain that one morning we'll wake with propeller blades chomping our feet.

"Don't you mean to say jet engines?" I ask.

"Nevertheless," Raymond says.

I tell Raymond, "Mathematically, the odds of a plane nose-diving our feet are less than the chances of our winning the lottery."

Raymond says, "Somebody wins the lottery every day, Livia."

Hearing about the woman jumper hasn't helped Raymond's nerves. He is gravely concerned that people hell-bent on self-destruction will fall from the sky in disproportionate numbers.

"Statistically, only one in every billion people jumps out of an airplane. Otherwise, you'd hear about a jumper every day," I tell him.

Raymond says, "Imagine falling from that height."

“A blur,” I tell him. “A woman falling from two thousand feet will reach terminal velocity in four seconds after jumping. She fell to earth in less than twenty seconds.” I show Raymond the numbers on my notepad.

“The Law of Falling Bodies,” Raymond says. “Galileo, 1590.”

“She didn’t land soft as a feather. Her bones will be pulverized into thousands of fragments, some as tiny as sand.”

“An hourglass figure gone to waste?” Raymond asks.

I change the subject. “Didn’t Galileo write about the natural descent of bodies in free-fall after dropping some melons from atop the Leaning Tower of Pisa?”

Raymond went to pull weeds from among his rutabagas the next morning. That’s when he found the woman who jumped out of the airplane cratered into the Mangel-wurzels. A dozen decapitated heads had popped out of the ground and scattered. The woman wore an orange jumpsuit. Her stocking-feet oozed. She had landed face up, but all distinguishable features had been erased by her fall. She had turned dark and smelled like a bag of wet compost.

The authorities came to take the woman out of Raymond’s Mangel-wurzels. They stepped gingerly among the Goosefoots as they took pictures of her body from high and low angles. A photographer straddled her, and took pictures toward the sky in an attempt to reconcile the airplane’s position with the time of her departure.

“The odds are one in a trillion that another woman will jump from an airplane and land in your vegetables,” I reassure Raymond.

Raymond is not convinced. “History repeats itself in strange ways.” Raymond points toward the giant belly of a 747 springing up behind the squared yellow tape cordoning the dead woman. First comes the scream of metal, then the sweep of hot breath. The airplane noses upward, ablaze in the sun’s reflection. Two hundred feet above us people wave from the airplane windows. They look like a row of potted seedlings straining toward the light. The bright bird bears them above the horizon, then turns toward Los Angeles, white plumes streaming the sky.

Tamara M. Baxter’s collection of fiction, *Rock Big and Sing Loud*, won the Morehead State and Jesse Stuart Foundation’s First Author’s Award for Fiction, and was published by the Jesse Stuart Foundation Press. In his introduction to Baxter’s collection, Robert Morgan says that Baxter, “. . .has given us the stories of some of the most afflicted and addicted, the most failed and failing, individuals on the planet, and also some of the strongest and most enduring people we are ever likely to meet.” Her short fiction, poetry, and essays have been widely published in journals and anthologies. Baxter has been recognized nationally and regionally with awards in both fiction and non-fiction. She lives and writes in Upper East Tennessee.

Birds L Mari Harris

Long after the street lights flicker on and the rooms dim, when clothes have been hung and TVs turned off, when all is quiet, we choose our feathers.

We unfold our wings and gather in the halls to dance and preen, decorating our crests with construction paper flowers and garlands. We then fly out the windows, the tips of our wings caressing, and we soar in circles over the trees and roofs.

Our laughter floats over the streets, and we hear the surprised whispers of the half-woken. We settle on power lines and stifle giggles with feathers folded over beaks.

Some of us ask if we can look into the houses, watch what they do when they think they're alone. We tickle each other, our beaks smooching *click clack clack*. We, too, were once young and in love.

Sometimes we fly to the ice cream shack, squeeze down the roof vent, and make ourselves butterscotch sundaes, our little toes tap tap tapping over the counters, our little bird tongues lapping the ice cream, taking turns preening the sticky butterscotch from our throats and breasts.

Other times, we gather outside the liquor store, perch along the curb, and wait as our bravest scuttles through the broken window in the back, wings tucked and folded tight, until she's back and we twitter and cry *Me Me Me!*

Back and forth she flies, bringing drops of cheap wine until we are all a little tipsy and we are ready to tell our stories.

Memory or regret? we are asked.

Regret, we answer.

L Mari Harris splits her time between Nebraska and the Ozarks, and works as a copywriter in the tech industry. Her work has appeared in *Atticus Review*, *Bending Genres*, *cahoodaloodaling*, *Gravel*, *Lost Balloon*, *Milk Candy Review*, among others. Follow her on Twitter @LMariHarris and read more of her work at www.lmariharris.wordpress.com.

Stretch Marks *Kristen Bell*

I only accepted the university teaching job on a dare from my therapist. She said talking to strangers would be a healthy experience for my brain. Besides, it only required leaving the house three times a week, and I could only maintain my post-trauma persona for a few hours at a time.

After recently ending my studies in India due to illness, sexual assault, and the sudden death of one of my closest friends and mentors, Iris, I had withdrawn to my parents' house in rural Pennsylvania, where I remained hidden for almost a year in what-I-hoped-to-be reclusive healing.

I imagined what Iris, a turtle-neck wearing earth-mother academic, would have to say about my new job. The scholar knew the pre-trauma me, the irreverent kid that skipped most of undergrad to sketch in art galleries and chalk political slogans on sidewalks. Iris scolded me for being a "smart-ass on the way to committing academic suicide" and supported me when I came out at twenty-one to a conservative family. She could critique my master's thesis with a scalpel then offer me cheap Shiraz and unsolicited romance advice.

Despite our forty-year age gap, I realized I could offer her as much as she offered me. In one letter she wrote, "Remember how in jest you shouted 'I hate you' to me when we were in Scotland together? At any rate, I hate you for bringing forth the longings—to travel, to have adventures, for encouraging my incipient transgressive nature."

Her response to my finally taking her advice of "grow up and get a job" would have been: "Now you have to attend class."

My first faculty meeting was at the end of August. I wore black and popped two Xanax. I felt like a fraudulent imposter entering a room full of serious academics, individuals like Iris. But I was greeted by the director, who introduced me to two men in checkered shirts, a young woman with a resting Benadryl face, and an older broad who said, "I hope this new one isn't another dilly-bar."

Is she talking about me? I wondered. I reached into my pocket and pressed the fresh cut edge of my new office key into my palm. This was my maladaptive preventative care for dealing with PTSD. Slight physical discomfort kept me present in the conference room.

At the far end of the table sat a professor I had met over the summer, Dilsha, a trim Indian with the slender defined muscles of a dancer, wit like suspended salt-shaker, and a bob of silver curls. As I picked a seat across from her at the table, she ruffled her curls to make an acerbic remark to a young colleague.

“I get emails from students every semester about their mental health. It’s because they are coddled as children. So they come here and feel overwhelmed. What are we supposed to do? Mash the food for them and push it down their throats?” Here Dilsha stroked her neck. “We can’t want their success or healing more than they do.” Her tone turned on a dime as I sat down, and she gave me a warm greeting.

We had exchanged emails in early August because I wanted to observe a class before the semester started. She wrote back, “Of course! And please call me by my first name.” No one had a chance to tell me that students thought she was “savage” (I would have failed her class due to daydreaming and tardiness). She had a formidable reputation on campus, with some faculty referring to her as “an institution” or “that insufferable bitch.” Her passion for language and no-boundaries devotion to her students reminded me of Iris.

Any awe I might have felt for my first faculty meeting faded as the room erupted with disgruntled debate over student retention methods. My imposter syndrome dissipated as fight-or-flight reactions took over and flicked the middle finger at my brain. Volume, even from mild academics, pushed part of my brain back to that street in India. A man I couldn’t clearly remember had his hands around my neck. I took shallow breaths. Dilsha was checking her nails; the glass bangles on her wrists jangled with each movement. Her resting face showed a bored brain on the edge of flat-lining.

Inside my oxford shoes, I clenched my toes. Instead of crying, I took the office key out of my pocket and pressed it against the delicate skin of my wrist.

After a few months teaching, I adjusted to the routine of leaving the house. But if I crossed paths with someone at night, including the university’s elderly instructor of medieval history, I looked on the ground for self-defense weapons: rocks, sticks, pine cones.

This is karma, I thought, for teasing Iris about her anxiety. She was anxious about the neighbors who sold weed, about the future of healthcare, about who would be the next president. My pre-trauma self used to tell her to drink more wine, have more sex.

“I get it now!” I shouted into the afterlife from under a piece of furniture and waited for my amygdala to recover.

During the semester, I shut the door and sat in the dim light of an Edison bulb. I fought the urge to release endorphins by self-harming. Instead, I brewed coffee. Focusing on physical sensations, heat from the steaming cup, taste of a dark blend stiff enough to keep a spoon standing up straight, helped my brain ground, and remain in the present.

Writing to Iris had been my way of grounding and processing life events, but when a blood clot broke loose and traveled to her brilliant brain, I stopped writing. Why continue when she wasn’t there with her half of the conversation? The thought of writing to someone else was painful and felt like betrayal.

After processing parts of my identity through Iris, her absence left a void in my thoughts. I missed what she described as, at seventy-four, “an abnormal personality with occasional flickers of sanity.” With her death, she was the first to teach me closure isn’t always possible, and there are risks to loving. I was lost without those parts of me that I shared with Iris; those parts burned along with her in the crematorium.

I needed a distraction. I tried splatter painting and pyromania, and then out of desperation, I returned to writing. When I finished an essay, I needed an editor, an objective reader with a balance of compassion and efficiency. I thought of Dilsha. Her reputation didn’t put me off. After a month of what my therapist called avoidance behavior, I finally sent a message to Dilsha. She encouraged my writing about India, and I started stopping by her office to continue conversations. I kept waiting for her to kick me out. She never did.

Instead, Dilsha offered books off her shelves and empathy for deranged bereavement. She had survived more loss than anyone else I knew, loss of health, her husband of thirty years, loss of bodily autonomy.

After I sent Dilsha a vignette about PTSD, we discussed feeling out of place in normal life and echoed what Iris had told me, closure isn’t always possible.

I knew this all too well. Self-harm scars covered my upper thighs, and, like a hoarder of objects, I hoarded the story for each cut. This jagged silver line is for the day he was released from prison. This never healing discoloration on my wrist is for day-to-day human contact.

In Iris’s absence, Dilsha was teaching me about the after, about healing. I was on the other side of the country when Iris went into the hospital for a low-stakes procedure. I read her obituary on social media and screamed into my pillow. As I healed, and Dilsha revealed bits of herself, I felt increasing anxiety. Dilsha’s mortality was an emotional risk factor. I couldn’t tell how old she was, and, despite being in excellent shape, she struggled with unpredictable health. I wondered what Iris would make of my growing sapiosexual attraction to this discerning and intense woman and my fears of replacement/not replacement.

I reminded myself that Dilsha was not Iris. Not Iris, as I stopped myself from taking Dilsha’s arm or hugging her in the hallway.

During the spring semester, Dilsha continued to keep me accountable for wallowing in bouts of depression. I imprinted on Dilsha because she offered an unspoken understanding of assaulted agency- we both had bodies hijacked by strangers. She encouraged me to write through anxiety, to move beyond damage.

“You can’t let this define you.”

But some nights, I couldn't write my way out of despair or wait for it to pass like a blinding migraine. The quickest way I could release grief or "stay in the moment," as my therapist was always telling me, was to mark time on my wrist. To stop myself, I tried to imagine the pain it might cause Iris. But later, I dismantled a pencil sharpener. I took deep breaths, pulled lines against the skin, and watched beads of red form.

As the weeks passed towards the end of April, Dilsha dropped the news. "I thought I would stay here until they took me out in a casket, but I've decided not to return in the fall." I braced myself for another loss and sat in shocked silence.

"It's time. I don't understand the younger generation."

We stood to leave for afternoon class. She fussed with the silver dupatta scarf around her shoulders while searching under her desk for her sandals. She looked up at my face and frowned.

"Sweet friend," she said. "Of course we'll stay in contact. You can't get rid of me that easily." I said nothing.

She paused by the door with her keys in hand. Then she wrapped her arms around my shoulders in a brush-of-bodies hug. "I've wanted to tell you that I'm so glad you've come into my life, but I didn't want to sound dumb."

I stood stunned for a moment in her embrace, then I leaned into her out-of-bounds body, close enough to smell her perfume and to feel her curls brush my cheek, close enough to connect at the waist. I rested the tips of my fingers against the shoulders of her black kurta.

On the last day of final exams, Dilsha extended an arm to her bookshelves.

"Do you really want all of it?" she asked.

I nodded and scanned her desk for signs of her other lives. She kept fresh cut flowers in a vase by the photo of her husband. The shelves were loaded with volumes of poetry, tomes of philosophy, feminist texts.

That particular day I was asking for her thoughts on an essay about my maladaptive coping mechanisms. As usual, she didn't offer advice or trite phrases. She was dunking a jasmine tea bag and blowing over the cup. She put the cup down.

She took my left hand in hers and gently touched the white lines on my wrist. "Are you able to write about this? Promise you won't cut again."

My eyes focused on the stack of argument textbooks. I hadn't stopped for anyone else. Not for my therapist or my parents or even my memory of Iris.

“Promise me you won't. You're too valuable to lose.”

She sat there waiting, her large brown eyes fixed on me. Love for the living, vibrant woman in front of me made me want to say yes. My clasped hands relaxed. I looked down at the discoloration on my left wrist. The skin had almost healed. Left behind were white lines like stretch marks.

Untitled *Guilherme Bergamini*

Reporter photographic and visual artist, **Guilherme Bergamini** is Brazilian and graduated in Journalism. For more than two decades, he has developed projects with photography and the various narrative possibilities that art offers. The works of the artist dialogue between memory and social political criticism. He believes in photography as the aesthetic potential and transforming agent of society. Awarded in national and international competitions, Guilherme Bergamini participated in collective exhibitions in 27 countries.

Epic96 *Tatiana Garmendia*



Epicizi Tatiana Garmendia



Epic132 Tatiana Garmendia

Tatiana Garmendia is an interdisciplinary artist exploring how the stories we tell each other and whisper to ourselves can be expressed through a variety of media including drawing. Garmendia lived in Castro's Cuba, Franco's Spain, and Nixon's United States of America before turning eight. Perhaps because Garmendia is a child of revolution, of broken promises, and of political asylum, her work is driven by an existential itch to probe identity, history and culture. It wrestles with conflicting moral intuitions, with the personal and the historic, conflating them. These drawings specifically probe notions of distances, great and small, as well as notions of open ground and narrow

All Everything *Arthur Kwon Lee*



Arthur Kwon Lee is a Korean American visual artist best known for capturing archetypal imagery through a combination of historical figures and cultural mythologies across the globe. He debuted his first solo at The Corcoran Gallery of Art at twenty years of age and continues his meteoric rise as the Eileen Kaminsky Family Foundation's youngest resident artist ever. Lee has been awarded by George Washington University, the Overseas National Institute, the Korean Artist Association and the Corcoran Gallery of Art – all in his early twenties. Last year, Arthur Kwon was awarded as the DMV's Asian American Artist of 2018 by President Baek of the Korean Society of Maryland for his contributions towards the community through visual means. Lee's influences go across the board from his relationship to the Jung Society of Washington, social and financial investment into the local church community and a lifelong commitment in martial arts. Arthur Kwon is obsessed with capturing the duality in human nature, his paintings often stack themes that appear contradictory at first glance but when looked upon in depth breathe an honest attempt to animate the deepest convictions of our collective unconscious.

Création Nelly Sanchez



Origines Nelly Sanchez



Un coup de dé jamais nabolir a le hasard *Nelly Sanchez*



Nelly Sanchez is a French collagiste, inspired by Surrealism and Futurism. Her univers is a feminine one, sensual, coloured, mysterious, sometime funny, often disturbing. Her artworks must be shown like mirrors, full of symbols. Her main themes are Woman condition, relationship between Man/Woman. Her collages compliment her writings on French Woman novel. All her artworks and her detailed resume can be shown on www.nellysanchez.fr.