

# RAINY DAY



Hello *Rainy Day* reader,

It's been a long year. In recent months, for many it's become tempting to believe that art has less of a place, or that there are more important things to focus on. But art has always been the struggle and the struggle has always been art. The most important mission of *Rainy Day* has been fighting for poetry, and art, and great literature. The power of literature and art to move and inspire is one of the most potent forces in the world.

Because of that, I want to thank you for opening this copy of *Rainy Day*. Writers from all across the country, some who have come here from across the world, have poured their hard work into the product you're holding now (isn't it beautiful?). This magazine, which has been so dear to me during my time as a student, is a space that protects what is, in my view, the good in the world: expression, passion, and art. The examination of existence is a revolutionary act. Poetry is important. Art is important. Words matter.

I'd like to particularly thank Kitty Xie and Alexis Ferguson for their work on this issue, and their friendship—without them to consult, it would probably have been less “Rainy Day,” and more “Typhoon.” I also want to thank the entire *Rainy Day* staff, just for existing and loving literature and coming to read poetry and prose with me every week. You're all the best. Thank you for putting up with me.

And with that, I sign off from my final issue of *Rainy Day*. Working on this magazine has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my college career and I'm so grateful for the opportunity to provide you with such wonderful undergraduate work.

Best wishes, keep the faith, and happy reading!

Ally Findley

# RAINY DAY

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# IN EVERY MOMENT AEOLUS

Zoë Clark

Despairing asparagus,  
 lost drops of dead aspersions - their casters long past-  
 and the sweat work in thrushing fields  
 and that broken violin  
 and the names of dogs who have died  
     flow  
         here all distilled  
                 over the apparatus of your mouth  
                 inhaling  
                 before release.

## I'M FROM GEORGIA

Stephanie Niu

yellow grasses bend,  
bow to the california sun-  
the smile of the city  
boasting its sunny skies and cloudless days  
is wide,  
cracked, lips parched and bleeding.

the earth craves rain-  
its sides pocked with aching crevices, the  
sere foothills golden  
burnt  
and charring.

a city that weeps for water,  
celebrates the smatterings of  
mist that occasionally fall from the sky.

people are scared of thunder,  
stay home  
when the streets become slick.

the city  
and all the others  
shrivel, carcasses sticky  
while back home  
it floods.

## GRAPEFRUIT LUNGS

Stephanie Niu

I breathe in citrus- exhale  
 acerbic  
 tartly glistening strings of pulp  
 plump with acid.  
 entrails of fruit:  
 rindless, verge-of-bursting  
 organs woven of water and stinging  
 pink. they squeeze a desperate rhythm.

to know your own diaphragm-  
 to trace the striations of exposed wetness  
 tight and thin-skinned against each other.  
 to imagine the skin-stinging  
 bittersweet nectar that your breaths are made of  
 is fearful as the first bite of caustic-sweet flesh.

can I bear to bite my own words,  
 drink in my breaths?

I am afraid  
 of my lips burning.

## NOTICING FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT WE ARE FRIENDS

Julia Freels

“I love lavender.”

And there it is, a sprig tucked  
between door and doorjamb.

I can imagine her:

Bent at the waist between classes.  
Sunlight’s combing through her hair.  
She’s bowed over like a lowercase n  
because she saw it there  
dripping from its stem.

She thought of me.

She wrapped her fingers around its neck  
and she carried it home to me.

I lean in close and breathe:

Soapy and young,  
Bright,  
Fuzzy like a baby blanket.

A little sour.

She thought of me.



## CWM

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### Sam Weyen

Milo Priest liked to use big words. In fact, he revered big words. But he didn't use them for attention or prestige. No, sir. He used them for himself, proudly identifying as a lexophile and a sesquipedalian. Besides, big words were not for simple tasks like impressing friends. Big words were for describing complicated things and complicated people. Milo was one such complicated person. Big words were good to him. He would not risk the relationship with a sloppy malaprop or pretentious catachresis.

Milo Priest memorized two new words every single day. For example: On January 1st, he learned "lexophile" (n.—a lover of words) and "sesquipedalian" (n.—one who uses long, polysyllabic words). On January 10th, he learned "malaprop" (n.—the mistaken use of a word in place of a similar-sounding one) and "catachresis" (n. the straining of words or use of words incorrectly).

Milo Priest had different ways of choosing his two words. Most mornings, he checked the front page of Dictionary.com and Merriam-Webster for their Word-of-the-Day, but other times he'd seek out his own depending on the day's events. On January 15th he learned callipygian (adj.—having an ample, heart-shaped bottom) and cupidity (n.—excessive, eager desire). He was hitting puberty, blushing vermilion like a petal for a particular girl he'd seen reading a John Green book while she worked the counter at the Kiwi Market. On January 16th, he learned "dulcet" (adj.—sweet, sugary) and "vellichor" (n.—the strange wistfulness of used bookstores). These two were inspired by a regular trip with his Mom and sister to Anderson's Bookstore, which was indeed strange and wistful. It was the most wonderful tradition: Each Tuesday night, Milo's mother would take Milo and Cassy to look at the new displays and to munch on the free chocolate Anderson kept at the register. Milo remembered piles of books stacked chaotically like pancakes and slathered with a syrup of dust. He remembered the feeling of melted chocolates making little snow angels on his tongue, liquefying quickly and falling to his shirt, lava hot, like chocolate Lucifers. Anderson's Bookstore was indelible to Milo, which made the words he memorized there similarly unforgettable. Around this time in January, Milo's mom had to cancel their next few trips to Anderson's. Something below her armpit was bothering her and she thought it'd be best to make a few appointments with Dr. Washburn. He could only do Tuesdays. On January 22nd Milo Priest learned crestfallen (adj.—dejected; dispirited; discouraged) and presentiment (n.—a feeling or impression that something is about to happen, especially something evil; foreboding).

Milo Priest's favorite words were abbey, gezellig, plethora, smultronställe, tuqburni,

vellichor, and cwm—an assortment of words from several languages. The last word “cwm” is English—the only word in the English language without a vowel. Can you imagine carrying on without something so essential? Milo admired cwm’s bravery.

Milo Priest repeated his favorite words to himself when he was upset. It brought him a comfort like ambrosia or an electric blanket on blue-cold toes. This was a trick Mom had taught him when he was young and she still had many lessons left to give: He was crying over his first paper-cut, a thin line of red peeking through the skin of his small page-turning finger. She pulled him close, “There, there Milo. Shhhhhhhh. Just think all of the little things that make you happy, and nothing else.” He was maybe five or six. A smaller him with long black bangs and curly eyelashes like semi-circles. Semi-circles wet with tears and sprinkling messily like confetti. When Mom gave this advice, he found some strength and carefully listed all of his favorite things:

1. Mommy
2. Reading with Mommy
3. Books
4. Anderson’s Bookstore
5. Chocolate

Milo Priest was smiling by the time he finished the list. As he got older he continued this ritual when in the face of trouble, his content evolving from “Mommy” to a glossary of special, favorite words: *abbey. gezellig. plethora. smultronställe. tuqburni. vellichor. cwm.* And the pain would go on its way. *abbey. gezellig. plethora. smultronställe. tuqburni. vellichor. cwm.* Organized in a familiar alphabetical order, except he saved cwm for last. He liked the way it was pronounced. “Koom.” Like the hum of a tuning fork. “Koom.” Meaning valley or depression. “Koom.” The world is in harmony.

Milo Priest’s birthday was on February 2nd. On February 2nd, he turned fourteen. More importantly, he learned “farcical” (adj.—absurd, ridiculous) and “verdure” (n.—a greenery). These words were discovered in one of his presents: *The Great Redwall Feast*, a picture book about mice, moles, and their adventures in Redwall Abbey. It was a special edition to a children’s series that his mom would read to him and Cassy late at night when they were little and bundled in bedsheets like tiny mummies. He’d seen this book at Anderson’s many times when they visited before they stopped going, but he was too embarrassed to buy a children’s book as a teenager. Mom knew him so well.

Milo Priest’s favorite birthday present came on February 3rd. That was when the impossible happened: Milo Priest almost forgot to learn his two words. Almost. He had never missed a day of vocabulary training, but he was trapped in a coma of

pages and luxurious paragraphs from his growing birthday library. It was by brute luck that he glanced at the wall clock beyond the wooden footboard of his bed. Time's smitten hands were almost holding each other at the 12. Uh-oh! He jumped up and scrambled to his special, green dictionary under the side table to memorize *something* before the day was complete. "Calumny." Noun. Meaning slander. Good. That's one. He flipped with urgency to a random page to discover the next. "Cwm." "Noun. A bowl-shaped, steep-walled mountain valley or basin carved by glaciation, often containing a small, round lake at its trough." He pictured a valley like the imprint of a breast in the beach from a sunbather. His mouth wanted to make a shape that said "wow" or "beautiful," but he couldn't bring himself to form a vowel. *There is no vowel.* What a perfect birthday present.

Milo Priest began letting fate choose his words right around the time his Mom started using the word "Dr. Washburn" in every conversation. Milo let fate choose his words by letting his finger fall randomly on a page in his green dictionary of lovely, assorted letters. On February 28th, his finger found "mendacity" (n.—the tendency to lie) and "dissimulate" (n.—to conceal under a feigned appearance). It was fitting because Milo's mom hadn't told the family how bad it was yet. She hadn't told them, but she would eventually so it was okay, right? Well done, Fates.

Milo Priest had a list of least favorite words, too. Most kids in his classes at school thought "moist" (adj.—moderately or slightly wet) belonged on the list, but Milo didn't mind words that sloshed and sloshed in the mouth. No. His least favorite words were his least favorite because they were full of hollowness. *Ellipsism*—n. the sadness that you'll never be able to know how history will turn out. *Monachopsis*—n. the subtle but persistent feeling of being out of place. *Kenopsia*—n. the eerie, forlorn atmosphere of a place that's usually bustling with people but is now abandoned and quiet. *Alschmerz*—n. weariness with the same problems and faults that one has always dealt with. *Exulans*—n. the tendency to give up trying to talk about an experience because people are unable to relate. And the worst of all: *Lump*—a compact mass of a substance, especially one without a definite or regular shape. With the exception of the last, these words were from an online forum: The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows. For this reason they were slang. They were made up. They were posted, invented by other humans searching for ways to groan and scream and say "Owl!" But imaginary words are just as powerful as the real ones. Accordingly, he did not repeat these words to himself in any situation, fearing them the way one fears demons they do not believe in. Instead, these words bounced along in his head like a pinball, creating morbid fantasies, here or there, of painful little details: a recently empty hospital bed, maybe. Or the soggy sheets stained from many mixed tears.

Sometimes Milo Priest learned words with no English equivalent. On March 16th,

he learned “hiraeth” (n.—Welsh— homesickness for a home that is no longer attainable) and an optimistic counterpart: “smultronställe” (n.—Swedish— literally a place of wild strawberries; a special place returned to for solace and relaxation; an idyll free from stress or sadness; another favorite word). Smultronställe.

Milo Priest found less and less solace in words chosen at random throughout April. On April 3rd he learned “chrysalis” (n.—a moth or butterfly at the stage of growth when it is turning into an adult and is enclosed in a hard case) and “peripatetic” (adj.—itinerant). On April 9th he learned “sallow” (adj.—an unhealthy yellow or pale color) and “diaphanous” (adj.—light, delicate, and translucent as of a fabric). On April 29th he learned electrocardiogram (n.—an EKG; a test that checks for problems with the electrical activity of your heart) and augury (n.—a sign of what will happen in the future; an omen; a direct hint to the reader).

Milo Priest gave up on fate and chose his words carefully by May. On May 12th, he learned “malignant” (adj.— cancerous) and benign (adj.—not cancerous), but only one would matter. On May 19th he learned Infiltrative Ductal Carcinoma (n.—A type of breast cancer characterized by abnormal cells formed in the milk ducts spreading beyond the ducts into surrounding tissue) and “lumpectomy” (n.—surgical removal of a discrete portion or “lump” of breast, usually in the treatment of malignant tumor or breast cancer).

Milo Priest celebrated with words, sometimes. On May 20th he learned “frisson” (n.—moment of intense excitement) and “surcease” (n.—relief or consolation). He hoped maybe these words could convince the world to be positive and forgiving. He hoped.

Milo Priest lamented with words, too. On May 21st he learned “metastasis” (n.— the development of secondary malignant growths at a distance from a primary site of cancer) and “mastectomy (n.—a surgical operation to remove a breast). On May 22nd, he learned three things. He learned casuistry (n.—the use of clever but unsound reasoning, especially in relation to moral questions; sophistry), sophistry (n.—the use of fallacious arguments, especially with the intention of deceiving), and also how to pray on his knees.

Milo Priest never ran out of neat and complicated words to say. When his father asked if he wanted to play catch or shoot hoops, Milo joked, “Is my insouciance for sports really a conundrum?” which made them both laugh. When his younger sister asked him why the neighbor kids had blackened his eye in gentle, watery, confused throbs, Milo said “Don’t you worry one bit about this eye. It’s a talisman, a good luck charm. It’s for edification, recrudescence, revival, growing stronger,” to which she replied in a giggle of understanding, “Can I have one?”

Milo Priest did not memorize any words on May 23rd. Not one.

*abbey. gezellig. plethora. smultronställe. tuqburni. vellichor. cwm.* It's almost finished with her isn't it. Pallid. Puffy. Apoptosis. Please I need to *abbey. gezellig. plethora. smultronställe. tuqburni. vellichor. cwm.* Her eyes sallow, diaphanous, and her skin looked as frail as tracing paper. *abbey. gezellig. plethora. smultronställe. tuqburni. vellichor. cwm.* She was like the chrysalis of a butterfly when it gets translucent and close to disintegrating, except there was no butterfly waiting to come out from underneath. *abbey. gezellig. plethora. smultronställe. tuqburni. vellichor. cwm.* Dad ambling back and forth, pacing while on the phone trying to get relatives over to the hospital before she... peripatetic. back and forth. *abbey. gezellig. plethora. smultronställe. tuqburni. vellichor. cwm.* Dad ambling back and forth, pacing while on the phone trying to get relatives over to the hospital before she... peripatetic. back and forth. *abbey. gezellig. plethora. smultronställe. tuqburni. vellichor. cwm.* See the path worn in the ground from thick, black soles digging into the floor, making valleys and canyons. Cwms. Staring staring staring down at feet pain back and forth like glaciers *abbey. gezellig. plethora. smultronställe. tuqburni. vellichor. cwm*

Milo Priest once had to say goodbye to his mother. He'd rehearsed. "Dearest mother, you are cozy and lovely and magnetically so—gezellig. You are the wonder of a new book. You are Anderson's chocolates, warm and always landing close to my heart, not unlike a stain." Then he was going to finish with a powerful one. He was going to say that she was his "You are Smultonstralle. A strawberry field, an idyll where pain is impossible because you love me so thoroughly." He was going to say that she deserved a plethora of more time. He would bestow all of his favorite words in their full power upon her—they were a blessing, the oil a priest rubs on one's head to anoint. He would give her all of his favorite words, except he didn't plan on using *cwm*.

He saved that one for himself.

Milo Priest walked in and heard the rhythmic pulse of the electrocardiogram—... lump...lump...lump...—mocking him in a fiendish, simple cacophony. His speech was instantly forgotten, poetry nightly forged, and quickly discarded. Instead of using words, he used a much more effective language. He wept.

Milo Priest once had his mom pull him close, and she said a variety of things. Things with sounds and voices that words cannot recreate. He once wordlessly climbed up onto the hospital bed and wrapped his toes in a turban of sheets, holding his knees to his chest with fidgety arms. She once pulled out a book and read to him until the labor of making shadows in the room was passed from the Sun to the lamps by their sides. But all books come to a close. Once, the spine crinkled as she brought the pages together again, closing it. Once, she gave him a present.

“Tuqburni. I know how much you love exciting new words, Milo. I hope you like it. It’s Arabic. And listen closely, my little baby-boy. It means that I love you so much, I can’t bear to keep you out of my sights. I love you so so so much sweetie.” And then it was time for Milo to go. The EKG played a song behind him as he walked out...

*lump...lump...*

*lump.....lump.....lump.....lump.....*

Milo Priest always knew exactly how to describe any feeling or situation. When the neighborhood kids began to notice that Milo was not like them and said in a small cul-de-sac gang that he needed to be taught a lesson, Milo said, “Backpfeifengesicht” (n.—German—a face that is begging to be punched.) When Milo’s best friend Parker came over for dinner and told the family one of his famous embellished stories, Milo said “Istoriesmarkoudes” (n.—Greek—narrative events so eccentric, specific, and wild that they seem to be untrue). When Milo waited eagerly in the car in the cold freshness of a morning garage for his family to drive to the bus-stop together, Milo said “Iksaurpok.” (n.—Inuit—the anxiety of waiting for someone to show up). When his mother died on May 23rd, he said “Oh.”

(No translation available).

Milo Priest used different words for different occasions. On holidays, Milo would write cards to friends and relatives splattered with big and celebratory words from his mental dictionary: surfeit, ecstatic, halcyon, jazzed, mirth, and pulchritudinous. His matrix of praising vocabulary became a trademark, and when he received his cards, he’d always find that his friends and relatives sprinkled their own “large” words in return. They all had the same formula: Happy Birthday Big Brother! I can’t believe you are 14. You are old! And dilapidated, enfeebled, and geriatric! Ha! -Cassy. Merry Christmas Milo, my favorite customer! Hope your day is blissful, jovial, and jocular! -Anderson. “Happy Valentines day my love! May today be as ebullient as you are” xoxoMom. The condolences that arrived in the brick mailbox on May 24th, however, did not have these features. They only had small words like “sorry” and “loss” in them. “Loss” is not a word, it’s an absence of one. A valley. A depression.

On May 24th Milo Priest learned four words to repay his outstanding debt:

rubatosis (n.—the unsettling awareness of one’s own heartbeat),

liberosis (n.—the desire to care less about things),

saudade (n.—Portuguese—a deep, nostalgic longing for an absent loved something or someone that will never return), and

Nederim (v.—Hebrew—a vow or bargain with God Almighty).

\*                      \*                      \*

Milo Priest's ritual has changed. He still learns two new words every day—maybe out of reverence, maybe out of pragmatism—that *hasn't* changed. But when he's feeling that emptiness, the shell of the chrysalis striking his mind, he says Cwm.

Cwm. Cwm. Cwm.

If it could survive without a vowel, so could he. And he loves that word in a special way. The only way to describe how much he loves and relies on Cwm is through another word.

Tuqburni: n.—Arabic—literally “you bury me”—A love so deep you can't imagine life without.

## QUERCUS ALBA

Emily Switzer

November is a month of rain –  
    fine, slanted, grey;  
also the rain of falling flames,  
    jewel-bright.

Caught in a moment of flight,  
pinned to the sky by shafts of pallid sunlight –  
    drops of blood and gold-edged ochre,  
falling, audibly, to the beat of disembodied wings.

They know where it ends –  
    piled in ashy drifts against the curb  
    slick with rainwater,  
    printing stars on the sidewalk.

I apologize to those sparrows I mistook for oak leaves –  
    but not to the leaves I saw as birds.



# EKPHRASIS

Emily Switzer

With what must one render  
old, tired pictures?  
Tapestries embroidered in plaster and must and mothballs –  
threadbare memories blooming in silk, wool, and tarnished gilt:  
touch them and they crumble to dust.

How careful, then, must I be,  
I, who touch you –  
to weave you into existence?  
How gentle the hands  
that guide the shuttle towards a semblance of your face.

From a palette of muted blues and greys – night colors,  
what thread for the hush?  
For slow-sliding daylight, cerulean,  
for the birds, quicksilver, who sing the day unseen –  
what color for the sound of your breathing  
when at last Hypnos has taken your hand?

Stitching dawn together from weft-dreams  
I wait for time's warp to blur you –  
Wait for fugitive dyes to mar the quietude of your sleeping bones –  
for they are beautiful bones,  
and I am no weaver.

If these clumsy fingers have poorly sewn your vulnerability  
forgive me –  
I will unpick it and start again. But –  
permit me this memory, already fading,

do not touch  
for while threads confuse me I can still wield a pen.

## TRANS-FORMS

Alexis Ferguson

I hold together within my form but my fingers long to touch  
A love of mine a face changed with selfhood a body entangled  
In the biology of growing cultures  
Of wriggling protozoan pills and festered fearing heat  
Evaporating cool and wet between our hands  
With lips on either side and eyes above as steaming chocolate reflecting pools  
I look through and look through myself and see myself not in them but with them  
Not forever but for ever now holding close

My body's not my lover's body but it's close to the same  
In touch in feeling in together curls and nuzzling necks  
Humming content vibrations of hands held and fingers through hair  
Not firstly defined as bodies but despite are so  
Sensitive to the ridges of fingerprints run lightly over lips and jaw  
Pressed into deeply warm and soft skin held by formation bones  
Holding bodies up together

I do not own a body my lover's body is changing same against my unchanging  
Transformation of self change from the heart and hormones outwards  
As my body doesn't change I change around within and do not know myself  
But as a body surrounded by mind mine and moments me  
Experienced not as self but dual self body and thought of mine and my love  
Together trans-forms and transforms together as

two bodies

## FEAR OF HEIGHTS

Jamie Bonan

I grew up with a forest  
in my side yard

and a barn by my driveway that the neighbors we didn't talk to  
said was haunted

when I was nine my mother took to the task of clearing it  
because she called them weeds  
and the barn was painted gray to match the house

I put on her flowered gloves and helped her cut the yellow suns out of the grass  
and watched from a tree as she brought tarps into the yard  
to keep gray bullets off the ground  
but her collar was hit  
as I climbed into the sky

and when she had to take me down from the evergreen

(because I was yelling and screaming once I saw the distance  
between my toes and the pine needles scattered  
on the ground seven hundred miles down  
just like my splintered bones if I just  
slipped  
on sap since you see  
I'd forgotten I was afraid of heights until the trunk became thinner  
than my forearm)

my legs were on her shoulders as she climbed back down  
and the gray bullet on her collar hit my skin

I smelled the sap on me for three whole days

I grew up with a river  
in my backyard

I didn't like the deep warm brown  
stagnancy or the harsh steady pull of the tides

or the old neighbors who lived around the edge  
who raised their eyebrows  
at badly kept lawns  
like ours and watched Fox with as much fervor  
as they misread  
that nice little book  
by their bed

so I lived in a kayak  
my mother and I  
dragged its hollow body through disappearing yellow suns and across  
dry gravel mountains from the freshly painted barn  
every morning before our neighbors were up

let it slide and dip into the water  
the way I was supposed to  
(if I didn't fear falling down  
sinking to the bottom and getting caught  
and stuck in the mud  
forever, forever)

my arms grew faster than I did  
cut paddles through water like I was getting revenge  
on someone somewhere something under  
the deep brown sludge

and my arms took me until I was so far downstream  
I couldn't see the barn  
or the forest or the gravel

not even the evergreen  
poking up  
past the house  
past everything else  
and my kayak and I started  
falling

# WALLER

Katherine Xie

*In remembrance of Haruka J. Weiser*

Yesterday, we was down on the river,  
waving our summer shirts at the trawlers above.  
As them boats cut lazy horseshoes along the  
shore, the pilots saw us and  
kicked up a spray with their rudders,  
so that the water spilled over our  
brackish feet and made us holler with joy.

The slippery insides  
of the river got mashed in our  
toes, currents  
of duckweed and arrowhead bickering  
like children. You waded on  
back to the far bank to rescue our sneakers  
before they choked on  
the mud, and I trapped a mitten crab  
in my bare hand before  
it pinched me and I had to let  
go.

## De los muertos y vivos      Of the Dead and Living

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Sylvia Claire Onorato

De los muertos y vivos

Primary colors shriek-laugh in the Dim,  
trumpets chortle, dulces por todos lados,  
everywhere,  
two children run around and a third  
in a tiny quinceañera frosting dress  
sits by her mother selling jewel fruits.  
Monarch in the night, graves alight,  
bouquets hedgerowed between headstones,  
familiares de ambos mundos, los vivos  
y los muertos, los que hablan inglés y  
los que todavía reguardan la lengua de  
sus antepasados (españoles),  
and transfigured beliefs of Aztecs  
who also come tonight, not in palabras,  
sino en la noche misma – en las flores  
cerca de las tumbas y en las alas  
de mariposas.

*Of the Dead and Living*

*trumpets chortle, treats*

*in a tiny sweet 15 frosting dress*

*relatives from both worlds, the living  
and the dead, those who speak English and  
those who keep the language of*

*their (Spanish) ancestors,*

*who also come tonight, not in words,  
but in the night itself – in the flowers  
by the tombs and in the wings  
of butterflies.*

# DEAD PANSY

Sylvia Claire Onorato

Is there anything beautiful  
 About watering a dead pansy?  
 Any neighborhood Quixote  
 Or undercover poet would say so,  
 While they water their own  
 Wrinkly-leaved idealism  
 Straining unsuccessfully to escape  
 Its hard, unyielding ceramic pot.  
 Who knows, maybe one day  
 It actually might, if it strains  
 With every browning fiber.  
 It will grow millimeter by millimeter  
 Until one millimeter tips the pot,  
 Bringing it crashing down  
 On the unforgiving tile floor.  
 The pansy may survive  
 Or it may not, but its seeds  
 Will be slightly closer  
 To the screen door.

## GROCERIES

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### Miranda Sasinovic

The year was 1996, one year after the Bosnian War had supposedly ended, and the atrocities against Bosnian Muslims were simplified under the terms “genocide” or “ethnic cleansing.” A Bosnian couple settled into their new home, a small one-bedroom apartment, furnished with a couch, coffee table, and tiny, round table where they would eat their food.

Their names were Idriz and Emina, newlyweds who, rather than hearing wedding bells, heard gunshots over their heads and decided they should make things official. Emina was eighteen, Idriz twenty-four, and the two snuck behind a barn and kissed each other’s wedding finger in place of rings as their brothers and sisters stood as witnesses.

It was their second day in America. A worker from the refugee center stopped by in order to take them grocery shopping for the first time. As they walked through the aisles of processed and commercialized foods, they would experience the first taste of their new lives.

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#### Tomatoes

The couple first pushed their cart over to the section of fresh produce. The woman walked around to each crate and gave them the opportunity to decide what they wanted. She spoke in Bosnian, naming the various fruits, narandže, jabuke, grožđe... and motioned to the bags that they could place the food in. They stopped in front of the tomatoes. When she was a little girl, Emina would go down the hill to Fatima’s house, an older woman known for her vast garden of cucumbers, garlic, lettuce, and especially tomatoes. Emina loved her tomatoes. Most of the time she ate them by themselves, sprinkling a little salt at the top, and biting into their juicy interiors. When the war was over, Emina learned that Fatima had been uprooted from her small home. Her tomatoes were on the soles of soldiers’ boots.

#### Hot Dogs

Idriz watched as Emina placed a package of hot dogs in the cart and looked away. When Idriz enlisted in the army, he hadn’t imagined that he would be defending himself and others against his own people. The Bosnian army split into factions, and Idriz, in favor of reaching peace with the Serbs, Croats, and his fellow Muslims, joined the DNZ’s cause against the Bosnian government. The DNZ’s army and supporters, forced to retreat from their occupied territory, sought refuge in a Croatian camp where conditions were poor but where they could recover. In order to satiate their unrelenting hunger, the people searched for leftover food in



abandoned homes and streets. Idriz remembered a package of hot dogs he had found in the fridge of one home. He had gone into the house by himself and stuffed the package in his coat pocket, thinking of Emina, her family, and his own. When he walked out of the home he told the other men that he could not find a single thing. Nema Ništa. That night he choked back sobs as he swallowed the uncooked pieces whole.

## Pads

The cart stopped at the personal care section. The woman reached for a package of pads and motioned over to Emina. She stared blankly at the package until the woman explained. *Za menstruaciju*, the woman said. Emina ran her palm along her flat stomach and shook her head. As a child and throughout the war, she hadn't experienced the luxury of using pads. Instead, her and her sisters had small washcloths that they folded and put over their underwear. The next day, they replaced the bloody rags with cleaner ones, washing the used ones and hanging them to dry. It wasn't until the war that they realized that sometimes blood just couldn't be washed out.

## Ear plugs

Right next to packages of cotton swabs, bags of earplugs hung. The woman reached for one and asked the couple if they needed some. When they stared at her blankly she explained again. She used her hands to show the plugs going into her ears and then stuck her palms together and leaned one side of her head against them, pretending to sleep. Idriz wondered if he could wear them everywhere in order to drown out the sounds in his head. Of gunshots that never died, and babies who constantly cried, and women who screamed for their dead relatives, and men who moaned as their last breaths left. He took the bag from the woman and ran his yellow fingertips along the blue package. *Rat je zaspao, ali ja nemogu*. The war has fallen asleep, but I cannot.

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The couple placed the items on the conveyor belt along with many more. They watched as the groceries passed by them and eventually dropped into bags they had to carry. Idriz took most of the bags into his rough and cracked hands, but Emina held a few as well. The two were side by side as they walked through the automatic doors and into the crisp December air. When they closed their eyes, it was like they were back home again, with snow enclosing their thin ankles and all they could see was white. Hill after hill of powdery snow, and it was quiet. They were back home, and it was finally quiet.

## 2/4 TIME

Anita Alur

Flip me a switch of that samba  
put it in a coffee cup, stir it  
until my soul stirs too.

I'm watching that needle dance on  
vinyl, feeling every turn of the  
voice, every groove of the sax

Getz and Gilberto at it again,  
I'll mime a mic,  
let you lyricize me in two/four time.

That bossa swagger, forcing  
us to sway, Portuguese feels like  
French to me.

You're a spitballin' sassafras  
and I'm cotton-mouthed and dignified  
singing thirds above normalcy.

We're soundtracking our memories  
like Morricone, feeling every inch of our  
bodies sizzle from the spirits.

But songs fade into ashtrays  
as the needle skips a beat,  
I remember it's half past four.

Records fall into sleeves and we to  
sleep, but that bossa jam  
tingles in our toenails.

## TENDER COCONUT

Anita Alur

Circled by blue, Avva's near-black eyes  
remind me of mine. She tells me it's the cataracts,  
that my eyes too will lose something black and  
gain something blue, her hands  
holding the sickle as she speaks

In one shot, she hits the coconut, its hairless core  
collapses on the plate, tender, it drips like egg yolks  
I won't let her forget me until she forgets

herself. I grasp the bits of brown and white, slurping  
the remnants of sweet from the sides, the lack of  
grace as we perch on tile floor, as tidily kept as  
her braid, oiled and black despite her age.

How her roots never grey,  
I'll never understand.

## GOING OUT

Andrea Farr

Brooks always left the door slightly ajar when he set off, causing my days to become a series of strung together moments of closing it after him. I particularly hated it when I would wake up to see it peeking open in the dark, him having slipped out during some hour of the night, leaving it to be slightly cracked the entire time I slept in our one-bedroom apartment on the west side of Boston.

It was only seven days after we got the new place when Brooks first disappeared through the door without a word, but not before leaving a wet kiss on my temple, holding my head lightly between his hand and his chest as he pressed into my hair. I was making myself dinner in our kitchen big enough for the stove and really nothing more, so he didn't stay for long. After he left, I heard the door squeal to a slow halt and his footsteps clip the edge of the wooden stairs before the gated door. We lived on the first floor with a view right out to the front, which is something we had decided we liked about the place, for its convenience, but now with the clear view through the kitchen window, it made his departures much harder to ignore.

"This has got to stop, leaving the door open all night. I'm going to get killed! How are you going to feel coming home and finding me dead?"

"I just know that using my keys to open it later would wake you up, and then we would end up in this same situation, only with a different problem for you to be mad at. I just wouldn't waste your time – our time – worrying about it, Harp."

"No, no. I'd like to. It's bad enough havin' the break of dawn slip in, I don't need the neighbor's cat along with it. Not to mention the kinds of creeps that probably live around here, you've seen them yourself with all the night crawling you've been up to."

"I will try to be better. And you should be glad I'm out there. If I see anyone headed this way, I'll make sure to turn them right back around," he said, flashing a wink on the last word.

A look could only go so far with Brooks, so I usually saved those for after he had turned away, satisfied with what he deemed to be the finishing remark to the conversation. He was still much more of a boy than a man, in both how he reasoned with me and justified his answers, but mostly in the way he stood with his shoulders consciously pumped up and out to give extra body to his upper half. Although he was fairly tall, he had a skinny frame and lanky limbs that made him fully aware of his lingering adolescence. He sure knew how to dress to make the most of it all, and it was only obvious to me because I had known him since before I grew into my body as well.

He stayed in for five of the following nights, the last of which he lifted me onto the counter of the kitchen, and behind the closed door we spent our time kissing

while the pasta boiled over onto the stove. We decided to leave it until morning, and instead rooted his guitar out from under the small heap of things that seemed fit to bring to the city apartment, all still confined to the tight corner of the living room.

He had brought his guitar to the first place I met him four years before, a party off of I-90 in the highest platform of a girl's father's barn. Neither of us knew the host. We ended up having one of those encounters you can't believe can happen with a stranger, though I had heard his name around town many times before that night.

"I'm disappointed that it took us this long to get to talking then," he said.

"Well, we're talking now." I had to look up at the stars to keep my voice steady. From that night on, I couldn't stand to go a day without him. On the day of his graduation, one year before my own, he had grabbed my waist as we looked out over his parents' land, him saying to me, "we'll have this, just you wait." The image of those fields leading to the river is what I held on to when I would hear about the girls at his new school, because I had seen him become the man they knew, so to me, he would always be more mine than anyone else's.

When he played then in the apartment, the sound softened the streetlights coming through the living room window. His voice was still coated with that same childish twang, so I rested my head on his shoulder to feel it vibrate from his body. Later, I kissed his cheek before heading off to sleep, hoping he would follow.

Sometime after our nineteenth day in the city is when I came home from a weekend away to find the door open and an earring under our bed, something my intuition made hard to ignore. It wasn't until late that night when I saw its glint in the folds of the sheets, and it wasn't until morning when I found Brooks sleeping on the couch outside the bedroom, with the door cracked wide enough to let a draft in.

"I just want to know if this is something to worry about." I woke him up using the hand that was not clenched around the tiny gleaming pearl.

Not missing a beat after opening his eyes, he responded, "What did I tell you before about worry, Harper. Let's just enjoy ourselves while we can, we're so young."

"I just want to know Brooks, is this something I need to worry about."

"Don't worry. Don't worry. I'm tired of repeating myself. Everything's good and fine, and would be even better if you could stop worrying and start believing me from now on."

And with that, I left the earring on the corner of the side table and didn't say one more thing about it. I instead continued adding to the list of things I had begun collecting like evidence that I could eventually put to good use, but never would. It was too hard during the softness of the nights he did stay, to say anything more than what he wanted to hear, what we both did. The next day I came home to see the earring gone from where it had sat, and I caught myself wondering if it had ever been there at all.

Like clockwork, Brooks continued his departures, each time leaving at

night, allowing a clear view of him to be shone through the front facing windows. He would return in the mornings, with some cut or another on his face or hands. Back home, I had liked how he would always find a way to start bleeding at the bar, giving me something to take care of on the nights out that wouldn't bring us back until the sun came shining over the little rooftops of our town. These are the things I chose to think about after the times he would ask "what's the matter with you?" at point-blank range in the same corner our things had been shoved into, right after I had said the same thing to him.

It was the twenty-eighth day when he left, again, cracking the door, still sweating out the dull murmur of where he had been the night before, whiskey lingering on in his breath and his eyes. That was the same night I had woken up to his fingers tracing the outline of a body that I could feel wasn't mine, and so I tried to fill the gaps with restless movement until morning. When I awoke, he was turned away and cramped into the far side of the bed, having come out of the illusion some time in the night.

It was a Tuesday night two days later when Brooks finally shut the door upon his leaving. Its closing produced a sound so foreign to the space of the apartment, and loud enough that I couldn't hear the voice of the girl with teardrop pearls through her ears, sitting just beyond the gate of the building. I stood looking, with the lights off in the kitchen, wondering by chance if I ever did hear her voice, which of course, I would come to hear always trailing off the edges of the city, if I would be able to sense a hint of his coming through at the end. I wondered if she had been able to catch glimpses of the boy within the man in the same way I still could, through the vulnerability of his sleeping face, still full of innocence.

Left in the muted quiet of the kitchen, I knew I would have some of myself to return to if I left, or at least this is what I would tell myself when I felt a courage to go welling up inside of me. But in the certain peace of the nights, I found myself alone. I knew I would always be picking pieces of him out of my skin. It was too hard to remember anything without him, our lives so woven I would be left far too unraveled if I yanked myself from the stitch. Looking at the door that night, I chose again not to go, because even with the times it was left cracked wide open, it was still easier for me to stay.

## LATIN AMERIKAN GOTHIC

J. Gabriel Gonzalez

!The men in my family have been pursued by lightning  
since before my father's grandfather cut  
his first stalk of sugarcane.

Still, I went outside to watch  
the storm, the razor wire tension  
growing in my head,

the hands of the Reaper straining  
to halve my skull like fried pork ribs—  
or better yet, an unripe hunk of guava.

Inside, a short-hemmed, pragmatic girl  
the daughter of royalty long deposed,  
stood deliberate at the kitchen counter

peeling a blood orange piece by piece.  
The palpable grace in her fingers  
was a gift from her mother,

from whom she also inherited  
a crippling fear of the sea—  
unfortunate

as all I wanted was to be close  
to the Caribbean  
and disassembled by such grace!

## CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

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**Anita Alur** is a senior at Cornell University majoring in English and minoring in Film and Psychology. She has written songs, poems, and short stories for most of her life and hopes to continue writing throughout her career. Apart from creative writing, she sings in a co-ed a cappella group and has a bi-weekly column in the Arts and Entertainment section of *The Cornell Daily Sun*.

**Miranda Sasinovic** is a sophomore majoring in History and minoring in Creative Writing and Law and Society in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is from Utica, NY, where she was born and raised by Bosnian-Muslim refugees. She is a fan of Manchester City F.C. and J. Cole. You can most likely expect his music to be blasting from her room.

**Emily Switzer** is a senior majoring in English Language and Literature at Yale University. When she is not thinking about words and whether or not she will ever be able to use “allotriopragmosyne” in an essay (the situation has not yet arisen), she is playing violin and dreaming about the day she will be doubly unemployable as a writer and as a musician. In her free time, she enjoys reading, gardening, and finding excuses to drink more coffee.

**Katherine (Kitty) Xie** is a junior double-majoring in Chemistry and Psychology at Cornell University. While her first love was and always will be creative writing, she has since realized that her true calling lies in rodent brains and prison education. One day, she hopes to earn a graduate degree (or several) in Neuropharmacology, but for now, she is more than happy to be an overworked lab assistant, part-time barista, and full-time Texan.

**Jesse Gabriel Gonzalez** is a senior at Cornell University studying English and Spanish. Over the past four years he has spent his time in Ithaca, New York, his home in New Jersey, the Pocono Mountains, and Havana, Cuba. Academically, he is interested in the Russian Silver Age poets, as well as post-Independence Latin American poets and thinkers. His poetry has also appeared in the magazine *Kitsch* and *Marginalia: Cornell's Undergraduate Poetry Review*, of which he is a co-founder and Editor-in-Chief. In his free time, he enjoys boxing and salsa dancing.

**Stephanie Niu** is a sophomore at Stanford University studying symbolic systems (a combination of computer science, psychology, philosophy, and linguistics) with a passion for education access and curriculum design. Outside of academics, Stephanie spends her time choreographing for a hip-hop dance team, making soap, and napping relentlessly. Her poems have recently appeared in *The Rain, Party, and Disaster Society*; *Liminality*; *CICADA Magazine*; and *Writer's Block Magazine*.



**Andrea Farr** is a junior at Cornell University majoring in English, and minoring in both Film and Psychology. When she is not writing, she keeps herself very busy by running through imaginary scenarios and walking into rooms only to forget what she was going to do upon entering.

**Jamie Bonan** is a junior at Cornell University, majoring in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. She is involved on campus as Publicity Chair for the student-led service-learning organization, Alternative Breaks and as Publicity Director for Cornell University's creative writing club, The Quill Guild. She is passionate about social justice and graphic design, and has interned at a literary agency for two years. She lives in Potomac, Maryland.

**Sam Weyen** is a junior at Stanford University majoring in Symbolic Systems with a concentration in Political Data. In his ~hypothetical~ spare time, you can find Sam tweeting aggressively at Shark Week's twitter account and explaining to people what his cryptically named major means (it combines computer science, philosophy, linguistics, and psychology). You may also find him spinning in circles frenetically like a poorly balanced, over-caffeinated child as the Stanford Tree, the university's unofficial mascot.

**Julia Freels** was raised in a small town in Mississippi. She grew up playing in the woods, writing short stories about princesses, and filming stop-action soap operas with her dolls. She studies at Stanford, pursuing a degree in English with Creative Writing. As a writer Julia is invested in allowing small mundane moments to become as important and beautiful and ugly as they deserve to be.

**Sylvia Onorato** believes Emily Dickinson has come as close as possible to answering the question of defining life's purpose when she wrote "If I can... help one fainting robin / I shall not live in vain" (5-7). If the salvation of one robin – a seemingly simple act of kindness – crowns a person's existence with meaning, why not try to help as many robins as possible? As a future professor of American literature and a creative writer, Sylvia hopes to inspire her fellow "robins" to discover writing that resonates with them and perhaps add their own leaves of grass to the field.

**Alexis Ferguson** is a literary nerd, grad school hopeful, and amateur queer poet. They are very honored to be included in this issue of *Rainy Day*!

**Zoe Clark** is fond of yarns, tales, even the occasional long winding fib.

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# RAINY DAY STAFF

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CC Groves '19

## *Faculty Advisor*

Michael Koch

251 Goldwin Smith

Cornell University

mk46@cornell.edu