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Dear Readers,

The languages we learn have roots in our surroundings, our privileges, our histories, our abundance, and our poverty. However, no matter the number and fluency of different spoken languages, we humans share a common language of emotion. We share love and loss and belonging and fear. We are conflicted about our morality and mortality, and we question our purpose. This common emotional tongue ties us together across borders and cultures and time. Each life is a different path and set of experiences that combines together in the shared story of humanity.

This was a beautiful and difficult work — to build an issue that strives to decentralize one language of power and identity, to interpret living physicality into the expression of word and image, to amplify sounds, colors, and voices.

Although arranged in the Table of Contents, the works are not printed by genre but instead flow through emotions and experiences that connect them, and us, together. In this Multilingual Issue of Obra/Artifact, we hope you encounter languages as lenses into stories that are both wildly foreign and strangely familiar.

Sincerely,

The Editors
Erica McCay, Nikki Fragala Barnes, Jacklyn Gion, Shelby Smotherman
& the Obra/Artifact staff
This is a brackish love,  
with salt slipping through lips  
the way o Río Guaíba slips  
into o Lago dos Patos. The way  
the word Río slips from your tongue  
into mine as I stutter through  
o Lago. You insist I am not saying it  
right no matter how many times  
I say it. You insist two things  
cannot be the same as one.

Mas quando  
è um Rio um Rio? Quando è o mar o mar?  
Is there no kiss that slips one  
into the other? Is there no language  
that can make a silence sing?  
Your eyes slip hazel into verde.  
Your mouth slips ordem e progresso  
into mine.

Often, I have lost myself  
in the intricacies of words, drifting leagues  
amidst this abandoned ocean. Yet here you are  
slipping fingers through my fingers  
as if to you this water were simply water.
Ceux qui se lient volontairement à un point fixe dans le plan et celui qui inlassablement calque des doigts les rues avec leur nom et ne cesse de tracer les différents parcours possibles, ils ne sont jamais sur une même surface,

Those who give themselves easily to a fixed point on the map and those who trace the streets and street names with their fingers, tirelessly, who never stop planning out all the different possible paths, they’re never even on the same surface,
Attendre à Bélem après six heures et demie alors qu’on lui a dit qu’il était inutile de s’attarder si longtemps—pour un visage fin, ses bras sont doux et lui donnent encore l’allure d’une petite fille, et même ses joues lorsqu’elle est anxieuse, ou bien celui qui arrivera trois minutes en retard et ne l’avait pas rencontrée, bien qu’il ait prévu le retard qui lui coûta une fortune, et qui sans cesse remet son chapeau ; en regardant ces profils, j’aurais pu tourner la page ou ajouter une phrase de plus —j’arriverais à toucher réellement leurs mains ou à faire se toucher leurs doigts, mais avec quelle concordance des temps,

Le store, baissé pour éviter l’érosion de la lumière du soleil à travers les fenêtres exposées au sud et pour tromper ne serait-ce qu’un peu la chaleur, accumulait souvent des poussières qui, au moindre souffle de vent, tombaient en petites lamelles sur les mains occupées à taper à la machine à écrire, sur le clavier, ou sur les vestes suspendues au dos des chaises. À midi, quand même le bruit des voitures et des rues ne faisait qu’accentuer la stagnation du temps, et que je répétais le geste de relever et de baisser les doigts, espérant que le mouvement de la lumière soit visible, j’aperçus les lettres dactylographiées à la dernière ligne sur le papier qui remontait graduellement : “déplacer la page vers une vie qui ne nécessite pas de rendez-vous” ; levant la tête vers celui qui m’avait donné rendez-vous, j’eus l’image d’une machine à écrire dont on n’entendrait pas le bruit, qui pourrait peut-être exister quelque part, m’est venue à l’esprit.

The blind, lowered against the sunlight coming through the south-facing windows to keep out the least bit of heat, often accumulates layers of dust which, at the slightest breath of wind, fall in tatters on the hands working away at the typewriter, on the keyboard, or on the jackets hanging from the backs of chairs. In the afternoon, when even the noises of the cars and the streets only accentuated the stagnation of time, when I kept raising and lowering my fingers, hoping at least to see some change in the quantity of light, I saw a line of text at the bottom of the page rising slowly into view: “move the page towards a life that doesn’t need any meetings.” Raising my head towards the one I was next supposed to meet, the image of a typewriter whose sound went unheard, which I suppose could exist somewhere, suddenly came to mind.
I’m with a group of other Americans, trying to get into a nightclub. The bouncer lets the boys in, nods & winks. Stops me.

Tu cédula, por favor?

I pretend I don’t speak Spanish, level & cut my eyes into razors.

I’m not Dominican.

He looks me over, considers, steps aside. But the sugar on my tongue has already dissolved, rotten aftertaste thinly coating my teeth.

I’m strung in the cobwebbed night dense as two-hundred-year-old cotton bales, as sugarcane stacked in wagons, dense as the salt-iron throb of blood.

Of course I want to leave then, but the boys are already throwing back rum shots, and I don’t have the heart.

The incredible thing about this country is that we don’t see race here. It’s all melting pot, olla de sancocho, everyone does bachata the same, you know?

My friend’s face is a cup of cream. Our parents sew skin, fix hearts. Our hands are soft as clean gauze. Our necks are smooth, our breaths confident. When we smile our teeth look like boarding passes.

We are smiling in a restaurant in the old Colonial City, perfect slices of stewed goat on our white plates.

I look down and think I see the goat’s heart. I want to say, there is a faint bleating coming from my plate

but I don’t have the mouth.

what do you call a goat trying to get into a nightclub?
what do you call Billy and his friends throwing words like darts at you?
what do you call a game of darts in the Colonial City?
what do you call a game of darts in Washington, D.C.?
what do you call a ghost that dances on your plate?
what do you call a bleeding morning of darts? a word throwing clubs in the city? a mourning dance at the club?
what do you call the precise form of surgery in which a heart is removed from a person while she is still walking, still speaking, and placed on a white plate?
what do you call what sugar does to a body, how it melts, sticks, damns the pipes, slows blood as it tries to push, slows the tuckering heart, ties it up like a goat?
what should we call this type of drowning?
When I met death (the second time)
the July lake was cold glass
grey like my father’s eyes
I ran in manic
dopamine of sunshine
slipped out
onto hot white sand
a fish:
Lips ripe and swollen
body slow
blood desperate
Eyes locked open
I only say grey glaciers:
world trapped in dark ice
(jack pines, high hills and bear berries)
contracting.

Internal decapitation
of the mind and spine
A disarticulation
as my blood stilled.

Bones are syllables
tangent in the quiet brush
(near the walking path)
without the syntax of ligaments,
the meaning of tendons
Skin envelope.

When I say I want to draw the air around you tight
I mean: keep saying what is wrong
until it has loosened, the way a lung expands,
the way a canary escapes.
1- Colonial presence
Produced grotesque contortions
Of beings, Villains,
Drunk delusionists and
Arsonists blazing the sky.

2-
America is
A silversmith that only
Shapes fitted handcuffs.

Amerik se yon
Ajantye ki silman bay
Menis mezire.
Attila, the President for Life of the East

Mark Budman

Your name means “daddy” in old Germanic.
А немцы наши враги.
You talk down to me from horseback,
as if I’m a pope who is defending Rome from you.
Хоть я и не католик.
A slab of meat is warming between your thighs
and the side of the horse.
Лошадь захромала, командир убит.
Your wispy beard
is singed by the camera lights
when they interview you
on CNN.
По русски.
Daddy,
though I left your country
half a lifetime ago,
I can never escape your reach.
Где бы я не жил.
Your arrows
blot out the sun and the moon
in my dreams.
All roads lead to Rome, Daddy;
You are coming for me.

Two cultures merge in an American wood. At the bend in the lane dappled bronze under braided boughs stands our Cape Cod where we prepare for guests. Mom and dad smooth linens while my siblings and I decorate the living and dining rooms until the ceilings are kaleidoscopic waves of papel picado, mariószki, and knickknack scarecrows.

The bell rings and I open the door to a deluge of aunts, uncles, and cousins. They bring the belly of the moon and the edge of the Black Sea ribboned in blossoms and songs and their amor, their miłość, their love. Our chorus of laughter and embraces bewilders neighbors who peek through generic curtains and over assembly-line fences. To them, our collage of phonemes and melanin is too dissonant, too mismatched. But I hear the harmony; I see the pattern.

Don’t you recognize your own portrait?
I call. I’m answered with a disappearing act.

Grandparents pass the threshold, swat from their napes decades-thick bad breath of dictatorial regimes; the stench hangs in the air, moistened with blood drops of desaparecidos and pogromy. I hug abuelo, abuela, dziadek and babcia. Their affection scalds with hope.

Dad leads the men to the backyard where they start to grill and discuss the World Cup. Abuela and babcia automatically enter the kitchen where mom, tías, and ciocie have already unleashed clouds of spice and herb. Abuela holds an ear of maíz and says there is a face of an ancestor in each gilded kernel. Babcia unravels skazki from potato skin swirls.

The town crier passes in front of the house. He wears a beaked mask and pulls a cart with a white sheet that covers a lumpy mound. He calls out with a clang,
Bring out your foreign-born!
Babcia scoffs and mumbles,
Sounds familiar.
Abuela laughs, too.

My garden bloomed in the Baja desert long before any flowers in May.
The dinner table, wreathed in marigolds and sunflowers, is a zócalo of food: gołąbki and tamales, kielbasa and chorizo, rosół and pozole. My tíos, tías, ciocie, and wujekowie share quizzical glances about how they soak the soup: tortilla on one side and chleb on the other. The four-hundred-pound turkey, its breast and drumsticks sizzled to the juiciest shade of ochre, is a crowd-pleaser. Dessert is an avalanche of pączki and conchas. Abuela and babcia exchange recipes on how to control their husbands. Abuelo admits he’s never seen snow to wide-eyed dziadek. The baby boomers reminisce Woodstock and Disco. Crowded around the fireplace crackle, my siblings and all our cousins trade nightmares of la Llorona and Baba Yaga.

My one-year-old niece, who looks like dad and shares his temperament, begins to fuss. Dziadek takes out his bandura and croons in a language older than the rest of us can remember,
Ой у гаю,
при Дунаю
Соловей щебече...
Dad cradles his wnuczka in a waltz. Afterward, over dad’s shoulder, mom lulls la Sandunga until la nena falls asleep. Mom and dad wrap her in a dream-patched quilt.

At night, the metiche next door comes to complain about the fiddler that arrived with dziadek and babćia; he’s playing too loud on the roof.
What are you celebrating? The metiche demands. I try to ask someone but I can’t: a hurricane of string riffs propels couples in a gyroscopic dance. Dziadek jumps brazen-faced the POW hopak through a bullet-holed flashback of World War II Europe. Abuelo cheers him on, raising a glass of his favorite spirit: tequila infused with guitar-plucked tears of a thousand mariachi songs. Abuela and babćia clap along as they tend to my niece who is awake from her nap. She watches the mirth, spellbound, and learns to marionette feet, hips, and hands with her polyphonic heartbeat. I look back at the metiche and finally answer,
Another frontier. Would you like to join us?

The metiche squints his scrutiny,
How do you understand each other?
My smile glints like a sterling harmonica,
Have you never read our legends?

We all speak Loss fluently.

as apple pie

Eric Odynocki

Two cultures merge in an American wood. At the bend in the lane dappled bronze under braided boughs stands our Cape Cod where we prepare for guests. Mom and dad smooth linens while my siblings and I decorate the living and dining rooms until the ceilings are kaleidoscopic waves of papel picado, mariószki, and knickknack scarecrows.

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My smile glints like a sterling harmonica,
Have you never read our legends?

We all speak Loss fluently.
studies on asemic interferences
on (and within) concrete structures #5
Federico Federici
Mami brushes past Tío Jaime and creaks open the wooden paneled doors to Abuelita’s dimly lit bedroom. We find my eighty-year-old grandmother snoring in a single bed covered in a yellowed crocheted bedspread she made when she could still see well. She wears her white hair combed back from her forehead in streaks that match the lines on her pale face. It’s strange to see her in bed instead of in the kitchen cooking a feast and giving orders to the housekeepers. And, in between, bitching loudly enough to them about la raza Risa for Beatriz and me to hear. If I’m honest, I think that, among other reasons, is why I love my grandmother, but I can’t say I’ve ever liked her. I’ve never been as close to Abuelita as Marla, who lived here for awhile and would be torn up enough for the both of us to see her like this. I might burn in hell for admitting that, but it’s the truth.

Mami kneels by her mother’s bedside and rubs her arm. “La bendición, Mamita. Soy Digna,” she says, her voice becoming ragged.

My grandmother smiles before opening her eyes. “Mi negra! Dios te bendiga, mija!” Abuelita calls her negra because Mami didn’t inherit Abuelita’s pale skin, blonde hair, or green eyes like some of her other siblings. Or Beatriz. Even Tío Jaime has hazel eyes, Mami has said many times, referring to the blend between Abuelita’s green and my grandfather’s black eyes.

When Abuelita looks at me, her green eyes sparkle in the sunlight that seeps through a crack in the window panel. Green eyes are pretty, but Mami’s dark eyes, which I have too, and her café con leche skin, are beautiful.

“Hola Mamita querida!” says Mami, who by now is full on crying as she stoops to hug my grandmother and kiss the top of her white scalp.

My eyes fall on a framed picture of a glowing blond Christ with a heart full of daggers that sits on Abuelita’s bureau. How anyone could find that picture comforting is beyond me. Christ’s blue eyes almost make me nauseous. My poor uncle. My poor cousin.

After covering Abuelita’s cheeks with kisses and theatrical crying and laughing all at the same time, Mami says we should be getting to our hotel.

“We’re here in Quito this week,” she tells Abuelita. “Next week, the mother of one of Sophia’s classmates invited us to Salinas.”

“What hotel?” he asks. “You must stay at my house. You’re only in Quito one week, so.”

“We have to check into our hotel,” says Mami, knowing he has just told the biggest lie.

“Okay. I can cancel the hotel reservation no problem. I’ll say there’s been an emergency.”


“I can’t believe what I’m hearing. But I guess Mami’s bullshit about Daddy makes Abuelita happy.

“Bueno,” says Mami through tight lips.

“Quieres champá?” he asks my mom as he wipes his own tears with a yellowed handkerchief from his pants pocket. Enough gushing already. Seriously.

“Buena,” says Mami through tight lips.

Tío Jaime throws open the doors of Abuelita’s china closet and removes a chipped wavy champagne glass.

“Aye, this one’s no good. Here, take mine.”

“Buenas,” says Mami and Tío Jaime.

“Señora Isabela, el almuerzo,” says the woman to Abuelita.

“Ah, sí,” says Abuelita, sitting up. “Quien come no muere.” Between spoonfuls of soup, Abuelita asks about Daddy. “Y cómo está el Salvador?”

“I laugh to myself at how my father’s name in Spanish sounds like a country. The housekeeper wipes her chin.

“Buenas,” say Mami and Tío Jaime.

“Y cómo trabajó tan duro todos esos años! Un buen proveedor. Exactamente cómo tú padre.”


“I can’t believe what I’m hearing. But I guess Mami’s bullshit about Daddy makes Abuelita happy.

“Si miu,” Abuelita tells Mami. Then she turns to Tío Jaime. “El tiempo arregla todos.”

Tío Jaime’s eyes fill with tears as he turns and goes back out into the dining room. I don’t know if anyone’s told Abuelita about Beatriz, but it doesn’t matter. Even from her bed, my grandmother has a dagged tongue where Tío Jaime’s concerned. My poor uncle. My poor cousin.

After covering Abuelita’s cheeks with kisses and theatrical crying and laughing all at the same time, Mami says we should be getting to our hotel.

“We’re here in Quito this week,” she tells Abuelita. “Next week, the mother of one of Sophia’s classmates invited us to Salinas.”

“No, gracias,” Mami says to her brother’s extended glass. I know what she’s thinking. Don’t treat me like that.

“You must come to my house,” says Tío Jaime. “Rita would love to see you.”

“You have to check into our hotel,” says Mami, knowing he has just told the biggest lie.

“Señora Isabela, el almuerzo,” says the woman to Abuelita.

“I breathe a heavy breath. This is gonna be rough. Tío Jaime said it won’t be a problem for us to stay at his house, but even he must know that’s not true. I get the feeling he wants a break from the tension over the Beatriz situation and, for all I know, his wife’s bitchiness about it. I’ve never been to Beatriz’s house without her there. After all the heaviness this afternoon, I am dying to see Angie in Salinas.


“I can’t believe what I’m hearing. But I guess Mami’s bullshit about Daddy makes Abuelita happy. 

“Buenas,” says Mami and Tío Jaime.
“Hola, miña,” she says to me. Hello, my daughter is only an expression.

“Hola, Tía.” I lean down to kiss her perfumed cheek.

She has highlighted her dark brown hair with blond streaks in contrast to the purplish blush on her cheekbones and bright magenta lipstick. Tía Rita’s eyes are a shade of amber so similar to Tío Jaime’s that someone who didn’t know better might mistake them for brother and sister. Mami stands behind me and does not stoop to kiss my aunt. Instead, she nods and says, “Hola.”

“Hola,” replies Tía Rita, forcing a smile at Mami.

“Quieres un té?” Tío Jaime asks Mami.

“Bueno,” says Mami before sitting down on the yellow velvet couch.

While my uncle bangs around pots and pans in the kitchen, Mami keeps her eyes focused on the grandfather clock whose pendulum thumps along with my heartbeat as I chew my nails.

After a minute, Mami grits her teeth at me. My aunt breaks the silence.

“Carmelita says my father visits her sometimes,” she says in Spanish, referring to her other daughter, Beatriz’s little sister. “On the day of her First Communion last year, the doorbell rang twice downstairs. I was upstairs showing guests where to leave their coats. My brother went downstairs to see who was at the door, but when he opened the door, there was no one there. Then the doorbell rang again. This time, Carmelita was down in her dress like a little bride. We watched her from the top of the stairs as she opened the door and said, ‘Pase Abuelo.’”

I shiver as I think of the old dead grandfather visiting me that night.

Mami nods and turns her face to the window. “My father visits me too. In dreams, though.”

Tía Rita nods. Abuelito wasn’t too crazy about Rita either. Mostly because she was the source of his thirst for the young. “Does your father come to visit you?” she asks Mami.

Mami nods and turns her face to the window. “My father visits me too. In dreams, though.”

I shiver as I think of the old dead grandfather visiting me that night.

Tía Rita appears in a white armchair in the living room and sips from a gold-rimmed peony-covered teacup. “Mija Marla always remembers your mermelada de naranjilla,” says Mami in Spanish before chomping on the croissant.

The next morning, we find Tío Jaime preparing breakfast in the kitchen.

“Buenos días, miñita,” he calls out to me. The term miñita is painful to hear now that Beatriz is gone.

The sadness in Tío Jaime’s eyes radiates like a fever. I think I have the same one. I walk over to where he’s mixing up a bowl of tutti frutti, the Ecuadorian fruit salad with the Italian name I’ve eaten on every vaca brava your family has ever gone on. I’ve always joked, to pay for repairs, and there’s nobody my age to talk to anymore. And I’m over the “joy” of seeing my grandmother. I can’t take things to talk about like Marla can, so I tell everyone I’ll be in the garden.

As I pass through the white-painted, open air corridor, I find my grandfather’s piano in the corner room behind the white-painted, open air corridor of the garden. I can’t fake things to talk to her about like Marla can, so I tell everyone I’ll be in the garden.

I sit down on the bench before the piano and close my eyes. The garden is not the same. It has changed a lot since Mami and Jaime first decided to let Rita and her family stay. The garden is not the same.

I sit down on the bench before the piano and close my eyes. The garden is not the same. It has changed a lot since Mami and Jaime first decided to let Rita and her family stay. The garden is not the same.

After a few minutes, Tío Jaime appears with a silver tray containing three more peony teacups, a plate of tiny croissants, and a small glass jar of what looks like orange-colored jam.

Mami takes a teacup from the tray and dips the tip of a croissant into the jar. “Miñita Marla always remembers your mermelada de naranjilla,” says Mami in Spanish before chomping on the croissant.

“Ya nunca quiser una mujer sacrificada,” says Tío Jaime, gently rubbing my arm.

“Por qué?” I ask, throwing his hands off me.

“Eh, es que el viento pase por la ventana en esta silla,” he says, darting his eyes. “No quiero que te resfriés.”

“Oh,” is all I say before taking the seat next to Mami on the opposite side of the table.

Tío Jaime doesn’t want me to catch a cold, but that’s not all he’s afraid I’ll “catch.” It’s not like Beatriz has fucking leprosy. It’s bad enough Beatriz has been “quarantined” in the mountains for liking girls. Jaime doesn’t have to get all stupid with me back here in la ciudad de Quito. It’s really getting hard for me to feel bad for him. It sucks to be at the mercy of imbeciles.

I can’t enjoy the warm, sweet bizcocho, or biscuits, and the frothy café con leche in my sunny yellow mug with a barbed knot in my stomach. Maybe Mami shouldn’t have canceled our hotel reservation. Watching her stir the sugar into her coffee, calmly, with her pinky poised in the air, it’s like she’s immune to her family’s drama. Maybe by the time I’m her age, I’ll be able to eat around these people with a clear gut.

“I’ve taken the week off from work so we can enjoy the city together,” Jaime says, spooning some of the tutti frutti into a shallow glass bowl, which he passes to Mami.

“As long as it’s not too much trouble.”

“Of course it isn’t. We could visit Mami again this morning then have lunch in the city. Over the next few days, we could go to La Mitad del Mundo, El Quinche, El Panecillo. Wherever you like.”

“Bueno. As long as Rita lets you go.”

Tío Jaime grunts. “Can you please stop it already?”

Tío Jaime lifts his eyebrows. “Don’t you like the name?” Mami asks me, frowning.

“Yo nunca quiser una mujer sacrificada,” says Tío Jaime, gently grabbing my arm.

“Por qué?” I ask, throwing his hands off me.

“Eh, es que el viento pase por la ventana en esta silla,” he says, darting his eyes. “No quiero que te resfriés.”

Tía Rita tilts her head. “Don’t you like the name?” Mami asks me, frowning.
“Oh I love it,” I tell her, frowning back.

“You’re crazy!”

“It’s nothing. I’m fine,” I say, forcing a smile.

“Mmm-hmm,” she says with narrowed eyes. “Make sure it stays that way. I didn’t spend money on this trip
for you to ruin it con esta manera.”

“I said I’m fine.”

Mami nods and follows Tío Jaime into the restaurant. Inside, we order chuletas au poivre, a platter consisting
of mini-empandadas, roasted pork, boiled hominy, and tostado, which is dry, toasted yellow corn. I wash
down the tightness in my throat with an Inca Cola. A crackling flash of lightning and the rumble of thunder
announce the torrent of rain that falls outside the window. There goes our trip to El Quinche. We’ll have
to go tomorrow. I don’t mind, though. If I can’t cry, let it pour.

Back at the house, we find Tía Rita standing in the middle of the living room taking clothes from piles
on the couch and the ironing board and placing them into an old Tango box that sits opened at her feet.
Tangos were always Beatriz’s and my favorite chocolate-covered cream sandwich cookies that you find at
every outdoor kiosk throughout the city. When I get closer to the box, my mouth drops—it’s filled with
Beatriz’s embroidered blouses, pleated skirts, and wool stockings all stacked tightly together as in a soldier’s
footlocker. Carmelita sits very close to the ironing board. She looks at me suspiciously and says nothing. I
was never close to this tiny Rita-like creature who Beatriz often referred to as her parents’ surprise baby.

“Pero qué estás haciendo?” Tío Jaime asks Rita.

Rita looks at Mami first, then at me before answering Jaime. Hi to you too, Auntie Dear.

“Dando su ropa a la iglesia de San Francisco,” she says, shrugging. She’s giving Beatriz’s clothes away to
the Church of St. Francis. Wow. Can’t even say her name.

“But maybe she’ll need at least a blouse,” he continues in Spanish, spreading his arms.

“She doesn’t need anything more than the uniform they gave her,” says Rita with fury now in her eyes.

“I just don’t understand why you have to give all of her clothes to the church! She’s not dead!”

“Padre Joselito blesses donors in front of the whole congregation at the masses throughout the week.
That way, everyone, especially God Himself, can see we’re decent people.”

Rita curls her magenta lips into a canine sneer.

“Why do we have to prove anything to the congregation?”

“Because they all know your mother! She practically used to live in church when she could still walk! You
thought she went there to pray when all she did was curse me! Curse our marriage and our kids and this
house!”

Tío Jaime’s eye twitches on the right. I wonder if he’s about to cry.

“Now everyone is pointing at me for giving birth to a child with unnatural urges! So I banished my
firstborn child! And your mother must be thrilled! And she will be thrilled till the day she dies. Ah, but she
won’t die like my mother did when I was only twenty-five! She’ll live as long as Abraham. And why? Because
yerba mala nunca mueren! Weeds never die! But you know the sick justice of it all, Jaime?” she screams. “My
unnatural daughter looks just like her!”

“Enough!” he says, throwing Beatriz’s chair down at the table. Its back splits down the middle as though
struck by lightning.

Carmelita screams and jumps off her stool. In that moment, the iron teeters off the board and lands on
her toe. She screams and Tío Jaime immediately scoops her up and rushes her to the kitchen sink. He holds
her foot under the faucet, and runs cold water over it. Rita stands in the doorway wiping tears from her
face with the back of her hand as she watches her husband and daughter. After a few minutes, Carmelita
stops crying. Tío Jaime soothes her with murmuring reassurances and strokes her dark hair before brushing
past Rita in the kitchen doorway. We watch in silence as he sits down on the couch and rocks Carmelita
until, from pain, shock, or fear, she falls asleep.

Rita huffs, kisses Carmelita on the forehead, and hoists the Tango box off the floor. She lugs it to the
doors to the church, but Jaime jumps in her car to block her. “Hey!” She turns to Jaime and pulls the keys
from his ignition. “Let me go, Jaime.” He is too afraid to object. He watches her drive her car to the church.

“Ahora no digo adiós, mi Mamita querida! Solamente doy la bendición!”

“Chau, mi negrita,” says Abuelita, smiling in her bed.

“I lean down and kiss my grandmother’s hand.

“La bendición, Abuelita.”

Then Mami turns to me. “Kiss your abuelita!”

“I grin at my grandmother. I don’t know the next time I’ll see her. We will never be as close as she and
Mario are, but there are things I can’t. This trip has proven that too many times.

When Tío Jaime hugs me, I whisper in his ear to please tell Beatriz I love her. He gives me a hug and
murmurs, “Thank you.”

“He feels better,” he whispers. “But he’s not fine yet.”

The scent of diesel fuel spews from the carburetor pipes of trucks that drive past. After ten minutes, the
bus pulls up. From the cracked open windows, I smell more diesel clouds floating over the tin roof shacks.

We will never be as close as she and

I leave my sunglasses on for the whole bus ride to Salinas, trying to catch the tears before they seep
down my cheeks and Mami yells at me for being ungrateful.

“I just don’t understand why you have to give all of her clothes to the church! She’s not dead!”

“Because they all know your mother! She practically used to live in church when she could still walk! You
thought she went there to pray when all she did was curse me! Curse our marriage and our kids and this
house!”

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past Rita in the kitchen doorway. We watch in silence as he sits down on the couch and rocks Carmelita
until, from pain, shock, or fear, she falls asleep.
be good // Nika Ostby
J’ai commandé une bière,
c’était Tom qui me l’a servi :

T’es Tom ?
Ouais.
C’est un nom plutôt américain.
Ouais.
T’es qui moi ?
Mon nom n’existe pas.
C’est une blague ?
Non, j’ais des États-Unis.
Je le sais
mais
ton nom
cest quoi ?
Ça n’existe pas en français.
Je te donne
un nom français
avec ta bière.
C’est quoi ce nom ?
Ça n’existe.

Wasn’t it then that I stopped existing in any language?
Dime, the bright light at the end of the tunnel is it really the end, or just another beginning. Another birth canal. A different ending.

It could say I lost her all at once pero eso no es cierto. La perdi poco a poco. Sus ojos fueron cambiando, oscureciendo. Me la quitaron entre llantos y suspiros. Que vaina.

My innocence started in blankets, and I am fairly certain she ended in blankets as well. I imagine the humidity, the contractions, her body yelling it was time for my birth, the beads of sweat on Mami's brow. On the day I was born, when the body said "Flow, ya es hora," I swam against it. Instead of going down the birth canal, I held tight to the comfort of my mother's heartbeat, pressing my little body upwards against the inside of her ribs. That was my first act of rebellion or the solidifying of my innocence, I am still trying to understand. After hours of labor, the concerned doctors made a clean incision, taking me from a place I did not want to leave, a first gasp of air, a first cry, and then blankets.

I lost my innocence the way you lose your favorite yellow crayon, it's overused wrapper torn back, worn down wax slowly disappearing each time she was used. Her skin peeled back like a mango, her soft sweet meat pierced by sharp teeth, her life dripping down chins.

Papi left to Puerto Rico when I was five. He married a nice Puerto Rican lady and lived in New York before he left. I remember drinking hot chocolate with him and making a 500-piece Lion King Puzzle on the dining room table. We would wrap the couch cushions in a blanket and make a bed for my visit. Sometimes I would walk alongside his 6 foot 3 frame chewing on the Toffifay candy that was a staple of our visits. If he was taking me home late, he would carry me like the Raggedy Ann doll in the Enchanted Square cartoon I used to watch on repeat on VHS. When Papi left, anxiety was a poison that grew deep in my marrow. I learned the language of, "Please, don't leave me." I lost her in pieces. The way you lose socks, or strands of hair, or even baby teeth, slowly over time, until they are gone, replaced by an unrecognizable otherness.

The thing about truths is that most of the time people do not want to hear them. I was thirteen-years old when I sat on my Tia Yeya's bed, fumbling the edge of the blanket between thumb and forefinger, words escaping my lips as though running from fire, chest rising up and down like smoke signals, eyes blaring fire alarms, detailing how my cousin would push my head under the blanket and between legs. Maybe that's why my tia didn't believe me. Because the thing about truths is that most of the time people do not want to hear them.

When Papa died, I flew to my grandparents house with my family. A three-bedroom home in La Sabana. When my viejito's body arrived, I only remember the hustle and screams of everyone directing the men to bring his casket into the house headfirst and to take him out of the house feet-first after the wake. My grandfather was laid to rest in a mausoleum, a small city of my dead ancestors, buildings made of tomb on top of tomb. I remember my uncles banging at the casket with a hammer before they shut Papa's body away with a concrete slab. My mother and grandmother’s screams still echo in my dreams. I couldn't stay the nueve dias de luto, because when you are second-generation transplant in New York, mourning is a privilege that most cannot afford. But the five days I was there, I spent being held by family and friends in our village, ugly crying until my eyes swelled like balloons. I could only see the world behind a veil of tears.

When my Titi Miriam passed away two years later, my heart shattered into pieces that I cannot put back together the same way. It was in December. I had held her hand the day before she passed, and I couldn't bring myself to go to her funeral. Instead, I took the day off, stayed home, played Hector Lavoe and Whitney Houston, her favorites, and cried while cooking too much food for no one in particular.
deconstructed poem
Dona Mayoora

deconstructed bilingual poem
Dona Mayoora
She relished the feel of the myrtle blossom in her fingers
έχουσα θαλλὸν μυρσίνης ἐτέρπετο
(or maybe it was rose?)
ῥοδῆς τε καλὸν ἄνθος, ἡ δὲ οἱ κόμη
as her hair cascaded down her bare shoulders
ὤμους κατεσκίαζε καὶ μετάφρενα.
and down to the small of her back.
It won’t stop raining
and here I am, tangled
in the things I never told you.

Your absence plagues these memories,
hides itself in the bush,
chews air that smells of dirt
upon return.

The moon also falls with the rain.
I make the most of it by interrogating her.
I ask her if you grew out your hair,
if you keep biting the paper,
if you squeeze the pillow thinking of my arms.

It pours out slowly.
The promises trickling from her mouth.
The wet crystals.
Your eyes in each puddle.

It cleared up.
But inside me
it still rains . . .
Mexican food in Paris. You told me you’d never tasted yucca, but you realized you just knew it by a different name: *mandioca*. To you, a flower for cooking.

“I promise, you’ll love Mexican food.”

“You always love me?”

tears tainted the tortilla, picante too much for your palate, a shade off color. Terrified of the Atlantic.

I promised I could, not that I would.

Later, rats by the Seine. We watched them run by our feet in the cold. We sat there, mesmerized by their tininess.

“How do you pronounce *La Seine* in English?”

“I say it like Sin.”

“Abba said it like Sane.”

You told me a joke about a business man who swam in the river because he was *in-Seine*. It made sense to me.

The moon emptying itself into the water. We poured saliva between mouths on the Pont Saint-Michel, you said:

“Eu tô assustado que nós nos perderemos.”

“I’m sorry you didn’t like the Mexican food.”

I wondered how those tears tasted.
La línea estatal  Un estado sublime  
A sublime stage  and the sensation the worldmound has  
y la sensación de que el mundo ha  quedado deliciosamente excluido  
been deliciously excluded  
Al lado  horror y belleza  
separados  All added  
horror and beauty  set off  
por el agua jabonosa  y dos charcos  soapy water  depth charges  
de refrescos diluidos  con vinagre  in soda diluted coned by vinegar  
Nos servían el café tibio  No one served us nibs  
y aunque  of coffee and de  
fiereamos jodidos  furry-moss-hoed and fucked  
no lo aceptábamos  we wouldn't have accepted.  
De un lado amarillo  y del otro  On one laid yellow and on the other as well  
también  entres los perros  de allá y de acá  between parrots from there and from here  
pero imposible  yet impossible  
Siempre el miedo  Always the fear  
a caer dentro del hueco y no saber de coiling into the wax and not knowing  
subirse de nuevo  how to subvert again  
El original signo  Original sin  of elegance under the spell  
ha perdido su significado  has lost its signified  
en esta torre de marfil  in this ivory tower  
Pero el mundo  Pears in the postcard world  
de la tarjeta postal posee  possesses their horror proper  
su horror propio:  el egoísmo aterrador  
de la exclusión  the terrifying egoism  
excludes  

EDITORS’ NOTE: 
The following visual translation is meant to be viewed as a GIF image. 
Flip back and forth between the following two page-spreads to experience the work as intended.
Pain between two walls is no longer pain. Let’s put the day and the night between us. All that unites and separates us. So much forgetting described and evaded, such spinning. An invisible star leaves its orbit, an orbit that was or is the memory. On the shaded side, memory grows and devours itself, its brilliance is closed and empty like a broken cabinet that held something once blazing.

The surprising touch of one’s own hand. The otherness of me. This exists. Unexplored place of intimate flesh. Another earth inside the earth. The body’s solitude unfolded in the dark.

The child looked at himself in the mirror and saw a monster. Such mysteries light makes. In glass one sees birth or death. So the old visions oxidize.

El niño se miró al espejo y vio que era un monstruo. Místicos de la luz. Según el cristal en que se mira nacer o morir. Las viejas imagines se oxidan.

Peeling a fruit one is swamped by the mystery of flesh. Teeth scrape a dark continent, the senses discover the fragility of a boundary. Feel an image, listen to blood. Hear its hallowed perfume.

Eco tras eco desenterrar la infancia. Esperar con paciencia que el recuerdo destile en nuestro oído su jerga de aguas negras.

Peeling a fruit one is swamped by the mystery of flesh. Teeth scrape a dark continent, the senses discover the fragility of a boundary. Feel an image, listen to blood. Hear its hallowed perfume.

El dolor entre dos paredes ya no es el dolor. Ponemos el día y la noche entre nosotros. Todo nos une y nos separa. Tanto olvido es otra vez descubierto, evitarle, girar en redondo. Estrella invisible fuera de órbita. Órbita que fue o es la memoria. Lado de sombra, la memoria crece y se devora, y la luz está cerrada y vacía como un estuche inútil donde alguna vez algo brilló hasta consumirse.

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Eco tras eco desenterrar la infancia. Esperar con paciencia que el recuerdo destile en nuestro oído su jerga de aguas negras.
I'm looking for my tongue. I've never seen it. It's the prize in a scavenger hunt, in a circle. Start in Kafka's maze, in Prague. Go through Celan's shibboleth, called from the smoke of Germany into the ruins of Spain. Next, Ginsberg's obscene Communist exultation runs its fingers over all the privates of America, peering into Chicago and its privatization of bodies and mud where Borzutzky writes life into a body made of the mud, and the mud-sunk bodies. This body made of mud with other bodies inside it carries you. Is this “die Fremde der Heimat?”

Sunk in the mud of symbols, each hanging from an umlaut, my tongue searches all over the century for its mother, bartered for petrol and a vehicle to search for its mother, leafs through barracks of mothers in search of its mother. Speaking is a subtractive procedure I cannot do until I've pulled each tongue from my mouth, catalogued, tagged, pinned and mounted it. This is anathema to Yiddish consciousness, a stream crowded with tongues fish-wriggling tongues babbling in all tongues, leaping as only the unlabeled can leap.

I hoped to have a heart-to-heart with my tongue, that awkward Jewish animal living under the roof of my mouth, but the symbols I keep shoveling in turn out to be another obsolete currency like the deutschmark. Deutsch marks my tongue, motherless. FürHappyacht.

Some of us remember before our tongues were cut out. These ones can make their mouth shape like how it did before, and sometimes others of us can even decipher them. Mine was first cut out before I was born. I learned to fashion new tongues out of various materials but they were clumsy. I got by, mostly by having symbols falling out of my mouth, which I saved. When my great-grandfather died I didn't know how to say his name aloud.

A dry papier-mâché tongue clicks against my twenty-eight teeth like typewriter keys. Teeth for original letters, and then the vowels, and the mutations that only live in Yiddish. No crowns, a jaw cannot accommodate an entire Torah scroll. Sometimes people tried to give back the tongues but they were broken or they were holy or it was one tongue we had to take turns speaking with. I wish I had a tongue to tell you about the times it was cut out, and the currency they used as a blade. They? We. We cut out our tongues and the tongues of our children. They became currency, we traded them for more Fremde. Our children want to return their Fremde for a refund, to get their tongues back, but there aren't enough left for everyone and there's no telling which came from which mouth. They jumble together. Tongues: tied, muted and limp. Missing. Broken.

Our children want to untie them, pull at the knots, put them back into their mouths. They try to speak with the tongues their parents never came back for, nearly understand each other.

Some fallen ayng, in love with a tongue, almost believe it to be theirs.
Tamil. Taa mihl. Thamizh...T(h)amil?
my mother's tongue,
the language by which
she was given to my father.
The word I am still trying to understand
As I search within it.

Kuṭumpam...Kudumpam. Koo dumpam... Ka...
Broken words echo with memories lost
trying to come together
creating a new whole,
fractured pieces of jigsaw families,
pounded into place.

Nādu...Naduuu...Eelam...Kaṭṭā.
Sites
where I began,
was found,
lost,
reclaimed.
Spaces
where life is lived
in between the margins of
identities.

Enai...En...NO...Nā...Nāτā...Nee?
Pieces of me
keep getting lost in you.
Leaving me with times
when I only see myself
in opposition to you,
where I find me,
in your omissions.

Tamil...Thamizh? English? Tamilish
my forgotten tongue
Created by the middle,
words to capture two hearts,
a history told in one voice,
ar ticulate in different symbols.
Scripts and symbols,
trying to tell me
the same story.

*Thamizh: There is a debate about the correct phonetical spelling with the “th” and “zh” being the main point of debate (Thanks, Sathya)*
*Kuṭumpa: Family*
*Nādu: Country*
*Kaṭṭā: Canada (Tamil Pronunciation)*
*Eelam: Eelam is a proposed independent state that Tamil is in Sri Lanka*
*Enai: Me*
*En: My*
*Nā: I*
*Nee: You*
*Tamilish: Tamil typed in English*
Y aquel mar, que se mueve a vuestra lado,
Es la promesa no cumplida de una
Resurrección.  
Alfonsina Storni

O primeiro susto se deu ao verificar as suas anotações de leitura num velho volume de Alfonsina Storni. Volume que ele, com toda a certeza, jamais havia lido. Folhando as páginas amarelecidas e bolorentas, constatou que aquelas eram:

The first fright happened when he verified his reading notes in an old volume of Alfonsina Storni. Volume that he, with all certainty, had never read. Flipping through the yellowed and mouldy pages, he noticed that, undoubtedly, those seen through the glass of the reading room were not the same. A problem now that he, as a reader of notes with the titbits he noticed only underneath rare lamplight, would have to solve in moments to come.

But he couldn't deny having savored it. Word by word. There it was: his letter, his peculiar way of demarcating relevant passages, his obtuse exclamation points, all very well spread out through many pages. Still dizzy and frightened,

Alone in the middle of the dusty office, he imagined, smiling, that time had put into work in his mind, already very tired from the pastures of word, an un-reading machine. Like an invisible erasure that, gradually, started to wipe off older pages, these, pausing on the borders of the pages, could not escape the inheritance of notes. "Every book has a good side.

Two months later, when leaving a doctor's office, he remembered such findings. It was a true consolation to rescue it there, in the middle of a traffic jam and the terrible heat at the end of that afternoon. He searched for a piece of paper.

Foi quando, brincando de si para si, teve a súbita certeza de que o tempo guardava, na boca sempre escassa de viventes, o sabor inominável das primeiras coisas. Pouco importam os motivos. Haveria de pulsar com renovado brilho,

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Diálogos de un escritor jubilado
translated by Desiree Jung (original text by Iacry Anderson Freitas)
studies on asemic interferences
on (and within) concrete structures #7
Federico Federici

studies on asemic interferences
on (and within) concrete structures #8
Federico Federici
guts for lunch: tragicomedy in three acts
translated by David Shames

GUTS FOR LUNCH
Tragicomedy in three acts
Original work by Tina Escaja and collabor@tors
based on the short story “Bola Luna” by Tina Escaja
Translated from Spanish by David Shames

Minimalist set. Three spaces within a town market. The location of the three spaces will rotate or alternate throughout the play:

1. Stall within an indoor marketplace displaying artistic collaborations for sale instead of meat, poultry or offal. Hanging from above are works of art which will be given to “customers” as payment in exchange for their troubles, disclosed in either poetry or prose. The artwork alludes to the theme of the play: guts for lunch, de tripas corazón, and the art is on sale for the audience, so the price corresponding to each piece will be listed in the program. Depending on the offer, there can be two or three copies of each work. Among the hanging works of art and on the counter will be reproductions of Goya’s black paintings, with an emphasis on relevant selections from “Disasters of War” (Desastres de la guerra) and the well-known “Saturn Devouring his Son” (Saturno devorando a su hijo). There also could be a few of the illustrations from the classic, Alice in Wonderland, like the first two from chapter IV (Giant Alice inside the house; and trying to catch the rabbit).

2. Dressing room, with a chair to leave clothes on and a full length mirror.

3. Small bar with a couple stools, if possible swivel stools.

CHARACTERS
GREGORIA (GOYA): Young store clerk at a poultry, tripe and offal shop.
JAIME: Bar waiter
MOTHER: Alicia’s mother. Middle age.
IRENE: Young store clerk at a fish shop.
EXTRA 1
EXTRA 2
EXTRA 3

The extras will play different roles throughout the play: acolytes, customers, voices, Jaime, etc.

ACT I
Scene 1.

Dressing room. Goya stands upright, like a doll, she’s half dressed. She is facing the audience, her monologue is directed at them. Two acolytes dressed in black arrive from different parts of the stage and proceed to dress her in her work uniform: red sweater and white apron. Then her clogs. Her street clothes sit folded on the chair. The mirror behind her captures a reflection of the entire action. The movements are meticulous and measured and evoke the ritual of dressing of the bullfighters before they enter the ring. Goya speaks while they dress her.

GOYA: Another morning. Another sunrise. Everything repeated, disjointed, absolutely identical. The world repeated and circular. The circle gets smaller, squeezing me, and I’m left without air, with my abdomen hard and exposed like an absurd insect lying on its back, without air. They call me Gregoria, or Goya if you want, it was my grandmother’s name and the name of my grandmother’s grandmother. Everything repeated and identical like a bad dream. They call me Goya and I sell tripe and guts, guts for lunch, de tripas corazón. (Listing) Carcasses for making stock, rabbits for roasting, lamb heads with a dazed look in their eyes, veal liver, tripe, prairie oysters, lamb fries, ham and cheese rolls, savory pastries filled of prunes, raisins, pine nuts and bacon, pineapple and peach filling, fillings of dreams in bulk, small portions of hope, everything and corpuses. (Aloudly) This waking up early makes one talk crazy…It makes you an idiot, it makes you detached and ridiculous like a mantororita, like an unwelcome mess. (Emphatically) Mensch muss seinen Schlaf haben! People need to sleep, they need a break from their troubles and inner turmoil which always triumph over their spirit, especially if you don’t have much, if you’re unable to obtain or find any. Spirit lost among the cornflowers, in the streets, in the litter-strewn corners, in literal debts and in the other kind, in the lack of options, in the sort of demands that they make of you without asking, demands that are dead ends, no way out. A whole generation of shortages and debts, a generation of unresolved troubles, of unemployment, of stagnation. And here I am, having barely slept, another morning. Another sunrise. Everything repeated, disjointed, absolutely identical. (Lecturing again) “Lack of sleep can compromise your immune system.” Wikipedia says so, and also says that astronauts experience imbalances from the lack of natural light, which affects their senses, their circadian rhythms, and they get delirious (She slowly lifts one of her legs, as if she was in space, but without changing her position, trying in vain to move forward on the scarred landscape of the moon. (Repeating) “And I venture out from the ship to the limitless space while the dust/smelling of shattered metal, of exploitive will, and the redundant night reflect each other.” This is a poem. I think it’s called “Infinite and woman.” First one leg then the other, but always staying in the same place, never making it anywhere else. This impossible stubbornness of being and never leaving yourself. Especially if you are looking out at an inert landscape through space helmet. Yeah, that, a lack of dreams or delusions, maybe lucidity. I don’t know how long I’ve been trapped inside this time capsule, without light, without dreams, without a way out, waiting for my turn.

How strange. The weirdest thing (Goya pulls back her hair and touches the visibly part of her shoulder blades). What’s happened to me? I don’t remember seeing this before. It’s something that has nothing to do with me. Or at least that’s what I think. The truth is that it’s pretty. It looks like…a little feather, small, tidescent, with shades of turquoise blue, beautiful to tell you the truth, but totally foreign to my skin, until today. (She

60

61
continues to check the area and explores the upper part of her back with her fingers.) Hur, yes, seems like, seems like there are more, little feathers. Feathers of a pigeon, (excited) of a bird of paradise… (with some alarm) or of a hen, yes, of a chicken… Curiouser and curiouser. The most… curious thing.

Goya continues to examine herself until an analyst brings her a pair of kitchen shears, a big and heavy instrument. Goya turns to the audience again and observes the shears.

Here is my sin and my destiny. My center of gravity, and it doesn’t even belong to me. The intersection of the two scissor blades seems to mock me. Here I am again. Another identical morning. The world repeated and circular, scarred on the inside. Everything (pause) yours.

Scene 2.

Goya turns toward the store, which lights up on. The dressing room disappears into darkness. Goya stands behind the counter and begins organizing the objects and artwork, cutting threads and assessing photos and images.

Voice 1: (shouting) Bon diaaa

Voice 2: Buenos días……

Voice 3: Good morning

GOYA: (Addressing the voices) Good morning! (To the audience, continuing to organize and works.) Well, the truth is that they are all the same, good mornings and bad mornings, mediocre ones or splendid ones. They are all equivalent in their sense of expectation. The fallacy of a ritual. (Suddenly she has a notion and the shouts) Let’s have a bad morning. A morning that offers us unexplored paths, infinite holes that bring you nowhere, of the two scissor blades seems to mock me. Here I am again. Another identical morning. The world repeated and circular, scarred on the inside. Everything (pause) yours.

Goya continues to examine herself until an acolyte brings her a pair of kitchen shears, a big and heavy instrument. Goya observes her for a moment. She continues her tasks.

MOTHER: What are you talking about? You need to think less. You and your… fantasies. Go and prepare Señora Martínez’s order. At least you don’t have to deal with that type of creature. These animals remind me a lot of people and their rituals. Here, when you open their egos, it’s like an omen: beautiful, round, yellow; that’s a good sign; blackish, deformed, that means catastrophe. Without their skin chickens look like children. The heart of a lamb is like a human heart, you know? Sometimes the schools ask us for hearts, or all of the organ meat: heart, liver, lungs you can inflate if you blow through the trachea, they expand and are alive again for an instant. Everyone breathing in unison in science class, like a mute symphony…

IRENE: …or a squadron of soldiers, identical and skinned. Ah, quiet. I don’t know why I just thought of this all of the sudden, but it makes me so scared Goya, what you’re saying makes me think about Fernando.

GOYA: Yeah, that is sad. (She continues her tasks.) And here I am cutting this rabbit’s head, Señora Martínez’s order. At least you don’t have to deal with that type of creature. These animals remind me a lot of people and their rituals. Here, when you open their egos, it’s like an omen: beautiful, round, yellow; that’s a good sign; blackish, deformed, that means catastrophe. Without their skin chickens look like children. The heart of a lamb is like a human heart, you know? Sometimes the schools ask us for hearts, or all of the organ meat: heart, liver, lungs you can inflate if you blow through the trachea, they expand and are alive again for an instant. Everyone breathing in unison in science class, like a mute symphony…

IRENE: Of course. I don’t know why you don’t like churches. They’re beautiful.

GOYA: Yes, they really are beautiful, just like this market is and then it gets filled with leisurely tourists and their cameras. But on the inside the waste piles up.

IRENE: I don’t know what to think, Goya. It’s been days since I last heard from Fernando, and that is pretty strange. Tonight I’m supposed to Skype with him, just like every Thursday. If anything has happened to him, I dunno, I’m capable of anything... I can’t take this anymore. I’m counting the days, Goya, I’m counting the hours until this bad dream is over. Fernando doesn’t even care about the army. He just did it because there was no other way out… If anything happens to him…
GOYA: Come on, Irene, stop worrying. Look at your name. You know your name means “Peace”? I read it somewhere the other day. Or on Wikipedia. The whole world lives off Wikipedia. It’s like living off of one of the capsules that you bury and open again in a hundred years.

IRENE: What about my middle name, my maternal grandma’s name? She was named Daniela.

GOYA: Um I’m not sure. I’ll look it up.

IRENE: And Goya, what does Goya mean?

GOYA: Well, it comes from Gregoria, which means something like “vigilant” or “alert.” But Goya, Goya doesn’t mean anything…

IRENE: Well that’s too bad.

GOYA: No, no, it’s better like this, then I can invent whatever I want and remain…vigilant. (She smiles). It’s almost, almost liberating…I don’t have to depend on a name.

IRENE: Well, that depends on what it means. “Peace” is pretty. Hopefully it’s a good sign.

GOYA: Sure. (Goya gestures toward the hen split open on the counter. Let’s take a look at these eggs…Look: they’re beautiful, round and perfect, with their little red and blue veins. Good sign. Although you only deal with fish. (Daydreaming, she stops working for a moment.) That makes me think of the sea. Manta rays, turtles, sea-bream…

IRENE: Squid, tuna, cheap sardines, paella shrimp wrapped in brown paper, (in a confiding voice), and weighing them on a loaded scale…

GOYA: (Complicit, gesturing toward her mother.) Our scale is loaded, too…

MOTHER: What a bunch of nonsense. Go on, Irene, time to go, Pesetas is almost here and yet here you are chitchatting. And you, Goya, hurry up.

IRENE: Where are you going? Goya stops her for one more moment, and addresses her friend with concern.

GOYA: Irene…How’s it going with…Pesetas?

Irene, visibly uncomfortable with the question, turns and leaves.

Scene 3.

Goya and her mother continue organizing the artwork. Customers will come and stop in front of the cashier and they will discuss their troubles and requests in various forms – dialogue, narrative or poetry. Their payment will be one of the pieces of art.

CUSTOMER 1: (Poem by Lina Zerón, México. “The Bitch’s Liver”)

A woman approaches dressed rather eccentrically, her hair all messy. She tiptoes up and positions herself behind the counter, next to Goya and her mother, both of whom continue working as if the woman wasn’t there. The customer gesticulates as she recites her poem, moving with dramatic gestures like an actress in a silent film.

On tiptoes, I keep my balance, my eyes peer out from behind the counter and I see her. I hate weapons but I would sharpen an enormous knife with pleasure (the grils it from the counter) a killer butcher’s knife, a barrio witch-hunter’s knife. I order a piece of lung from an unfaithful man, “the owner breathes with those,” they tell me. I get pissed, I demand the testicles of a cursed pig, “she eats those too.” I smile, below the ruins of her face, behind the greasy window I see the fake breasts of the woman who dismembers the chickens, the woman who picks at the customers’ meat and sits down to eat ox tongue.

New she’s at the storefront, always addressing the audience.

I raise my voice, I don’t recognize myself. I’d never lost my cool this bad before. I scream that if the patrona devours everything else may they give to me the liver of the bitches’ daughter.

CUSTOMER 1 leaves.

CUSTOMER 2: (Story by David Shames, United States)

(to clerk) Bet you don’t see that many people come in looking for twenty kilos of cow heart. It’s not just for me. I work for a restaurant. Chichi Peruvian joint called La Mar over on Main. It’s owned by Gastón Acurio – basically the Peruvian Mario Batali but with maybe a little more street cred, I’m told.

(to audience) I ended up in this city the same way anyone does. I was seduced. I always loved food, ate the weirdest, most adventurous shit when I travelled and was always bugging people for recipes so I could test them out in my kitchen. Feeling unmoored in those post-university days, I must have been an easy mark for the city to sink its hooks into, woozy off its perfume of high end gastronomy.

My friend Tommy already had a job at La Mar and he called me up to convince me to come down.
Come on, man, he said. You like food.

True, I said.

This kind of kitchen is where the best of the best go to cut their teeth, he said. And Peruvian chow is on the up and up. Duck confit, duck confit is passé.

Good money? I asked.

You’ll be making sweet bread, said Tommy, and then he hung up.

Total miscommunication. I thought he said sweet bread, like good dough, nice money. The pay was shit. He had actually said **anticuchos**, stomach, entrails, heart, that kind of thing. They started me off making **anticuchos**, these beautiful medallions of cow heart that are marinated, cooked *a la plancha* and served kebab style. Swear to god, take one bite and you’ll wonder why you ever shelled out top dollar for filet. Tender. Spicy. Tast as powerful as anything you’ll ever feel.

Of course, this story’s not about **anticuchos**. It’s about a girl. I’d left Katie up in my hometown when I made my big city move. We’d had a good thing going before. On the same wavelength. Only person I could talk to about how I felt about stuff without getting uncomfortable. I figured if she tagged along, cool, we’d be together, and if not, well, the train rolls onward.

So why did I bolt without giving her notice?

I could say the city seduced me, and that’d be a nice little story. There’d be nice color to that story if I went on about the brutal contrasts of the work, of three stars and big money appetizers in the front of the house, while I was literally elbow deep in viscera, surrounded by real men and women, working class people, immigrants, exiles, people who haven’t had half the leg up I’ve had and always asked me what the fuck Tommy and I were doing as line cooks. I could say all that. But the truth is I left hometown because I was scared shitless of giving myself totally to someone. Scared of losing my personal identity and being defined not as an individual but as an offshoot of her, my smarter, more beautiful, more charismatic better half.

Katie didn’t get rid of me right away. There were weekend trips. Buses that smelled like fast food and hand sanitizer. There were phone calls where I told her the separation was poisoning me slowly and I couldn’t leave yet. There were fights.

Still she got rid of me. Slowly. No reality TV drama. It was little things. Microscopic things that packed an unexpected wallop in their punches, like they had lead in their gloves.

For example. In the morning I’m an early riser. I’d make coffee. I’d leave her cup to get lukewarm the way she likes it, sip mine as the sun came up. Then I’d shower. I take long hot showers. She’d wake up and chug her coffee. While I was still showering she’d come into the bathroom to pee. We’d talk to each other over the hiss of water. She would always leave without flushing. Just her thoughtful nature. She didn’t want to mess with the water pressure while I was showering. Imagine my surprise when she started flushing all of the sudden. Imagine my surprise when what hurt the most was not a scalding blast from the shower or her absent thoughtfulness. It was something more primal than that. I missed the smell of coffee in her urine. I missed that she didn’t feel comfortable enough around me anymore to leave her piss in my presence.

The day she called me to tell me I shouldn’t come up anymore, I knew that I was in my early 20s and already I had made the biggest mistake of my life.

You’re probably thinking, what have I done to change?

Nothing.

Still making **anticuchos**.

Maybe that’s my penance. Skewering hearts all day long.

*(takes bag of cow hearts/art pieces from the clerk)*

Tommy always says the thing about food is that it’s a metaphor. A spiritual guide. Life lessons.

If food is a metaphor, sometimes it’s a metaphor that laughs in your face.

He leaves.

CUSTOMER 3: *(Mónica Franco, Spain-Panama. Poem “That Old Store”)*

A melancholic woman approaches the counter. When she gets there, she recites her poem, facing the audience.

Standing before the counter you and I divided the sad spoils of our love.

She turns to Goya. Quarter and a half. Please. Wrapped up to go.

A quarter of disappointment.

A half of desolation.

My liver slaps the counter with the sloshing sound of a fish without a shadow. Carved up and greyish.

No life left in ’em.

I see your lungs hanging from a hook below the cold white light. The gentle breath of my voice enters but cannot inflate them. Apathetic and sad they are nothing more than pipe without a piper.

The implacable knife of time tears apart and slices.

Today the butterflies that once gave life to that stomach fly away. They slip through a crack in the shop window, and the ones that pass by the street look curiously at us. There, standing, both of us in that old store.

Butterflies flying and blood mixed with tears trickling out from under the counter. Goya gives a bloody parcel to the customer.

She leaves.

Fade to blackout.

You're probably thinking, what have I done to change?

Nothing.

Still making **anticuchos**.

Maybe that’s my penance. Skewering hearts all day long.

*(takes bag of cow hearts/art pieces from the clerk)*

Tommy always says the thing about food is that it’s a metaphor. A spiritual guide. Life lessons.

If food is a metaphor, sometimes it’s a metaphor that laughs in your face.

He leaves.
Scene 1.

At the bar. Sitting on a swivel stool, her back to the audience, Goya is having a coffee. There are two small wings coming out of her back, nothing pretty, but with iridescent black colors like a pigeon, mixed in with some brilliant turquoise feathers. The wings provoke a sensation of discomfort and anxiety. Jaime, a young waiter who is in love with Goya, is behind the bar. His elbow is planted on the bar and he is bracing himself against his arm, his chin cupped in his hand, as he contemplates Goya with an enormous and absent-minded smile.

JAIME: What’s up with you, Goya? You promised to tell me what’s going on in your life, remember?

GOYA: There’s nothing to tell. I wish I could tell you that I’ve got a long and sad story, but that’s not even true. My reality is simple and repetitive, an identical circle that, I don’t know, Jaime, I don’t know what I am in this very moment. Right now I feel tiny and stooped, without anything to grab on to…

JAIME: You always say the weirdest things. Here, drink your coffee and maybe you won’t feel like you’re about to collapse anymore.

GOYA: Or maybe I’ll just get smaller and disappear, which wouldn’t be such a bad thing. Tell me, Jaime, who are you? What are you thinking about? What’s your story?

JAIME: Why does it matter? I’m a simple waiter. Waiters don’t have stories.

GOYA: Neither do clerks at the butcher’s shop, of “select” byproducts, as if there were different kinds of actions or heartbeats. But here we are, talking, existing for a few minutes or for however long our performance lasts. We stop being anonymous. Perhaps we’re not what we appear to be. Perhaps we are variations of snakes or squid.

JAIME: Your mother might be a snake. To me, you’re an angel (affectionately), a divine and winged creature.

GOYA: More likely I’m just a strange bird, as my wings don’t look very transcendent. They look pretty ordinary.

JAIME: Well there’s nothing else to do but get used to it all.

GOYA: Get used to it? But why? For what? I admit life can be monotonous and repetitive, but I think you gotta find a way to get out of this time capsule, to escape once and for all…What street do I need to take to get out of here, Jaime?

JAIME: Where are you trying to go?

GOYA: I don’t care where.
JAIME: Then it doesn't matter which street you take. The problem is, I think, that paradise doesn't exist, and in the garden everything is just appearances, and it's always “off with everyone’s head!”

GOYA: Heads can’t end up rolling if nobody has one. We’re anonymous, remember.

JAIME: You’ve got one, and a pretty one at that. (In love again, with his enormous and dopey grin).

GOYA: Nothing is what it seems. I’ll either turn out to be a harpy or a chicken tossed in a pot. I have no other option than to be obedient and mindless day after day, in this obscene and repetitive ritual. Day after day, stupefied from getting up for work every day. Everything in my life blurs together and by the end I can’t figure out where the world starts and where I stop. And the moral of the story is lost on me, if everything is circular, and paradise doesn’t exist, like you said. Maybe you know what the moral is?

JAIME: The what is?

GOYA: The moral.

JAIME: Everything has a moral, if only you can find it...Figure out the solution to the madness. You just have to wait until the performance is over.

Goya’s mother passes by heading toward the store.

JAIME: Speaking of heads rolling, here comes your mother. Maybe it’d be better if we talked later.

Goya finishes her coffee in one gulp and runs to the store. There are already two ladies waiting outside, talking about the soap opera from the previous afternoon. While Goya and her mother help them, a third customer approaches and listens to their conversation.

CUSTOMER 1: You won’t believe what happened yesterday on the soap…

CUSTOMER 2: What happened? Tell me, I had to bring the kids to soccer and didn’t have time to watch.

CUSTOMER 1: Turns out that when Mariana found out that Adela is pregnant…

CUSTOMER 2: Wait, Adela is pregnant? That’s wild! I always thought there was a little more to her than meets the eye….Turning toward Goya. Grab me some wings, won’t you, honey.

GOYA: Of course, ma’am. How many would you like?

CUSTOMER 1: I’m not sure (impatient for the conversation about the soap to continue), however many, like a dozen or so. And give me something, too, that’ll go with rice.

CUSTOMER 2: Well, you’ll see, who could’ve expected that?

CUSTOMER 1: Such a shame, the way these young girls turn out. They don’t know to get treated with respect. That’s why they always end up…

CUSTOMER 2: You are totally right, in my day a girl…

CUSTOMER 3: Back in our day girls got married once they got themselves knocked up, right? We didn’t even know where babies came from.

CUSTOMER 2: (A bit taken aback by the interruption) I mean, you might be right, but everything was lovelier, more romantic. Now it’s just whim bam thank you ma’am.

CUSTOMER 3: But at least they know what they’re getting into. We never had anything, they married us off to the first boy who touched us like we were merchandise…right? Girls today are lucky. Although they can still get hurt, they can still get mixed up in plenty of other problems, what with the crisis and lack of options.

CUSTOMER 1: I guess you’re right. My niece had to go to another country because here, with her degrees and everything, they wouldn’t even give her a job at McDonalds.

CUSTOMER 2: What’s her degree in?

CUSTOMER 1: Civil engineering.

CUSTOMER 2: My daughter graduated with a business degree, and she still living at my house and mooching off me. And she graduated with honors and everything.

CUSTOMER 1: I guess you’re right. My niece had to go to another country because here, with her degrees and everything, they wouldn’t even give her a job at McDonalds.

CUSTOMER 2: And just think of all that nasty food people stuff their faces with over there. Goya, get me some lamb fries and cut them into medallions for me.

CUSTOMER 3: It must be weird to live in an alien place, like living on another planet. Struggling to explain yourself and get people to acknowledge you. Seeing the world through a space helmet. Like Goya, here, selling tripe. Guts for lunch. She’s gotta grin and bear it. (To Goya). There’s nothing else you can do, right, girl?

GOYA: Certainly…Her mother casts a reproachful gaze in her direction.

Goya gives the parchment-wrapped meat to the customer and charges her. Irene passes by the store with a gloomy expression. Goya calls to her. Customer 2 has also already left, and Goya’s mother assists the third customer.

GOYA: Irene!
Irene approaches.

GOYA: Irene, you ok? Is it... Pesetas?

IRENE: No, no it's... Fernando.

GOYA: Did something happen to him? Didn't you talk to him last night?

IRENE: No, I couldn't. He wasn't online. I get so nervous, Goya, if something happened to him, I dunno, I dunno what I would do.

GOYA: Irene, calm down, please, there hasn't been anything in the news. Everything is ok. It's gotta be complicated to live in such a different place, and he probably needs more time to get used to everything. What did he say to you in his last messages?

IRENE: I dunno; he sounded depressed. He told me about men in their tents and women covered in turquoise burkas, like he was trapped in somebody else's dream. He's just out there, out of place, feeling weird, without really understanding what's going on.

GOYA: Did you say burka?

IRENE: Yeah, burka, a lot of women wear them.

GOYA: (Daydreaming) It would be so strange to only see life through a screen, through a series of holes, only feeling the fabric on your sweaty face. The taste of salt. The world filtered through a screen, avoiding scars so you don't trip and fall. Another one of life's traps.

IRENE: (As if talking to herself.) Fernando told me things weren't going well, that he didn't think what he was seeing was fair, and that he couldn't adjust: nights were so cold and mornings were scorching hot. A lunar landscape, extinct, scarred from so many battles. (To Goya.) I'm gonna go crazy if he doesn't get in touch with me soon, Goya. If something happens to him, I don't know what I'm gonna do. We had so many plans... With his leave permit... I just can't, I can't do it... I need to step outside for a moment and see if he sent me a message.

GOYA: Irene, don't worry, don't torture yourself...(Wanting to cheer her up). Look, I'm going to open up this hen, let's see what she augurs for us. By the way, yesterday I looked up your middle name and found what it means. It's actually pretty surprising the amount of imagination that goes into thinking up the meanings of names. I looked up Fernando's name, which, of course, means "daring," "bold," and Daniela, Daniela means... Irene has already left by the time Goya makes a face of deep anguish and unease, her eyes locked on the imaginary content of the deformed innards of the chicken... "justice."

CUSTOMER 3: (Referring to Irene, who has just left) I feel bad for her. I didn't know her boyfriend was in the military, so far away. On top of everything else, mind you. That's the last thing she needs. Her boss, that Pesetas, is a bad person. He makes life impossible for the girls who work at his store. I won't shop there because the way he treats them is an embarrassment. And that rancid fish he sells...I'm surprised she even has a minute to come over here, the poor thing. Who know what other awful things he does to those girls... anyways... (To Goya's mother) How much do I owe you?

MOTHER: Look, maybe we should all just mind our own business. Every house is a world, and everyone knows how best to handle their own. Girls today, as you know... they need to be treated with an iron fist.

CUSTOMER 3: Oh sure, as if these girls were somebody's property. And if it was just an “iron fist” anyways. Maybe I should make a formal complaint about that bad man.

MOTHER: And to whom are you going to complain about him? Tell me? One girl goes away and 100 more take her place. Those girls are here because they want to be, aren't they? And who knows, they might even be looking for...

CUSTOMER 3: If they're here, it's because they have no other options. With all the unemployment. There's no solution. Even these girls' mothers offer them up for marriage like lambs to the slaughter. There is no compassion. There is no decency.

MOTHER: Here, give me 50 and I'll give you change.

CUSTOMER 3: What a travesty. Here you go, God bless you. (She leaves).

MOTHER: (to herself) Go back to work.

Scene 2.

CUSTOMER 4: (Story by Marta Zabaleta, Argentina-London. Adaptation by Tina Escaja.) Mother and little daughter stop in front of the store.

MOTHER: It'll be Christmas Eve soon, Yanina, tell me what you're in the mood for.

DAUGHTER: I want to eat those sausages.

MOTHER: What sausages?

Daughter points to a product in the case.

DAUGHTER: Those little balls right there. They look like truffles.

MOTHER: Those little balls are...natural.

DAUGHTER: Those little balls are...natural.

MOTHER: What sausages?

Daughter points to a product in the case.

DAUGHTER: Those little balls are...natural.

MOTHER: What are you talking about?

DAUGHTER: Umm...they aren't "made," they come...from an animal. They are the testicles of an animal. My father liked to eat them.
DAUGHTER: Ugh, that’s gross.

MOTHER: Honestly, I never tried bull testicles before, nor pig, lamb or goat. Only chicken ones. But your grandfather ate them all, and it was totally natural, same goes for eyes, tongue, tripe, guts, brains, cow brains and brains from other animals. And he found it all delicious. The real difficulty was to find someone who knew how to cook them.

The mother addresses the audience. The little girl is still busy looking at the products in the case. That’s probably why I always saw him eat offal (“poor-people meat,” as my mother used to say, throwing it to the dogs) during the rodeos at the big ranches in the Belgrano region, in the south of the Santa Fe Province, Argentina.

Never at home.

On those rodeo Sundays there was everything. Spirited horses ridden by young strapping men who held tight against the beasts’ furious bucking, and sometimes they even made it to the end of the show still mounted on their saddles. The young calf getting branded, burned on the shoulder blade with a red hot iron bearing the owner’s sign. The festivities were accompanied by the cow organ meats which were grilled with the hide still on, with beef empanadas, white bread and plenty of red wine with cold seltzer. It was illegal to sell Coca Cola in that Province as it was officially classified as an unhealthy beverage. There were also horse races. And an old exquisitely-dressed woman who spoke badly of Evita, the first lady. For the ladies of the ranch estates, she was a dreadful, indecent woman.

Meanwhile, next to where the commotion was taking place, they’d be cooking at least one piece of hide and other meat, on a grill. That is the most exquisite part of a cow: the meat that is attached to the hide, when you eat it right off the skin, without thinking about plates or napkins, when it’s really hot. That’s the essential part.

The mother buys the testicles. Goya gives them to her in the form of a work of art, and the mother and daughter leave.

CUSTOMER 5: (Poem by Karim Quiroga, Colombia. “Wolf.”)

A stranger arrogantly approaches the counter. Elegant yet somewhat disheveled at the same time, his clothes stained with what appears to be blood, he also seems to have a tail and perhaps wolf ears as well, but all of these attributes are understated and he is discreet, half animal half person.

To the audience. He speaks and gestures arrogantly and with a touch of intuitive, predatory aggression.

I admire your acting.
Wolf who hides his fangs
and your insatiable hunger —
He makes a threatening animalistic gesture.

Polite at the dinner table
On the verge of devouring a delicious bite.
He licks his lips.

There you are in fine form at the feast
Telling cowboy stories
Only your voice can be heard. The audience raves. And claps, and demands more.

Excited, bearing imaginary cheers.
They celebrate the occurrence of love
They deliver you

To the daughter
Who, with dignity and grace, is advanced in years.
So ready for what she deserves. And there you are, taking advantage of Innocence. Senselessness.

They deliver you to the daughter. And to her dowry.

The family inheritance. The end of the problems at your home
He makes a scatological gesture.
And in your stomach. Maybe you’ll keep on chasing your prey here and there
You’ll come back to the house full, your muzzle spotted
“Where were you?” she asks
“I fell,” you reply, “into a pool of blood.”

He picks up the parcel from the cashier and leaves.

CUSTOMER 6: (Poem by María Ángeles Pérez López, Spain)

An actor approaches the audience.

The Butcher Sharpens his Knife

He spreads out the dirty butcher’s chart,
the word animal and its fear,
its syllables cut with precision
as if you could carve
a noun (pig, chicken, cow)
without blood splattering the walls.

As if you could be thinking about
the sweet contours of a sphere,
about the love of numbers and the cosmos
while you plunge in the blade
create incision and harmony in the meat.

Salt scabs over that wound
and so hunger preserves the torment
of seeking refuge in the clean split,
in the blade of metal and the paper
that catches the spray in every trade
and is the decapitation of the innocent.

The hand trembles, the hand that is supposed to be exact.
If writing “butcher.” If “innocent.”

The actor leaves.
Scene 3.

Irene crosses the stage with an enormous knife. She seems lost in thought and frazzled. Goya looks at her, horrified, and calls to her.

GOYA: Irene!! Irene!!

Goya's mother forces her to keep working. Goya shews.

Fade to black.

ACT III

Scene 1.

Dressing room. Goya, facing the audience, is once again being ritualistically dressed by the acolytes. When Goya describes the way Pesetas died, shadow puppets begin to form on the other side of the stage and depict the tragedy in its most elemental and violent components, culminating with the shadow of Irene's body, hanging. Goya's movements reflect the events she describes and synchronize at times with the shadow puppets, giving off an impression of simultaneity and identification.

At sound as I heard the scream, I dropped my scissors and ran to the loading dock behind the market. I climbed the stairs two steps at a time until I reached the basement and its awful stench. I pushed through the small crowd that had gathered there until I came to her bare feet. Irene was swaying gently, hanging from an enormous meat hook to which she had tied one of the cords they use to transport the boxes. The boxes filled with fish she had used to climb up to the hook lay toppled at her feet. The scattered and trampled sardines kept their silver sheen against the reddish river flowing from Pesetas' blind and eviscerated body.

She pauses.

I read later on that a couple soldiers from Fernando's unit had gone into a village and murdered a bunch of farmers and shepherds. Beforehand, they had methodically separated the women from the men, raped the women and young girls after removing their burkas and then brought them to the commanding officer, their blood absorbed by the roughness in a satellite of scars. Fernando was one of them, but maybe he couldn't bring himself to follow suit because of his conscience and his part in the conflict ended right then and there. He was the only casualty in his unit that day.

And now here I am again, in this perfect and circular ritual, at the exact point where I am heeled into the time capsule, that simulacrum, rotting and gelatinous like Pesetas' eyes in Irene's hand as she swung gently and alone in the marine breeze. Eyes of a burnt out moon, cesspool eyes, frog eyes embedded in my memory. And now here I am, (Reciting. She moves heavily, as if on the moon, in such a way that the acolytes escort her to the center of the stage). "Trying to balance,/the first notion./Oscillating between being and reflection./ Barely looking around, weightless and immovable in my space suit,/perhaps the center of the theorem, perhaps the contour of this illusory cartography that names and programs us." (She stops, emphatic, and addresses the audience.) "La verité qui cache qu'il n'y en a pas." Truth hides what does not exist.

(Aloudly) Getting up early every day, it makes you insane....It makes you an idiot, it makes you detached and ridiculous like a marionette, like an inopportune beetle. Every generation a generation of shortcomings and debts, a generation of unresolved troubles, of unemployment, of stagnation.

(She recites again while the acolytes again escort her to the center of the stage, Goya labors to lift her feet, and then the other, as if she were on the moon.) "And I am floating, trying to balance,/the first inflection,/the origin and memory. And now here I am again, in this perfect and circular ritual, at the exact point where I am heeled into the time capsule, that simulacrum, rotting and gelatinous like Pesetas' eyes in Irene's hand as she swung gently and alone in the marine breeze. Eyes of a burnt out moon, cesspool eyes, frog eyes embedded in my memory. And now here I am, (Reciting. She moves heavily, as if on the moon, in such a way that the acolytes escort her to the center of the stage). "Trying to balance,/the first notion./Oscillating between being and reflection./ Barely looking around, weightless and immovable in my space suit,/perhaps the center of the theorem, perhaps the contour of this illusory cartography that names and programs us." (She stops, emphatic, and addresses the audience.) "La verité qui cache qu'il n'y en a pas." Truth hides what does not exist.

FIN
PRAE
“On Jan. 19, the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Liz Throssell, said that, ‘between 29 November and 22 December, at least 22 people were killed in the context of post-electoral protests — among them, 21 civilians and one police officer.’” — CNN

You collect the beer bottles drunk last night to use them for the Molotov cocktails of tomorrow. No — you don’t. Of course you don’t.

You know people who do. Some personally, some through Facebook, some personally who know someone through Facebook, and some through Facebook who know someone personally.

Do you wish you were the sort of person who assembles Molotov cocktails from the beer bottles of last night? To throw them at the Tegucigalpa Marriott and Presidential Palace, screaming, “¡Revolución! ¡Capitalistas! ¡Gringos, fuera de mi país!” Perhaps you would to have your picture taken in the midst of the revolution? Yes, you can see it: smoke from the tear gas, you stand in the middle wearing a red bandana and a Ché Guevara shirt, one fist in the air and the other holding a cloth infused with vinegar to your mouth — because you’ve been told that’s how you breathe when they throw tear gas at the protesters. Yes, that would be a great profile picture with many, many likes. Except you could never post that, because you have your whole family on Facebook. They would disown you. Maybe, if you were part of the starving population, you could do stuff like Molotov cocktails, because there would be nothing from which to be disowned.

Maybe if you were Alexia, your friend who’s your age but poor, it would be tangible to blow up the Tegucigalpa Marriott and Presidential Palace. Except Alexia, your friend who’s your age and pobre, can’t leave her house because of her six-month-old baby. A baby that vomits all day, and even her best diapers look like green, contaminated pudding.

Just last week she discovered the special, weird-smelling, expensive formula she’s been buying for the baby’s reflux is a watered-down formula of the lowest quality, which can make the baby sicker — but that’s the only kind of quality that is shipped to this country. You think that’s a great reason for Alexia to throw a Molotov cocktail to the Presidential Palace and scream, “¡REVOLUCIÓN!” except Alexia would scream, “¡REVOLUCIÓN!” because she doesn’t know English, that’s the language of the rich.

You promised you would teach her English someday, but you’re afraid of going to Alexia’s neighborhood — because she told you the group of boys on her street are the sort of boys who throw Molotov cocktails at the Tegucigalpa Marriott. Once, as she walked to buy some formula for her sick baby, the police stopped her and asked where the plaza was located, and she pretended she didn’t know. Because if she had told them, the boys, who assemble Molotov cocktails and sell mota in the plaza, would’ve killed her, put her body in a plastic bag, and threw her in a dumpster for the street dogs and rats to eat. Could you lie if the police asked you where the plaza is located? How could you? The police never ask anything in your neighborhood, because no one sells marijuana there.

So you will never teach English to Alexia or throw a Molotov cocktail or have your picture taken in the revolution — because the people you love will ask, “What could you possibly have to complain about?”

Not watered-down baby formula. No, not that.
Was it too hot when you finally arrived, Uncle Al-bert? Were you in your winter clothing? Did you sleep naked? Did you have any spare clothes, did you have any money? Did you go to DF right away, or did you stay a few months, looking at that blue sea that makes you cry? I cleaned houses in California, what would they have thought at home. Hungry exiles cannot afford shame or fear. Only at night, when we touch our bellies and think of sea foam.

1 Great-uncle Al-bert was an exiled Catalan. After the Spanish Civil War, he spent time in a French concentration camp. The Mexican President, Lazaro Cárdenas, extended an invitation to the refugees that lost the war and were suffering in France. Uncle Al-bert never returned to Catalunya.
In the crest of the wave I float,
Como gaivota no ar antes do mergulho.
And I always wanted to be a seagull, spread my feathers
e voar. The wave comes,
I rise, a onda vai, I dive. A lullaby and I am a baby
in my mother’s lap. Agua salgada suspende
tudo no frio líquido do nada and I have not yet
learned how to swim. Nothing é como antes, when I believed I
could fly. Hoje é o amanhã
de ontem and I still don’t know how blue involves
the air of the night. Eu imagino-me pequena, a little girl
who loved the sea. Sentada à beira da rocha, thoughts would
come and go full as the tide.
A lua prenha de prata, an ocean of dreams. Then the future
era feito de ouro, no more thoughts and ideas to give
away. Agora mesmo, ora cresida, life embraces me as a shroud. All
is fluid, tudo é nada, enquanto perco-me
na aurora dourada, minha estrada to the center
of a cloud.
Edu Barreto is a poet, graphic designer, and university professor based in Asunción, Paraguay. His work has appeared online and in various print journals, both at the national and international level. As an artist, he works toward creating a bridge between communities, and encourages people to read his work alongside other South American writers, such as those from Asunción and Montevideo.

Korbin Jones is a senior at Northwest Missouri State University studying creative writing, publishing, and Spanish. In the fall, he will pursue his Master of Fine Arts in Poetry at the University of Kansas with full funding. His original works and translations have appeared in Noctua Review, Polaris, The Vehicle, and Missouri's Best Emerging Poets, among others.

Eli Binkovitz is a Jewish Chicago poet with a BA in German studies from Oberlin college and contributions in a 2007 translation of Thomas Brasch's collection of poems, Was Ich Mir Wünsche (“What I Wish For Myself”) from German into English. Their poems have appeared in Rising Phoenix Review, Vagabond City Lit, and WWWM Every Day.

Kimberly Brincklow is a native of Dunedin Florida and received her BA in Visual Arts with a minor in Anthropology at Eckerd College in 2018. Following a successful Senior Thesis Show, Dreaming in Color at the Cobb Gallery, Kimberly continues to enter local shows. She hopes to become a full time painter as she applies to graduate school. Her choice of medium is acrylic painting, the limits of which she continues to explore. She is also a Registered Nurse who recognizes the value of art as being therapeutic and therefore enjoys creating paintings that elevate the spirits of those who view her work. She has three married children and lives with her husband and youngest son. Her artwork is held in private collections.

Ana Brotas is a Portuguese interdisciplinary artist that studied Fine Art at both Central Saint Martins and Goldsmiths University of London. Her work has been exhibited internationally and awarded at Camberwell's and Deptford's Visual Arts Festivals. Currently, she is coordinating the MAE art project.

Simon Brown is a self-taught poet and translator from the territory of the federally unrecognized Passamaquoddy Nation in southwestern New Brunswick, Canada. His French and English-language texts have been presented in conceptual pieces, collaborative performances, poetry collections and magazines such as The Equalizer, Vallum, Watts, Mathius and Crux Deperditionis. As a translator, he has adapted texts by Erin Robinsonson, Angela Carr, Danielle LaFrance and Steve Savage, among others. The collection Grande pausée (with Maude Pilon, swift, Montréal) appeared in 2017 and the chapbook Oustro-flâques (Vanloo, Marseille) is forthcoming in 2018.

Mark Budman was born in the former Soviet Union and speaks English with an accent. His writing appeared in Fire Poets, PEN, American Scholar, Huffington Post, World Literature Today, Daily Science Fiction, Mississippi Review, Virginia Quarterly, The London Magazine (UK), McSweeney's, Omega Review, Another Chicago, Sunwather, Southeast Review, Mid-American Review, Painted Bride Quarterly, Short Fiction (UK), and elsewhere. He is the publisher of the flash fiction magazine Vested Review. His novel My Life at First Try was published by Counterclock Press. He co-edited flash fiction anthologies from Ooligan Press and Persea Books/Norton.

Cristina DeSouza is a poet and physician, living in Vermont. She is originally from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and writes both in English and in Portuguese. She has had several poems published both in the US and in Brazil and in 2011 had a book of poem released by Vidragus Publishing Company in Brazil. Her email address for contact is colo2309@gmail.com.

Woody Dismukes is a poet, musician and author living in Jackson Heights, Queens. He is Counselor/Advocate for ECDO, Inc's High School Youth Program and has taught poetry at University Settlement's Creative Center in New York City. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in The Aurora, New Quantum Literary and Haiku juice.


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Addison Hoggard is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Asheville, holding degrees in Creative Writing/English and French. He is interested in exploring spaces of linguistic liminality and intersectionality.

Desirée Jung has published translations, fiction and poetry in Esquire, The Dirty Goat, Modern Poetry in Translation, and many others (for more information, see: www.desireejung.com). She has also participated in several artist residencies including the Banff Centre, in Canada, Valparaiso, in Spain, and Martha’s Vineyard in the US. Her book of short stories Despes Submersus is published by Chiado Editora. She has a film degree from Vancouver Film School as well as an MFA in Creative Writing and a PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of British Columbia.

Manville Kanagasabapathy completed a poem a day challenge in 2016, where she successfully wrote 366 poems, and was one the winners of City of Toronto’s My City, My Six, 6-word story contest. The piece, Mother Tongue, is about feeling of alienation that can accompany immigrant children, belonging to both cultures and neither.

R. Keith is the author of Chicken Scratch (EYEmEYE books), Background (inquieto press), How to design a hail storm (Another new calligraphy), Signature Move (Knives Forks and Spoons) and re:verbs (Bareback editions), as well as six chapbooks. His writing appears in Canadian and international literary journals.

Stephanie Laterza’s short fiction has appeared in The Nottingham Review, Writing Raw, Literary Mama, and Akashic Books. Her poetry has been published in Omnique Sismon, Newtown Literary, San Francisco Post and Hope, Literary Mama, and Menicus Magazine. Her legal thriller, The Boulevard Trial, has been acclaimed most recently for its, “Vivid Descriptions of Women’s Varied Experiences.”

Nick Leibee is a realist oil painter currently living in DeLand, FL with his wife and two children. He is a graduate of Stetson University, having studied painting under professor Gary Bolding. Nick’s major artistic influences are 19th century trompe l’oeil and still-life artists, as well as early 20th century surrealists and contemporary pop-surrealists.

KA Masters invites you to read her debut novel, The Morning Tree, published by Indie Gypsy. Follow her on Goodreads as K_A_Masters.
Irène Mathieu is a pediatrician, writer, and public health researcher. She is the 2016 winner of the Bob Kaufman Book Prize and Yemassee Journal’s Poetry Prize, and author of the book oregony (Trembling Pillow Press, 2017) and poetry chapbook the galaxy of origins (dancing girl press & studio, 2014). Irène has received fellowships from the Fullbright Program and the Callaloo Creative Writing Workshop. She is a poetry book reviewer for Margie Magazine, an editor for the Journal of Internal Medicine’s humanities section, and a contributing author on the Global Health Hub blog. Irène holds a PhD in African and African American Studies from the University of Pennsylvania, and is the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship to the University of Amsterdam. Her work appears in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Review of Books, Muzzle Magazine, and ZYZZYVA. She is an advocate for animal rights and environmental justice. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, photography, and reading. You can follow her on Instagram @irenemathieu.

Jorge Galván Flores is an emerging writer of poetry and fiction from New York. He is a first generation American who grew up in a multicultural household: his mother is Mexican and his father was Ukrainian & Jewish. Eric’s work has been published in Acentos Review and is forthcoming in the Westminster Review. He has published an article on León Felipe and Jorge Luis Borges’ translations of Walt Whitman in the peer-reviewed journal Obra/Artifact. Eric’s work has been published in Acentos Review and is forthcoming in the Westminster Review.

Lisa Allen Ortiz is a poet and author of Guide to the Excluído which won the 2016 Perugia Press Prize last year. Her poems have appeared in The Best New Poets 2013 and been featured on Verso Daily. She lived in Peru for two years where she began translating Blanca Varela and made the acquaintance of her family. Find more information about her at: lisallenortiz.com.

Lisa Done Moore is writer and musician working as a Physician Assistant in trauma and acute care surgery in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. She is an MFA candidate enrolled in the University of British Columbia’s Creative Writing graduate program and has an interest in weird fiction, horror, true crime and medical narratives. Her short fiction is published in the Canadian literary/art subscription service Parnassus.

Eric Odyocki is an emerging writer of poetry and fiction from New York. He is a first generation American who grew up in a multicultural household: his mother is Mexican and his father was Ukrainian & Jewish. Eric’s work has been published in Acentos Review and is forthcoming in the Westminster Review.


David Shames is a literary translator and PhD student in Hispanic Languages and Literature at Boston University. He has published fiction in outlets such as Vantage Point and Liquid Imagination, and in 2012 he was awarded first prize in the annual short story contest held by Short Fiction Journal published by the University of Plymouth, UK. David is also a practicing translator and a scholar of translation studies, and he has published an article on Leon Felipe and Jorge Luis Borges’ translations of Walt Whitman in the peer-reviewed journal Obra/Artifact.

Alysha Sidhu lives in Chicago where she makes art.

Patrick Sylvain is a poet, writer, social critic, and photographer. He is published in several scholarly and creative anthologies, journals and reviews, and edited collections, including The Idea of Haïtic Rethinking Crisis and Development, edited by Millery Polyné. Sylvain received his B.A. Political Science & Social-Psychology from the University of Massachusetts, Ed.M. from Harvard University Graduate School of Education (Conant Fellow), and MFA at Boston University (Robert Pinsky Global Fellow). He has taught at Brown (affiliated with Africana Studies), UMass/Boston (Anthropology) and Harvard (AAAS). Sylvain is pursuing a Ph.D. in English at Brandeis University (Shirle Dorothy Robbins Creative Writing Prize Fellow). Forthcoming poetry chapbook: Underworlds (Central Square Press, 2018); and a book of essays (in Spring 2019).

Drake Truber embraces the influence of substantial drawing. He has exhibited in various gallery and museum group shows including The Rochester Contemporary Art Center, Fort Wayne Museum of Art, and the Department of Education. His interest in languages nurtured the creation of two video games: Koine Creyg (Flash-based), teaching ancient Greek vocabulary, and Vindac (Unity-based), a Latin preposition game. Vindac was in the Independent Game Festival and is now available on the Apple App Store. Truber is illustrating his second children’s book and draws live caricature portraits at events. He is currently studying entertainment illustration at Art Center College of Design. Follow him on Instagram and Twitter.

Viviane Vives is a Fullbright scholar for Artistic Studies (Tisch School Of The Arts, NYU) Viviane’s recent publications are poetry by Southeast Missouri University Press, a short story—Todo es de Color—in LiteraMagazine of London, and a ten page story in The Write Launch: “In the oblique and dreamlike style of Marguerite Duras, Viviane Vives weaves memories of her ancestors and place—Nice, Barcelona, Perth, New South Wales, Texas—in ‘Dialogues With Your Notebook,’ a stunning literary achievement.”

Bessie F. Zaldívar is a creative writer from Tegucigalpa, Honduras. She is currently getting her undergraduate degree in Creative Writing and Psychology at Lindenwood University in Belleville, Illinois. Your Place in the Revolution is inspired by the recent events in Honduras, specifically the current president’s illegal re-election, voter fraud, and the death of over 40 protesters.
To our readers who challenge us to create these pages,

To our contributing authors and artists who give these pages meaning,

To our family and friends who support us during the long hours,

To Stetson’s MFA of the Americas’ faculty & visiting artists who inspire us,
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    Dr. Teresa Carmody (Director of the MFA of the Americas),

And to our founding editors who created this opportunity,
    Rebecca Renner, Jared Alan Smith, & Lucianna Chixaro Ramos,

Thank you from the current Obra/Artifact staff:

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<td>Jacklyn Gion</td>
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<td>Shelby Smotherman</td>
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<td>Carley Fockler</td>
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<td>Tony Pizzo</td>
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Tu es génial!