

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Garden Statuary is the official Undergraduate Journal of English at The University of British Columbia, operated and peer-reviewed by UBC undergraduate students. We publish twice a year online (once at the end of each term) and compile both online issues into a single end-of-year print edition.

The journal began as the idea of a group of writers, artists, and musicians from a second year English honours class and has published 18 issues since September 2011. As “English” is a field of remarkable interdisciplinary richness and UBC students work in remarkably diverse mediums, we welcome a wide range of genres and forms: academic essays in the field of English, poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, stage and screenplay, photography, visual art, music, and film. Our mission is to provide a place for UBC undergraduates to showcase, celebrate, and share their work within the university and beyond. In turn, we hope we leave our student audiences feeling inspired and connected to the incredible energy and talent found in the community around them.

If you are a UBC undergraduate and wish to see your work on our print and/or digital pages, please peruse our submission guidelines on our website www.thegardenstatuary.com. You can also contact us at thegardenstatuary@gmail.com. We’re excited to see your work!

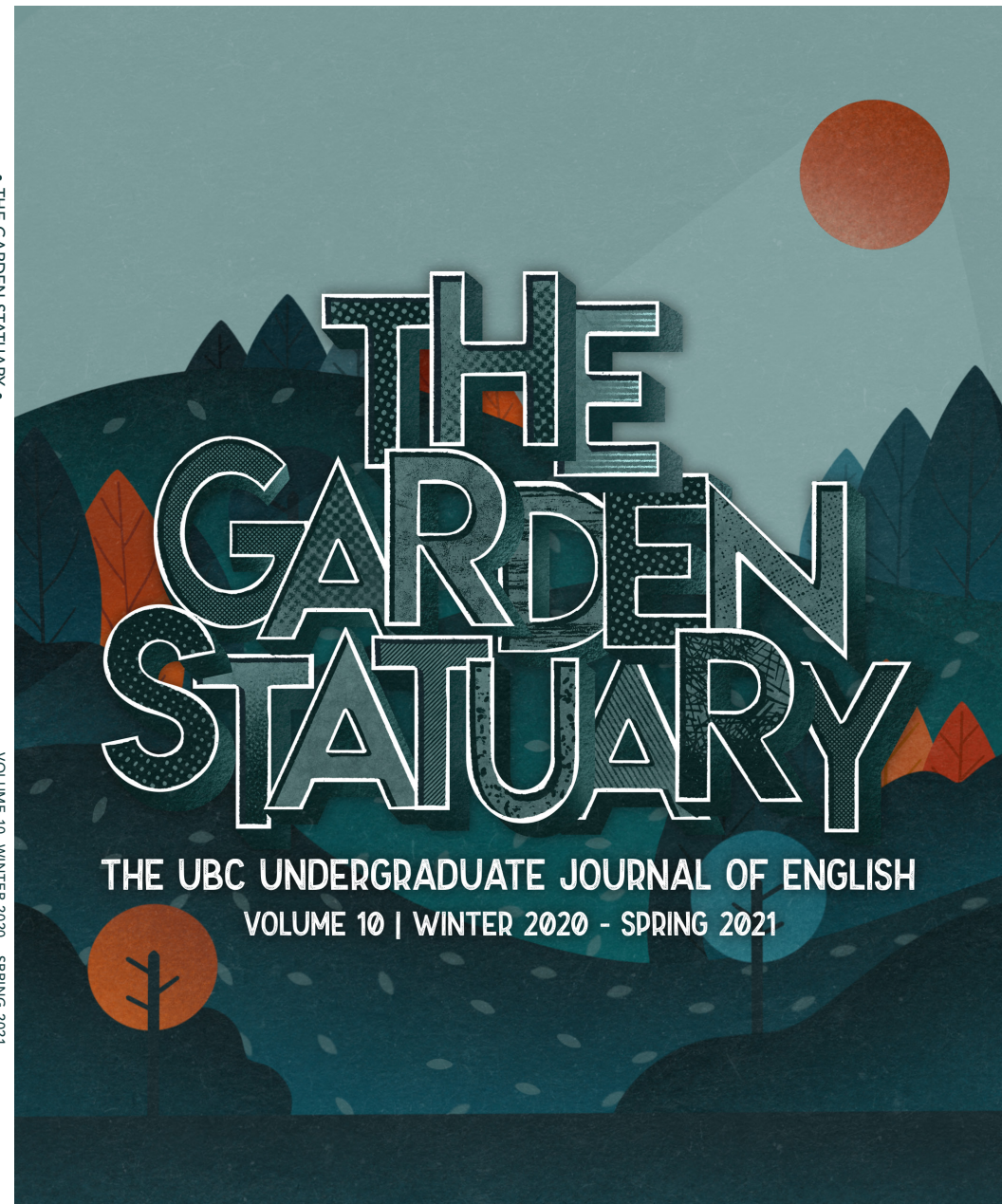
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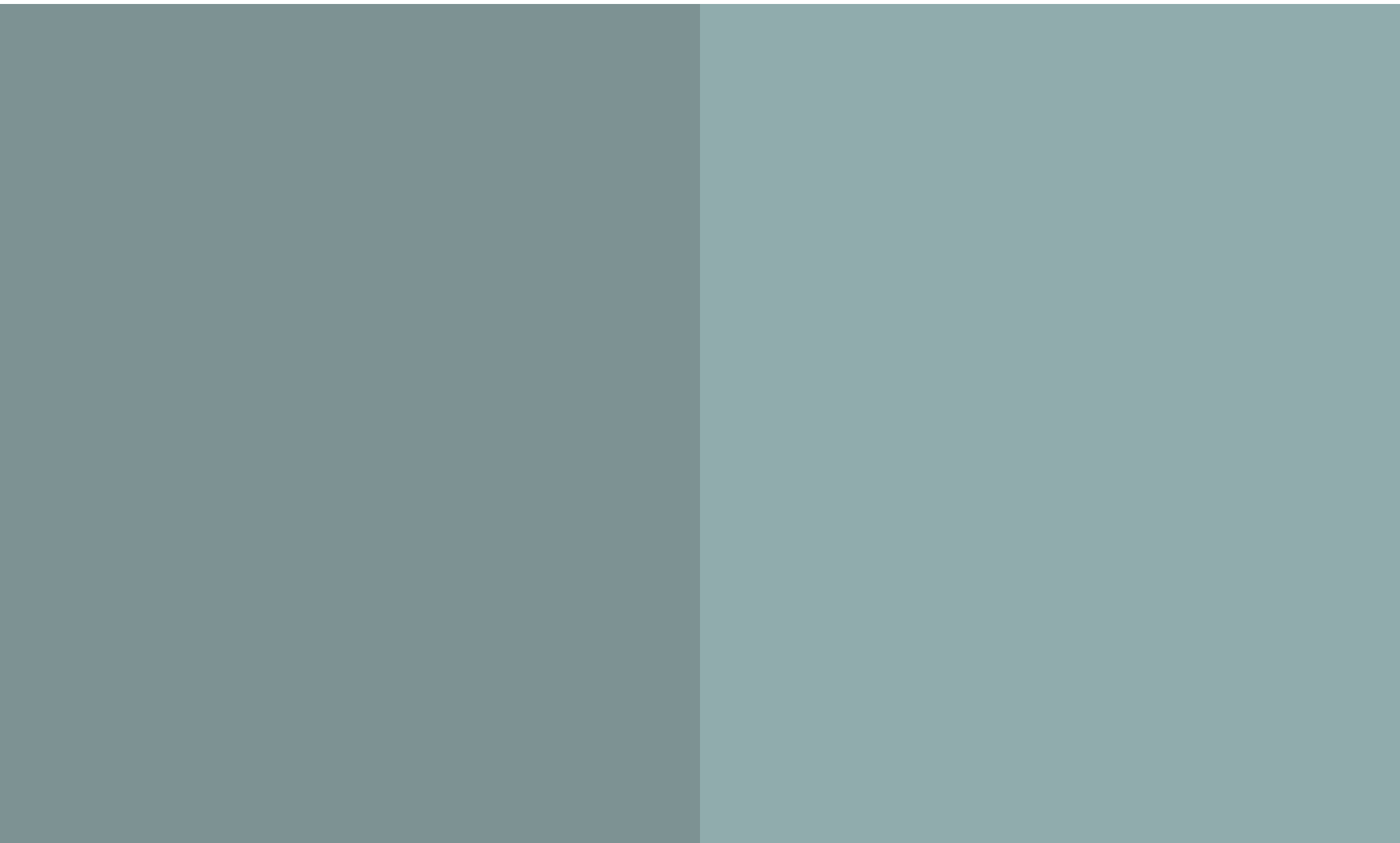
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• THE GARDEN STATUARY •

VOLUME 10, WINTER 2020 - SPRING 2021





The Garden Statuary

VOLUME 10 — WINTER 2020/SPRING 2021

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hello!

Thank you for taking the time to read Volume 10 of The Garden Statuary (TGS). This year's publication is particularly special for two reasons: it was assembled during the Covid-19 pandemic and commemorates the journal's tenth anniversary.

When TGS was created in 2011 by English Honours students, I doubt that particular cohort knew how successful the journal would become. The fact TGS continues to grow in popularity testifies to the importance this particular publication plays in UBC's ever-growing arts and cultural community.

The challenge of creating this issue during an online-only academic year was more than met by the extremely talented editors and illustrators. I remain grateful for their ability to edit, create, and collaborate across time zones and on multiple pieces. Additionally, Volume 10 would not have been possible without the hard work of the executive team. The marketing work done by Avani, the illustration coordination spearheaded by Asli, and Yun's meticulous submission organization made my job (and those of the editors and illustrators) much easier. Thank you all!

Whether published or unpublished, many thanks must be given to those who submitted their work for consideration this year. While we were unable to publish everyone's pieces, the editors and I were amazed by the quality of writing and the sheer creativity. Within these pages, we have featured what we believe to be a diverse and enlightening selection of prose, academic, multimedia, and poetry pieces.

For those who will be returning as undergraduates next year, please submit more work! And for undergraduates and graduates alike, drop by our (hopefully in-person) launch parties.

All that being said, please enjoy this issue of The Garden Statuary!

With all best wishes,

Samantha Bowen
Editor-in-Chief

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"RATED PG-13 FOR LANGUAGE AND MILD SEXUAL SITUATIONS": THE COMPLICATED QUESTION OF SEXUALITY IN M.T. ANDERSON'S FEED

ELLI TAKENAKA

In a society where approximately seventy-three percent of people have essentially unlimited and uninterrupted access to a colossal version of the internet through “the feed” (Anderson 112), one would expect pornography downloads and other interactions with sexually explicit material or services to skyrocket. But M.T. Anderson’s young adult novel *Feed* lacks direct representations of sex and sexuality altogether, instead only hinting at pleasure-driven sexual relationships rather than demonstrating them outright. So why are there no clear acknowledgments of the physical act of sex, sexuality, or any other sexually explicit subjects in *Feed*, despite it being set in an environment where one would expect such matters to be abundant? I argue that the way in which sexuality is discussed in *Feed*, that is, particularly through an emphasis on consumerism and environmental degradation, as well as the overall lack of direct representation of sexual acts in the text are a notable reflection of the dystopia within which the story takes place. However, the role that I suggest this lack of outright sexuality plays here remains in tension with the way young adult literature seems to obscure

sexual acts on a grander scale, implying the presence of sex rather than demonstrating it, or simply excluding it altogether. This paper therefore aims to examine the representation of sex (or lack thereof) in *Feed*, keeping in mind the trends in YA which seem uncomfortable with the idea of young people’s engagement with sexual acts.

Before diving into an examination of *Feed*, it is critical to note what I mean when I discuss trends of the lack of sexuality in YA literature. In her article “Let’s Write About Sex – YA Fiction as a Means of Learning About Sexuality,” Sara Hutchinson outlines the importance of portraying healthy sexual relationships in young adult fiction in order to educate adolescent readers about sexuality. There is something constraining about YA literature: the general lack of sex scenes in YA fiction may have to do with what Hutchinson calls “gatekeepers who may doubt the value of sex scenes within YA fiction,” accompanied by apparent general anxieties about adolescents having sex as well as reading about sex (Hutchinson 316). *Feed* presents sexuality chiefly through language, though such language still seems

to tiptoe around the subject. For instance, rather than referring to the genitals of the anatomical diagram in the doctor's office as such, Titus and his friend continue to refer to the "anatomical guy's basket" or his "nads" (Anderson 57 & 61). Later in the text, Quendy asks Titus if he thinks Calista and Link are "doing it," a clearly euphemistic and oddly juvenile choice of wording. Additionally, in the hospital, Link and Calista stand by the "vibrating bath" having "probably decided to hook up" (Anderson 61; emphasis added). It is precisely this "probably" that figures in the text: we can assume from the consistent sexual references throughout that these 15-year-olds are sexually active, in fact, Titus even mentions wanting to "hook up" with Loga "again," implying that they had had some sort of sexual encounter before (12), but none such encounters are presented definitively in the story. Although I would argue that Anderson's choice not to directly represent sexual acts reflects the bleak reality of Titus' society, particularly as such an omission is highlighted by the abundance of language referring to sex, it is important to note the speculative nature behind such an argument what with the clear pattern of omission seen across the scope of YA literature.

In the version of America presented in *Feed*, everything from the school system, to the government, to the moon is commercialized and run by corporations, each of them simply an avenue for advertisements of whatever products and merchandise are on trend at any given time. As literary critics Elizabeth Bullen and Elizabeth Parsons write, "[in *Feed*],

the characters' awareness of this outcome of predatory capitalism is limited by the parasitical relationship corporate capitalism—in the novel, the Feed Corporation—has with the consumer" (132-133). This relationship between corporation and consumer forces Titus and his peers to find the greatest feelings of pleasure not from their relationships, but from the products they buy. It is as if these corporations intentionally subvert human sexuality with products to prevent further human connection. Upon his reintegration with the feed after being hacked at the nightclub, Titus is described as feeling completely overcome with the feelings of the feed "pouring in on [him and his friends] ... [coming] down on [them] like water" (Anderson 71). They "[dance] in the rain" and run their hands across their bodies, "feeling them again" (Anderson 71). It is like an orgasm, an outpouring of pleasure not due to anything overtly sexual however, but to the renewal of their abilities to connect with the corporations that feed on them. In other words, it is as if they are channeling their sexuality through the feed via the consumption of materialistic products, rather than through sexual interactions with other people, or even masturbation. But interspersed throughout this "rain" are brief interludes of news from the feed, describing harsh realities of the world that Titus and his friends simply ignore, and which are quickly overridden by lighthearted advertisements:

In other news, protests continued today against the American annexation of the moon. Several South American countries including Brazil and

Argentina have submitted requests to join the Global Alliance in response. President Trumbull spoke from the White House. "What we have today, with the things that are happening in today's society is..." (Anderson 71)

It seems as though the sensation of pleasure has been entirely displaced from an action that connects individuals to a capitalistic process that separates them, and the corporations use this pleasure to mask the dystopia their practices have created.

Titus is lonely, and his loneliness seems to reflect a sort of separation he feels from other individuals, perhaps due to the feed and its displacement of pleasure: virtual life rarefies sex and dissipates human interaction. Titus goes to the moon hoping to meet someone, or to hook up with his ex-girlfriend Loga should no one better show up (Anderson 12). But Titus does meet someone on the moon, however his relationship with Violet never escalates beyond a "PG-13" rating, with only "mild sexual situations" even though she gives him "complete prong" (Anderson 298 & 144). The most sexual encounter between the two of them described in the text, besides making out in his upcar and Violet's one-sided attempt to feel Titus up, happens to be that orgasm-like moment where they reconnect to the feed, with Violet "pulling her hands down across her breasts, her chin up in the air" (Anderson 71). Even together, Titus and Violet derive pleasure from the concept of consuming goods and services through the feed, which acts as a sort of substitute for actual sex. In fact, as Violet's feed deteriorates, Titus becomes less and less sexually attracted to

her, eventually saying she's like a zombie (Anderson 269). Moreover, when Violet asks what he thinks would be the best way to die, Titus responds by saying:

I want to have this like, intense pleasure in every one of my senses, all of them so full up that they just burst me open, and the feed like going a mile a second, so that it's like every channel is just jammed with excitement, and it's going faster and faster and better and better, until just—BAM! That's it, I guess. I'd like to die from some kind of sense overload. ... I'm going to do that when I get real old and boring. (Anderson 145)

Once again, intense releases of pleasure are associated directly with the feed, rather than sex. In fact, it seems that a pleasure so intense that one "bursts" is doable if purchased, since Titus notes that he intends to die that way when he's "old and boring" (Anderson 145). Thus, even pleasure and death are contracted down to merely commodified products.

Though much of the discussion of sex in the novel is presented through language, it is not necessarily always through the dialogue between characters but rather the advertising and advertising speak that such a consumeristic society generates. While looking at "upcars" to buy (that is, futuristic flying vehicles which have replaced traditional cars), Titus is presented with an advertisement of a "Dodge Gryphon ... with all of these people in bikinis stuffed into the car with [him]" and a more personalized one of a "Nongen Swarp" that shows "a romantic drive through the mountains with just [him] and Violet, who they got pretty

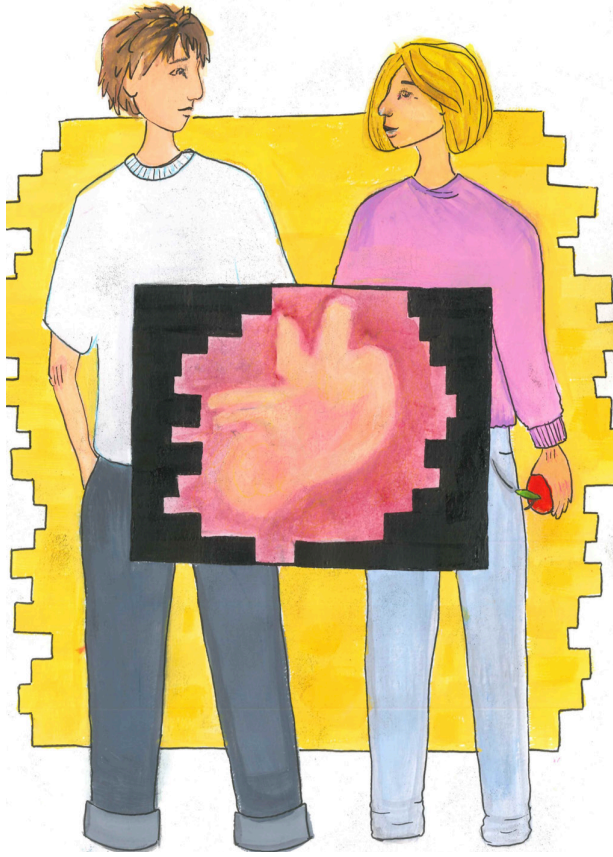
much right, except they made her taller and with bigger boobs” (Anderson 121-122). Additionally, at the dinner table one night, Titus’ younger brother, whom he calls “Smell Factor”, sings over and over “Intercrural or oral! Ain’t a question of moral!” to which his parents’ reaction is not to question the appropriateness of what is being said, but rather to scold him for singing at the table (Anderson 127-128). This is perhaps because they are all so accustomed to the presence of sexual language in everyday speech due to the advertising that bombards them daily. Sex appeal is used to draw attention to materialistic products, but once the purchase is made the precise things that makes an inanimate object attractive disappear, and suddenly the consumer is left with just another product that “the minute she [walks] out of the store, she [doesn’t] like ... anymore” (Anderson 31). Running in parallel to the rampant capitalism in *Feed* is intense environmental degradation which goes hand-in-hand with a human disconnect from nature:

Set in a not-too-distant future, the novel’s consciousness of the geopolitical and environmental hazards of consumer capitalism in risk society is figured through characters who are for the most part unfazed by clouds so artificial they are trademarked, farms that grow great walls of meat in which mutant eye and heart cells sometimes generate into blinking organs, the last forest in the district cut down to build an air factory, and a sea so toxic that a visit to the beach requires a suit fit for a present day trip to the

Chernobyl reactor. This environmental degradation is indirectly revealed as background information while the plot progresses, mirroring the fact that in promoting social atomisation, socialisation into consumer capitalism reduces political consciousness. (Bullen & Parsons 132)

It is fair to assume that the reason for this degradation is rooted in such a disconnect, a narcissistic elitism that sees the human race as more important than the natural, and this disconnect is exacerbated as the environment continues to disintegrate. The deterioration of the tie between humans and nature in the novel is made clear through the lack of sexual representation, with the most prominent example in *Feed* being that of conception, which, due to high levels of radiation, must take place in facilities called conceptionariums rather than “freestyle” (Anderson 225).

In conceptionariums, each baby is “brought into the world in a room with no one there but seven machines. We all are” (Anderson 270), so from the start, children in Titus’s society are deprived of human and natural connections. Even the two parents of the child are separated from each other during the process, the father in one room and the mother in another (Anderson 117). There is a complete lack of sexual intimacy in the process of conception, with each baby given whichever features from the mother and father the parents choose, plus a few from any photo reference they bring along (Anderson 116-117). What with the conceptionariums meaning sexual actions are no longer needed for procreation, it seems that the obvious conclusion



would be that sex is solely for the sake of pleasure then. But if pleasure is most strongly associated with consumerism, then maybe over time sexuality becomes somewhat obsolete. This is, perhaps, the goal of a society in which everything is governed by corporations, to break down human connection and emotion so as to prevent people from banding together and participating in the ensuing riots and protests which Titus sees news of on the feed.

In his essay “Parables for the Postmodern, Post 9/11, and Posthuman World,” Thomas J. Morrissey examines *Feed* as a chiefly satirical text intended to invite young adult readers to be critical

of humanity’s rapid movement toward a capitalistic society completely intertwined with technology. In doing so, Morrissey discusses the novel as a “de-creation myth, ... a consciously sterile re-enactment of Genesis” (195). Viewing Titus and Violet as alternative Adam and Eve figures is not uncommon among scholars, particularly given the direct references to Genesis Anderson provides: the third section is titled “Eden”; Violet shares with Titus the highly processed apple juice when he awakens in the hospital; they explore a “garden” together; and most notably, they awaken together in what seems like a new world, one outside of the circle of the feed. It is like a rebirth, a moment where it seems as if they alone are given a second chance at a life much different than their own. However, the “garden” they are presented with on the moon is a horrifying adaptation of any kind of utopian Eden: “Outside the window, there had been a garden, like, I guess you could call it a courtyard or terrarium? But a long time ago the glass ceiling over the terrarium had cracked, and so everything was dead, and there was moon dust all over everything out there. Everything was gray” (Anderson 62). The description of this garden follows directly after Violet and Titus’ first kiss, a kiss that lacks any sort of emotional description, and which is instead overlooked in favour of the horrific description of the dead garden. As Morrissey writes, “the lunar garden has died because technology has failed. The terrestrial biosphere is dying because technology has been misused. Thus, the garden that was intended to remind lunar visitors of the homeworld’s

bounty instead tells a tale of misapplied creative zeal. The pleasure dome is cracked; Eden is sterile” (196). In one single image any supposed human-nature connection is cracked too, like the glass of the terrarium, and the damage to such a relationship is reflected in the grayness of the garden. Even the garden, which is supposed to be an abundant, fertile space upon which Adam and Eve may lay the foundation for the rest of humanity, is reimagined into a horrific reality of infertility and death. The “binary between technology and nature” has been complicated, through a suggestion that “nature needs technology to survive” (Ostry 101). But demonstrated here is precisely the fact that technology divides the human and the natural, and that very divide cracks the terrarium which is meant to protect the sanctity of Eden. The relationship between Feed’s Adam and Eve cannot overcome their situation; Titus and Violet were not meant to last, for the fruitful environment upon which they are meant to build their kingdom was doomed from the start.

With the many references to sexuality in Feed, it seems unlikely that Anderson chose to omit direct representations of sexual activities based on anxieties related to the sexuality of young people. Rather, the ways in which discussions of sexuality are woven into the language of the text forces the reader to question why physical acts of intimacy are not exhibited, and why industries like pornography and prostitution are not present and intermixed with the corporations that sell material goods and run the country. All things considered, however, Anderson’s choice

not to include any instances of physical, sexual intimacy emphasizes the power of the corporations in Titus’ America over the average consumer, and the environmental degradation and human disconnect that such intense capitalism produces, ultimately acting as a reflection of the dystopian society that Titus is often too ignorant of to portray to the reader himself.

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BLACK AND QUEER INTERSECTIONALITY IN NELLA LARSEN'S PASSING

CHASE THOMSON

Personal identity is one of the most complicated aspects of human sociality—the realms in which our identities exist, coexist, and intermingle are often responsible for the ways in which we interact with the world around us. In the twenty-first century, specifically the last decade, concepts of identity formation and intersectionality have been at the forefront of media and scholarship. While prevalent as of late, the concept of intersectionality is often credited as deriving from the work of Black feminists of the twentieth century—namely, Audre Lorde. As a Black, lesbian, feminist author, Lorde's work emphasizes the importance of acknowledging our positions in society in order to handle social issues effectively: "it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences" (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 115). While Lorde is credited with the conception of intersectionality, many early-twentieth century female writers display nuanced examples of concepts similar to Lorde's future work. In particular, Nella Larsen's seminal 1927 novel, *Passing*, offers insights into the life of Irene Redfield in

1920s New York and Chicago. Generally, Irene navigates society as a proud Black woman; occasionally, she must pass as white in order to ensure her safety, or comfort, in racially discriminatory spaces. While initial inspection of Irene points to her pride, Larsen crafts a queerness that bubbles underneath the surface of Irene's identity. In subtle ways, Irene's rekindled friendship with Clare Kendry also exhibits a kind of homoeroticism between them—presenting the subtle intersectionality of Irene's being. Furthermore, Larsen uses Clare's constant passing in every aspect of her life as a counterpart to Irene's superficial passing. The subtle intersections crafted by Larsen lead me to believe that Irene would inhabit similar positions to those of Audre Lorde. Irene's proud Blackness and shy queerness would have found the space to further develop had she existed during a more modern time. Through analyzing Irene's explicit and implicit positionalities within *Passing*, one can ascertain who Irene Redfield would be today and gain insights into the social boundaries of self-expression in the early twentieth century.

I find it ineffective to analyze the

positionality of Irene Redfield's personal identity without acknowledging the position of the cultural milieu in which she exists. Between the Tulsa Race Massacres and the second rising of the Ku Klux Klan, race relations between white and Black Americans in the 1920's had been tense. Felix Harcourt notes that the Ku Klux Klan rose in popularity once again by avidly publishing positive propaganda throughout American cities and their respective publications, namely in Chicago: "by June 1923, the Chicago Weekly claimed, with justification, to be 'one of the strongest publications in the country supporting the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,'" (Harcourt 33). Larsen's decision to have *Passing* open with Irene Redfield navigating the social scene of 1920's Chicago is no mistake, and it adds an emphasis on race relations at the time. As Lorde notes, American society exists within a sort of 'mythical norm:' "usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure," (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 116). Existing within both white and patriarchal power systems, Black women are forced to face oppression on two fronts: for their Blackness and their womanhood (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 118). In addition, as Lorde mentions, the heteronormativity, or as she describes it "heterosexism," of white and Black society must be considered when understanding the safety concerns that come with people proudly owning their sexuality, as they are "caught between the racism of white women and the homophobia of their sisters" (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 117). Consensual homosexual

intercourse would not be legalized in the United States of America until 2003 (see *Lawrence v. Texas*), therefore, being openly queer in the 1920's meant imminent danger to one's safety and freedom. To belong to categories of "other," as described by Lorde, in regards to your race (non-white), your sex (female), and your sexual orientation (non-straight) would place you in a complicated and dangerous position within society. To belong to two of these categories, or even three, would only intensify that threat. It is imperative to understand Lorde's mythical norm as being the backdrop to Irene's experiences to fully understand Irene's inability to have pride over all facets of her identity. Taking into account the risks Irene would have faced from the dominant group in society, as well as her fellow marginalized citizens, makes clear the context in which Irene is never awarded the opportunity to accept and own all of the social categories to which she belongs.

While establishing the societal limitations that hinder Irene from owning every aspect of her identity, Larsen does, however, illustrate a clear Black pride within Irene throughout *Passing*. This is particularly exemplified in Irene's involvement with the 'Negro Welfare League:' "the Negro Welfare League, you know. I'm on the ticket committee, or, rather, I am the committee," (Larsen 53). This aspect of Irene's character points to not only a pride over her Blackness, but a certain community advocacy. I bring Lorde's work into this analysis of Irene's advocacy for multiple reasons. First and foremost, Lorde's work is an act of activism

and advocacy for Black, queer, and feminist rights. Furthermore, Lorde herself inhabits certain positionalities in society that place her in the category of ‘other,’ however, she does not let these positions hinder her work as an advocate for other marginalized groups. These personal and political facets of Lorde’s identity, and Irene’s for that matter, do not exist individually. As Lorde mentions, the personal is directly tied to the political: “in a world of possibility for us all, our personal visions help lay the groundwork for political action,” (Lorde, *Master’s Tools* 55). Though she exists far before Lorde’s time, Irene is unabashed in her Blackness by participating in an annual, public, and undeniably political committee dedicated to throwing Black-focused events within a white hegemonic society. As many acts of advocacy often are, this is a brave position for Irene to place herself in considering the social milieu of the times she lives in. Considering the moments that Irene owns her Blackness as a form of advocacy or protest begs the question of the meaning in the moments that Irene hides her Blackness by passing as white.

Essentially, passing is the act of Black citizens passing as white, and in the 1920s, the concept of passing became prevalent in New York as a source of fear amongst the white elite (Smith-Pryor 90). Passing had represented a threat to the ecosystem of existence and privilege for the dominant white hegemonic group. Many figured that, if “coloured” citizens could find ways to infiltrate white social circles, they would pose a threat to the purity and security of white society. Furthermore, as Elizabeth

Smith-Pryor notes, “passing as white challenged the belief in the existence of race by pointing out... the permeability of the boundary between... Black and white,” (Smith-Pryor 91). The notion of race as a fixed social category leads to comfort for the oppressors—white Americans—who presume that their race is superior. Passing as a concept flooded the national newspapers in 1924 when Leonard Rhinelander declared that his wife, Alice Jones, had passed as white throughout their marriage. The case against Alice led to New York being considered the “centre for passing” in America (Smith-Pryor 103). Once again, Larsen’s choice of setting is no accident in *Passing*: by setting Irene’s narrative within Chicago and New York, Larsen is placing emphasis on the white hegemonic society that Irene must face as a Black woman and the fears of passing that had been prevalent within white society. Smith-Pryor continues by presenting W.E.B. Dubois’ thoughts on Larsen’s novel in relation to the colour line: “the fear that large numbers of... ‘Negroes’ were ‘crossing over’ to become white tapped into the growing concern... with demarcating exact boundary lines between the races,” (Smith-Pryor 108). Under this social context, I want to introduce specific moments in which Irene actively passes as a white woman.

Though Irene, as examined previously, owns her Blackness by taking part in public Black-focused events, there are moments within the novel where she actively passes as white. Larsen presents two main circumstances in which Irene decides to pass as the dominant race

in society: for comfort and for safety. Passing for comfort is the first example of situational passing that Larsen presents. In the heat of a 1920s Chicago summer, Irene finds herself in the backseat of a taxi, searching for a rooftop restaurant to grab a drink. Without hesitation, her driver suggests, “the Drayton, ma’am?” (Larsen 5). The Drayton Hotel, as we learn later, is a segregated whites-only establishment. Interestingly, Irene is not the originator of the suggestion to pass in this moment—although the taxi driver is clearly unaware that Irene is Black, he is the one who brings up the idea of passing in a whites-only space. Irene’s casual acceptance of this suggestion implies that it isn’t her first instance of passing for the sake of visiting a comfortable establishment that she would otherwise be barred from. While Irene visits the Drayton Hotel’s rooftop for a cool drink, she experiences a chance encounter with her old friend Clare Kendry. Before Irene realizes that the woman looking at her is her old friend, her inner dialogue offers insights into her anxieties in regards to being caught passing: “did that woman, could that woman, somehow know that here before her very eyes on the roof of the Drayton sat a Negro?” (Larsen 7). As quickly as these anxieties enter Irene’s mind, she shrugs them off: “they always took her as an Italian, a Spaniard, a Mexican, or a gipsy,” (Larsen 8). Irene’s inner dialogue points to two interesting aspects of her and the concept of passing. Irene is clearly aware of the dangers of passing—had she been found out to be Black at the Drayton, at best, she would have been thrown out and embarrassed. More interestingly, what this

dialogue also points to is Irene’s familiarity with passing; she reflects on past times that she was mistaken for other races, thus implying that she is quite familiar with her ability to pass and has ample experience with passing in situations prior to the Drayton. Initially, this may seem like Irene trying to assimilate herself into white society, however, Larsen does an efficient job in ensuring that Irene has no interest in joining her oppressors: “white people were so stupid about such things,” (Larsen 7). In successfully passing as white without being detected, Irene holds a secret kind of subversive intellectual power, embodying the ambiguity of Black and white racial distinctions. The act of passing then undermines the hegemonic, white, and patriarchal system of oppression and imposed racial difference—Irene is showing that her passing for comfort is not simply superficial, but rather runs deeper as an example of her taking the power away from her oppressors.

Clare’s individual form of passing counters Irene’s, and elaborates further on some of the reasons why certain Black individuals may seek to pass as white in regards to their safety and comfort. Upon the Drayton Hotel encounter, Irene discovers that Clare is also passing as white, but not only in moments that allow her security or comfort; Clare passes in her everyday life. When Clare had been shipped off to live with her white aunts after her father’s death, she had been forbidden by them to mention her “Negro” ancestry (Larsen 18). Eventually, she had married her wealthy husband and had a child, all under the facade of being a white woman.

Clare's commitment to this facade bears similarities to aforementioned comforts of passing as white, particularly when Clare asks Irene if she has ever considered passing:

"Tell me, honestly, haven't you ever thought of 'passing'?"

Irene answered promptly: "No. Why should I?... You see, Clare, I've everything I want. Except, perhaps, a little ore money."

At that Clare laughed... "Of course," she declared, "that's what everybody wants, just a little more money... And I must say I don't blame them. Money's awfully nice to have. In fact, all things considered, I think... that it's even worth the price." (Larsen 19)

Not only are facets of Clare's identity and desire revealed here, but this passage elevates the concept of passing for comfort and security. While Clare is displayed as mainly passing for prosperity, she also passes for safety. When Irene meets Clare's husband, she learns that Clare is even passing in her private home life. Completely separate from the social scene, Clare had gotten married, birthed a child, and lives completely as a white woman—even her family doesn't know her true race. Complicating the situation, Clare's husband, Jack Bellew, is an avid racist and refers to Clare as 'Nig': "I don't dislike them, I hate them. And so does Nig... they give me the creeps. The black scrimy devils," (Larsen 30). The discomfort and tension of this scene is palpable as Irene tries to hold back her reaction to such vitriolic language and rhetoric: "in Irene, rage had not retreated, but was held by

some dam of caution and allegiance to Clare," (Larsen 31). This tense interaction stands as an example of the second reason Larsen presents for Irene's passing: safety. Irene's ability to stand up and pronounce her Blackness in this moment is restricted by a very real risk to her livelihood; Jack is aggressive, vitriolic, and physically fit and there is no predicting what would occur had Irene revealed that she is a Black woman. Irene, in subduing her innate reaction to Jack's racist remarks, echoes a similar concept in Lorde's writing: "in order to survive, those of us for whom oppression is as American as apple pie have always had to be watchers... for some illusion of protection," (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 114). Adaptability is a skill, Lorde notes, that Black women have had to master for many years when navigating social and racial issues. Clare's upbringing with her aunts reveals a toxic living environment in which her marriage to Jack had been her only way out. However, does Clare Kendry's complete erasure of her Black identity qualify as adaptation or self-preservation? Furthermore, is it truly "worth the price"?

Larsen uses Clare Kendry's total transformation into a white woman to contrast Irene's more selective passing. In addition, Clare's extreme act of passing emphasizes that Irene's passing does not negate her pride as a Black woman. Joona Taipale, in her essay about Tove Jansson's story, *Invisible Child*, reflects on characteristics prevalent in Clare:

Even if there is no doubt that Ninny is alive in the biological sense, she does not properly feel alive and real. It is as if she was not fully in touch with her life, and



therefore when she perceives others, she cannot grasp herself as being seen by them with such an internal reservoir... she is like a ghostly incarnation of 'anyone,' an anonymous X without any individualizing content... she is not active but passive in relation to the social environment. (Taipale 15)

I bring Taipale's analysis of Ninny from *Invisible Child* into discussion to show the similarities it shares with Clare, in the way that their identities are inextricably linked to their passing existence as white women. Clare's acceptance of her husband calling her racially derogatory terms shows her complacency in her own degradation in order to assimilate into privilege. Furthermore, Clare's willingness to bring

her two friends to meet her husband knowing that they are Black women and that Jack is a racist shows a lack of attunement with reality and her life. The interaction between Clare, Jack, and Irene shows Clare's passivity; her only real moment of interjection comes when she playfully tries to quiet her husband's racist remarks: "Really, Jack!" Clare's voice was on the edge of temper," (Larsen 31). While this remark comes after countless derogatory racist comments, Clare's persona never crosses over that edge of temper, but rather passively toes the line. It appears as though Clare has crafted a comfortable, yet entirely unstable, life for herself where she can exist as a quiet, complacent, white housewife.. Later in *Passing*, it appears that

Clare realizes her desire to break out of the constraints she's grown accustomed to: "Clare Kendry had said to her, for whom safety, security, were all important: 'Safe! Damn being safe!' and meant it," (Larsen 51). Clare continues to express her desire to reconnect with her "people," and seems to express remorse for the life she's created for herself: "if it hadn't been for that, I'd have gone on to the end, never seeing any of you. But that did something to me, and I've been so lonely since! You can't know... never anyone to really talk to," (Larsen 52). Clare's self-erasure of her Blackness has created a "ghostly incarnation" (Taipale 15) of the childhood friend that Irene knew many years prior. Instead, what remains, is a ghostly shell of a woman longing for her old identity, but stuck in a strange invisible life that she's created for herself.

Irene's reactions upon discovering that Clare is living her life wholeheartedly as a white woman acts as further indication of the Black pride within Irene. Once Irene leaves Clare's home, her anger rears its head, albeit in a subtle way: "I was more than a little angry myself... That, Irene pointed out, was exactly like Clare... Taking a chance, and not at all considering anyone else's feelings," (Larsen 33). Irene is proud of being Black and, therefore, would never imagine sacrificing that part of her identity in order to marry a white man. Her disdain over Clare's life choices, once again, parallels with the writings of Lorde: "for the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change... this fact is only

threatening to... women who still define the master's house as their only source of support" (Lorde, *Master's Tools* 54). Irene appears to share similar sentiments in her disapproval of Clare's consistent passing, apparent when she vows to not see Clare again after meeting Jack. While these sentiments may not seem as surefire as Lorde's potent essays, I urge you to recall the time differences between Irene and Lorde. Had Irene lived in a more modern time, based on the connections I've presented thus far, she may very well have been a more outspoken activist for Black civil rights. Furthermore, Irene seems to silence her response to Jack's racist rants for the sake of her own safety, as well as Clare's. Could Irene's protection of Clare imply a connection beyond platonic friendship?

While I've analyzed Irene's relationship with her racial identity, there is an undeniable queerness bubbling beneath the surface of *Passing* that points to an intersection in Irene's sexual identity. From the moment Irene spots Clare on the rooftop of the Drayton Hotel, Larsen uses an array of romantic language to describe their interactions: "an attractive-looking woman, was Irene's opinion, with those dark, almost black, eyes and that wide mouth like a scarlet flower against the ivory of her skin" (Larsen 6). Irene explicitly expresses admiration of Clare's mouth and figure through her summer clothing. As Elizabeth Dean points out in her queer reading of *Passing*, gazing seems to be a tool Larsen uses to "explain the central tensions of queerness and respectability in the novel" (97). Furthermore, when Clare begins to gaze at Irene, Irene seems

more concerned with how her attire looks than if she's being exposed as passing: "had she, in her haste in the taxi, put her hat on backwards?... Perhaps there was a streak of powder somewhere on her face" (Larsen 7). Irene continues to describe Clare as "lovely" or the mood around their interactions as "seductive." When Irene swears to never see Clare again after meeting her husband, this oath may be viewed as Irene's repression or shunning of her feelings for Clare. However, the oath lasts no longer than a couple weeks. When Clare shows up at Irene's home unexpectedly, one would expect Irene to be angry, instead, she asks for Clare's forgiveness for shunning her (Larsen 52). Certainly, if we are to view *Passing* as a subtle queer novel, it is imperative to acknowledge the complexities that queerness adds to Irene's personal and social identity. Dean makes clear that "queer women sat at the bottom of the hierarchy of respectability" (Dean 99). For Irene to acknowledge, or succumb to, any sort of sapphic tension with Clare, it would mean placing herself in a detrimental and dangerous social position. Irene's denial of her connection with Clare has two-fold implications: she is uncomfortable with how Clare lives as a white woman, or she is uncomfortable with the queer feelings that Clare evokes in her. Interestingly, these two possibilities represent the two important aspects of Irene's intersectional identity. It would be unjust to analyze Irene's queerness as separate from her Blackness, as both of these aspects directly impact the way she navigates the world.

As Lorde makes clear, "refusing to

recognize difference makes it impossible to see the different problems and pitfalls facing us," (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 118). Accepting Irene's queerness and Blackness presents new potential motives for the ways in which Irene acts throughout *Passing*. Does Irene have a difficult time forgetting Clare because of her romantic feelings? Is Irene's resentment towards Clare caused by Clare's interference in Irene's Black pride? Irene's actions point to the possibility of these realities. Had Clare not been considered during Irene and Jack's tense interaction, Irene could have simply left or revealed her Blackness in a show of pride to combat Jack's racism. Irene's potential romantic interest in Clare further complicates the situation. Had Irene displayed her Blackness, she would have risked never seeing Clare again or causing Clare serious harm. Perhaps Irene's feelings for Clare interfered with her ability to be proudly Black in this moment, establishing another cause for Irene's attempt to ostracize Clare from her life. In her review of Lorde and Jansson's work, Hallie Wells raises interesting points in regards to the concealment and revealing of one's queerness: "effort [is] required both to conceal and to reveal. Neither of these processes are discrete events; rather, they require ongoing effort and vigilance" (Wells 227). Irene's refusal to see Clare, under Wells' analysis, can very well be seen as an active vigilant effort to conceal her queer desires. In addition, Wells notes that concealment and disclosure require a "negotiation [with] a primarily heterosexual social world, as well as a relation to an 'other' who is desired" (Wells

227). Brian, Irene's husband, becomes the negotiator within their heterosexual world as their marriage is primarily void of intimacy. As for the desired "other" that Wells mentions, I argue that this is represented in Clare: Irene's desire for Clare peeks through clearly when Clare asks, "you mean you don't want me, 'Rene?'" To which Irene responds, "no, Clare, it's not that" (Larsen 50).

The subtle romantic interactions between Irene and Clare further establishes Irene's shy queerness throughout *Passing*. I'd like to extend Wells' framework of concealment versus disclosure to cover the moments when Irene and Clare conceal or disclose their racial identities as well. Passing requires active concealment of one's race, a negotiation of the white hegemonic society in which you are passing, and the desire for some sort of "other," whether that be embodied by a person or a form of prosperity. This then echoes the idea that we cannot consider one part of someone's identity without taking into account all parts of their identity, thus proving the intersectionality that is at the heart of *Passing*.

Although her classic novel, *Passing*, is a mere ninety-four pages long, Nella Larsen is able to weave a nuanced story of racial tension and queer desire, and display the social limitations of Black queer people in the 1920s. In connecting Irene's proud Blackness and shy queerness with the writing of Audre Lorde, it becomes clear that Irene is limited in owning her intersectional position within a white, heteronormative world. After examining Irene's multifaceted identity,

it becomes clear that she could have very well inhabited similar positions to those of many Black, lesbian, feminist women had she existed in a more modern time. Between the advocacy she partakes in to the romanticism she displays with Clare, Irene Redfield is a pillar of Black feminism in *Passing*—whether she is aware of it or not. While Irene's voice may have been louder and prouder had she existed in a more modern context, Black, queer, feminist voices are still erased and ignored in contemporary movements such as the LGBTQ Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter. As Jade Petermon and Leland Spencer explain, "#BlackLivesMatter is, at its core, a movement rooted in queer Black womanhood. Its founders, Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi, all identify as Black women, and Cullors and Garza identify as queer" (Petermon and Spencer, 340). While the movement itself had been created by three Black women and two queer women, all too often the representation of Black Lives Matter "erases the founders' identities," (Petermon and Spencer 339). In regards to the LGBTQ Rights Movement, many critics point out the "white hegemony and transphobia" within the movement itself (Petermon and Spencer 342). Just as it had been important to understand the 1920's social milieu in order to understand how Irene navigates it, it is important to understand today's social milieu to understand how Black, queer, feminist women are still marginalized. America in 2020 is a potent example of the ways in which Black and queer lives are still in danger. While Irene does not exist in a modern time, to speculate on

who she could have been allows for a kind of introspection into ourselves: we could all use a bit of Irene Redfield and Audre Lorde's bravery in combating our hegemonic and heterosexist society.

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ALONE TOGETHER: FRIENDSHIP IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S FLUSH

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A woman and her dog, living through the words of Virginia Woolf, experience the joys and sorrows of friendship—of a friendship that spans the life of that dog from his puppyhood to his last breath and that leaves its mark upon the woman. Woolf's fictionalized biography *Flush* depicts the dynamic relationship between the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning and *Flush*, her English cocker spaniel. In their union, the two are “alone together” (Woolf 22, 36). Deceptively simple, this pairing of words points to ideas and processes that underpin the foundations of friendship. This essay examines the various meanings of “alone together” and considers the novel alongside Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay “Friendship.” Investigating Woolf's intriguing oxymoron, especially when placed in conversation with Emerson's philosophy of friendship, offers a way of reading Woolf's characters and their relationships that ultimately illuminates our understanding of the nature of friendship across species and between humans.

“Alone” implies the delineation of identity that separates the self from others. Elizabeth Barrett's individuality is relatively easy to ascertain: she is a human being

with thoughts and a will of her own. Even through the displaced canine perspective of the novel, her personhood is clear. *Flush*'s identity, on the other hand, is the terrain of greater creative speculation. In our society, non-human animals are not universally held to possess the cognitive abilities that give rise to subjectivity, and their inability to express themselves through human language perpetuates the mystery. Woolf, however, counters our perception of animals by portraying her canine protagonist with an active, inquisitive mind and “an even excessive appreciation of human emotions” (Woolf 6). Because most of the story is told through *Flush*'s viewpoint, using a narrative technique termed internal focalization or figural narration (Herman 554), readers become fully aware of his ability to comprehend the world. The narrator vividly describes how *Flush* understands reality, and the use of free indirect discourse is particularly effective in demonstrating the dog's sensitivities and worldview. Although Mr. Barrett and Mr. Browning's willingness to have *Flush* sacrificed when he is captured by the thieves of Whitechapel suggests their disregard for his consciousness,

other characters recognize the dog for the sentient being readers know him to be. Miss Barrett may at times misunderstand or underestimate Flush, but she never fails to appreciate the existence of her companion's subjectivity—which is significant in her friendship with the cocker spaniel.

Prior to Flush's arrival, Miss Barrett seems to have had a rather solitary existence, giving even more weight to the word "alone" and to how this concept is transformed when the two characters are "alone together." Confined to her bedroom, her social interactions are limited to those who come to meet her and, as much as she may enjoy their society, she is "relieved by solitude" (Emerson) when they leave: "Miss Barrett sank back very white, very tired on her pillows. Flush crept closer to her. Mercifully they were alone again" (Woolf 28). Emerson declares that "Almost every man we meet requires some civility." Indeed, when visitors are expected, "The bed would be carefully disguised as a sofa... Miss Barrett herself would be wrapped becomingly in Indian shawls; the toilet things would be scrupulously hidden under the busts of Chaucer and Homer" (Woolf 27). More than just acts of hospitality, these preparations aim at disguising certain parts of Elizabeth's life, and she feels the need to dissemble even when accompanied by members of her own household: "So long as Wilson was in the room she fiddled about with her knife and fork. But directly the door was shut and they were alone, she made a sign" (Woolf 28) and Flush came to take her dinner. Later, her father comes to check if she had eaten as he commanded and is satisfied at "his daughter's

obedience" (Woolf 29). Such efforts reflect the hardship of pleasing others which Emerson discusses as an impediment to genuine relationships, and they take a toll on one's experience of sincere subjectivity. Perhaps Elizabeth, at this point in her life, would share Emerson's sentiment that "All association must be a compromise, and, what is worst, the very flower and aroma of the flower of each of the beautiful natures disappears as they approach each other." Emerson further proposes that "Every man alone is sincere. At the entrance of a second person, hypocrisy begins." As far as Miss Barrett's feelings are discernable in Woolf's work, she does seem to find truth only in solitude—that is, until Flush comes into her life.

When the narrator declares that Miss Barrett is alone with Flush, we do not take that to mean she is alone because her subjectivity occupies a space devoid of other minds. With him, she does not feel the need to alter her behaviour in the least, but we can understand that there is a difference between the sorrowful solitude that marks her life before Flush's arrival and the quiet, joyful, honest companionship she has with the dog precisely because we—and Miss Barrett—know that Flush thinks and feels. Thus, moments in which she is authentic in the presence of her cocker spaniel do not presuppose that he lacks consciousness; rather, they reflect a state of harmony and communion between the consciousness of two beings, or, in David Herman's words, the way "human experiences unfold in the context of a wider ecology of minds" (558). Considering Elizabeth's reliance upon solitude to express the parts of herself she

keeps hidden from others, a friend with whom she may be “alone together” is of the greatest value, and the ability to act without dissimulation in front of another can be taken as a marker, if not the marker, of profound friendship. In fact, Emerson declares that “The essence of friendship is entireness, a total magnanimity and trust,” and that “A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him I may think aloud.” Because Flush can see Miss Barrett completely—in all her infirmity and her sorrow—he can also move her completely: the cocker spaniel brings her such joy that “For a moment she was transformed; she was a nymph and Flush was Pan” (Woolf 26).

If being seen is such a powerful, meaningful experience, feeling invisible, especially within a friendship, is equally impactful. When Mrs. Browning “looked through [Flush] as if he were not there” we are told “That was the cruellest look she had ever given him. It was worse than her cold anger when he bit Mr. Browning in the leg; worse than her sardonic laughter when the door shut upon his paw in Regent’s Park... She looked through him as if he were invisible” (Woolf 98-99). To have his mistress in front of him and yet to remain unseen indicates disconnection. The greatest sorrow a friend can experience is, Flush suggests, to be together but feel alone. This passage, then, indicates a particularly bitter signification of “alone together.” Even though Woolf never uses the expression in this context, her oxymoron does hold such meaning, and it is precisely this sense of the phrase that renders friendships in which people make themselves utterly visible such

dangerous emotional ventures, which Flush in the depths of his agony well discovers. Having such potential for ambiguity, the words “alone together” embody the fragility of relationships.

Perhaps because his canine nature is innately open or perhaps because his lack of language means his thoughts remain somewhat inscrutable regardless of how he acts, Flush never dissembles. His sentiments are at times misunderstood but he does not hide any part of himself. Consequently, he does not need solitude to experience freedom as Miss Barrett does, and his authenticity facilitates the development of his friendship with the poet. Though Miss Barrett’s relationship with Mr. Browning demonstrates that genuine interactions are possible among humans, with him she first needs to build intimacy through months of letter-writing and subsequent afternoon encounters: “Miss Barrett’s voice had been forced and unnaturally lively at first. Now it had gained a warmth and an ease that [Flush] had never heard in it before” (Woolf 40). Flush’s nature, however, makes immediate authenticity possible and, from her first moment with the little dog, Elizabeth acts naturally. As such, their relationship may stand as a model of what other interactions can become if they reach their potential for genuine connection.

Once Miss Barrett and Mr. Browning become closer, we understand that they too are able to be not only “together, but “alone together” and Flush’s jealousy of Mr. Browning demonstrates that he understands the difference between the two. Flush is not bothered by Miss Barrett’s other visitors because, presumably, he

recognizes that her relationship with them is of a distinct, more distant kind, but the love she feels for Mr. Browning prompts Flush to see him as a threat. Likewise, the cocker spaniel initially perceives Mrs. Browning's son as an unwelcome competitor for his lady's affection. Even though Flush himself is still not deceitful, his hostility towards Mr. Browning and the baby makes him unable to see them for who they are, which renders connection between them initially impossible. Thus, unity relies not only upon genuine self-presentation, but also on an accurate perception of others. Finding himself all alone, Flush ultimately realizes that the solution to his troubles is to resist such blinding jealousy and to accept those whom Miss Barrett loves as a part of herself (Woolf 46). Once he does so, harmony is restored to their relationships: "He was with them, not against them, now; their hopes, their wishes, their desires were his... [they] are joined in love" (Woolf 48). Flush eventually develops friendships with both Mr. Browning and with the baby. Thus, presumably, it becomes possible for all four of them to be "alone together."

We are told that "At Three Mile Cross Flush had mixed impartially with taproom dogs and the Squire's greyhounds; he had known no difference between the tinker's dog and himself" (Woolf 20). In London, however, Flush discovers some dogs are esteemed and others scorned based on their breed or lack thereof. As much as the Spaniel Club functions as a commentary on the overvaluing of social class and the arbitrariness of such distinctions, these passages are more than mere satire: they offer an exploration of how an urban,



aristocratic socialization may shape one's—in this case a dog's—worldview. Such a reading is in agreement with Herman's proposition that Woolf's "fictional practice foregrounds the way conscious experiences arise from the interplay between embodied intelligent agents and their surrounding cultural, social, and material environments" (553). Flush's nature changes because of the environment to which Miss Barrett exposes him, and his realization that there are differences among dogs instigates an inward turn in the little cocker spaniel. For the first time, it seems, Flush wonders about his own identity: "Flush knew before the summer had passed that there is no equality among dogs: there are high

dogs and low dogs. Which, then, was he?” (Woolf 21).

When Flush first comes to Wimpole Street, he looks at the mirror and does not recognize himself: “Suddenly Flush saw staring back at him from a hole in the wall another dog with bright eyes flashing, and tongue lolling! He paused amazed. He advanced in awe” (Woolf 14). After his introduction to the laws of the Spaniel Club, however, he realizes that the animal on the wall is himself: “he examined himself carefully in the looking-glass. Heaven be praised, he was a dog of birth and breeding!” (Woolf 21). As Pauline Macadré points out, the “projection of human feelings onto Flush reaches its peak during the episodes of the looking-glass, which may be read, in the light of Lacan’s mirror-stage theory, as a defining moment in the constitution of the self” (par. 3). Through Flush’s upbringing in London, therefore, the human view of society and of selfhood are passed onto the dog. Flush already has subjectivity before he enters the world of Wimpole Street, but distinguishing himself from others makes him aware of his individuality. Thus, in a way, socialization creates “alone” for Flush. The identity formed through the stratification of dogs is, moreover, a rather artificial one, and, although Flush is never dissimulative, his snobbery constrains his self-expression and his ability to live according to his more genuine instincts. Consequently, Flush’s awareness of his pedigree shapes his behaviour in the streets of London, but, when he is with Miss Barrett, Flush’s knowledge of the Kennel Club appears to have no effect. Just as Miss Barrett lets go of the demands of social

decorum when she is alone with Flush, so is he able to forget about the rules of canine society when he is alone with her. In their relationship, such exterior constructs are irrelevant—their friendship is based upon the parts of identity that are more innate and enduring.

In Italy, the rules of the Spaniel Club do not apply, and Flush can at last act like a dog, following his instincts with satisfaction. Likewise, “Mrs. Browning was exploring her new freedom and delighting in the discoveries she made” (Woolf 73) and, whereas in England Flush notices that Miss Barrett’s behaviour changes in front of others, in Italy he makes no such observations. There, both find an environment in which social distinctions are less relevant, and, although “the tie which bound them together was undeniably still binding” (Woolf 78), Flush and Elizabeth feel less of a need for each other: Flush can roam about freely and Mrs. Browning has a fulfilling, healthy life of her own. Thus, in a society where individuals can act without dissimulation in public, being “alone together” with a close friend becomes less important—it is no longer the only available source of genuine connection. Considering that both Elizabeth and Flush are much happier in Florence than they are in London, a careful examination of the politics behind Woolf’s representation of “alone together” highlights the novel’s criticism of the social divides of Victorian England.

Throughout his essay, Emerson reveals an ambivalent view of friendship, wishing simultaneously to maintain his distance from his friends and to unite his soul

with theirs so completely as to reach a transcendental unity. He asks: "Why should we desecrate noble and beautiful souls by intruding on them? ... Let him be to me a spirit. A message, a thought, a sincerity, a glance from him, I want, but not news, nor pottage. I can get politics, and chat, and neighbourly conveniences from cheaper companions. Should not the society of my friend be to me poetic, pure, universal, and great as nature itself?" (Emerson). Emerson recognizes the difficulty of what he wishes for: "The higher the style we demand of friendship, of course the less easy to establish it with flesh and blood. We walk alone in the world. Friends, such as we desire, are dreams and fables. But a sublime hope cheers ever the faithful heart, that elsewhere, in other regions of the universal power, souls are now acting, enduring, and daring, which can love us, and which we can love."

Whereas such relations may be hard to attain in the human realm, Woolf's canine protagonist may be capable of such a feat. Since the kinds of particularities that hamper human relationships have no impact upon his friendship with Elizabeth Barrett, the union that exists between the cocker spaniel and the poet may be inherently of a more transcendental kind. Some distance between Flush and Miss Barrett is inevitable because "The fact was that they could not communicate with words" (Woolf 25) and they perceive the world in utterly different ways. Miss Barrett "with all her poet's imagination" cannot understand his canine instincts or perceive the smells and sounds only Flush knows, and "Flush was equally at a loss to account

for Miss Barrett's emotions" (Woolf 25). Flush and Elizabeth are, therefore, bound by the constraints of identity, experience, nature, and viewpoint—and yet, they are connected. Woolf writes:

As they gazed at each other each felt: Here am I—and then each felt: But how different! Hers was the pale worn face of an invalid, cut off from air, light, freedom. His was the warm ruddy face of a young animal; instinct with health and energy. Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other? She might have been—all that; and he—But no. Between them lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another. She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog. Thus closely united, thus immensely divided, they gazed at each other. (15)

Standing on opposite sides of the "wildest gulf," their minds are ultimately not united by cognition or language but by love.

Perhaps Flush and Elizabeth's relationship gives rise to a new meaning of "alone together": though alone in their subjectivities, they are together in a friendship that transcends even the most drastic of differences. This understanding of "alone together" may be particularly apt in describing cross-species friendships—formed despite and across gaps in perspective, communication, and understanding, these relationships are inherently situated at the margins of cognitive and experiential differences. Relations among humans, however, must also, even if to a lesser degree, surpass the divides of identity and perspective if they

are to substantiate what Emerson proposes when he says, “I find them, or rather not I, but the Deity in me and in them derides and cancels the thick walls of individual character, relation, age, sex, circumstance, at which he usually connives, and now makes many one.”

The nature of Flush and Elizabeth Barrett’s relationship is complex. Woolf shows that their bond can be frayed. Nonetheless, through all the trouble and turmoil they encounter, their friendship persists. When Flush is kidnapped and placed in torturous conditions, reality itself seems to fade to him: “The whole of that life and its emotions floated away, dissolved, became unreal” (Woolf 55). Once Flush reaches the depths of his anguish, we are told that “If he still held to hope, it was to something nameless and formless; the featureless face of someone he still called ‘Miss Barrett.’ She still existed; all the rest of the world was gone; but she still existed... his last hope—Miss Barrett” (Woolf 62). The memory of his friend sustains Flush through his suffering even in the absence of actual, physical closeness. As such, yet another meaning of “alone together” emerges: even though each individual is physically alone, in friendship they remain ever together. Such a reading may explain why Emerson affirms: “Let the soul be assured that somewhere in the universe it should rejoin its friend, and it would be content and cheerful alone for a thousand years.”

Considering the fragility of relationships and the potential for disconnection inherent in the very words that describe the central friendship of the story, perhaps

we need to understand “alone together” in the same way we understand “alone” and “together”: as temporary, changeable states, which are nonetheless real and mark our existence. Nevertheless, Woolf’s oxymoron does, of course, mean more. “Alone together” is different from both “alone” and “together.” “Alone” implies isolation and, to Elizabeth Barrett, sadness, but “alone with” does not—it indicates connection and joy. Moreover, Miss Barrett may spend her afternoons “together” with her visitors or her family, but those interactions are devoid of the truth and authenticity that exist when she is alone and, thus, of the kind of intimacy and communion she finds when she is at last “alone together” with those to whom she is closest. Moreover, the unity denoted by being “alone together” seems to persist in our memory with a unique force. Woolf’s complex pairing of words indicates a connection that can remain long after all that is temporary has faded: when physical proximity is absent and when the boundaries between species, the confines of individuality, and reality itself have been forgotten, the friendship of those who are “alone together” endures.

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THE FUNERARY ROUND

FRANCOIS PELOQUIN

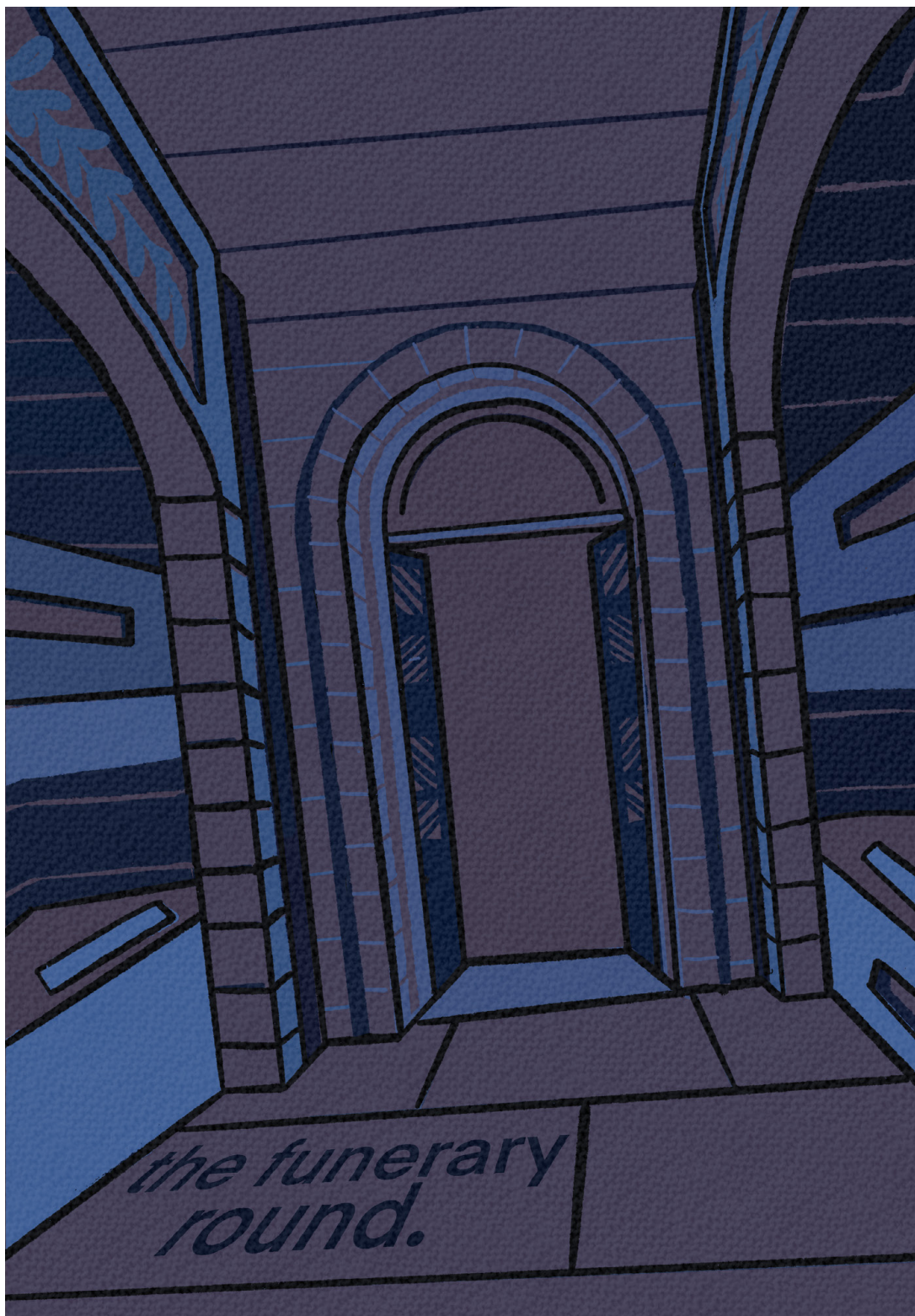
My mother goes first,
turning herself into the clock
that stopped right twice each year,
a metronome of albums, candles, and prose;

my father next,
silent, knowing the boy
was not his, becoming the keys of the piano
that tried each spare room in heaven;

my sisters later,
reshaping last words into
cutting rights, last pictures
into stained glass;

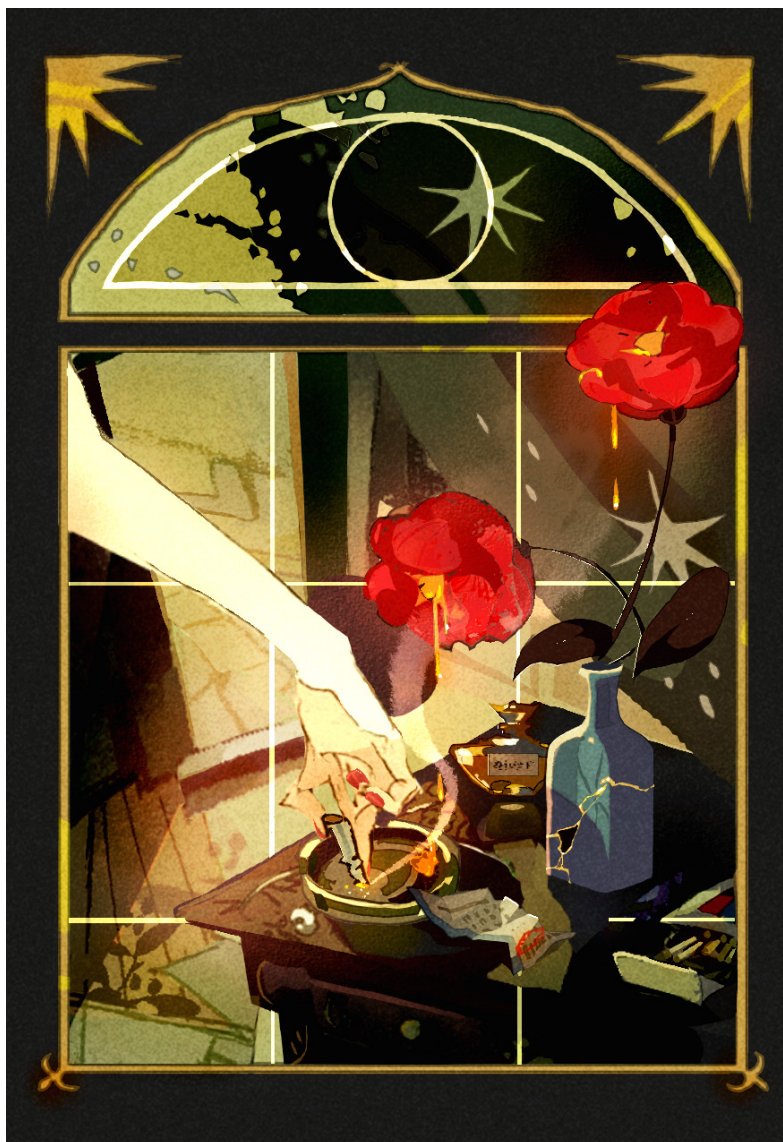
finally me and my brothers,
borrowing, in turns, his nineteenth year,
trying on his wrists and clavicles for size
before throwing them off like hand-me-downs.

What I do know: That the pages
have never stopped filling with your sound.
That we who remain are cursed
to form and reform ourselves
to your echo
of pavement on bone.



THE BAZAAR OF DISCLOSURE

CICELY WILLIAMS



If you tell me why you always ring the Hornet hive doorbell
and wait with a spoon thinking it's a honey hive, thinking
the amber inhabitants will remind you to wipe your feet on the
welcome mat before letting you swallow and scoop honey soup and larvae lava,
I'll tell you why I stood Swan-Lake-point-toed
on the dining room chair and took down the disco ball and dipped
it in a milk bowl and swallowed it whole

If you tell me why you bend the sharp barbs of blackthorn
bushes into holiday bows while distracted on picnics
And why in grass-stained gingham you envy the pea green caterpillar
crawling around your wrist, ticklish bracelet of bliss,
I'll tell you why I blot my lipstick on each and every lottery ticket
and why I imagine that my go-to shade's name "Ruby Adore"
is the stage name of a showgirl with a perpetual hangnail who inhales
hot Belmonts backstage, dewes up her skin with glycerin, pickpockets
her admirers' diamonds and hides them between each of her ribs

If you tell me why you bottle sunrays to uncork them at midnight and sniff
the cinder and wax bone cologne of Helios
and why you don't use the word "lush" enough for someone
who has soaked in moss baths in April and who whined
that there wasn't enough foxglove in eden,
and why you beat your shadow for her bad posture
and why you cried, not when the primrose wilted
but when the Calico scratched her trachea
on the rickety table and its vase teetered and smashed
with the clatter of a glass deluge on hardwood,
I'll tell you why I dove to grab at its shards with my naked
hands even though the broom was closeted right next to the cataclysm
And why I did not flinch when a small mangled fragment,
a mouse's mirror, martyred my fingertip.

NKWAGALA

MORGAN GOVIER

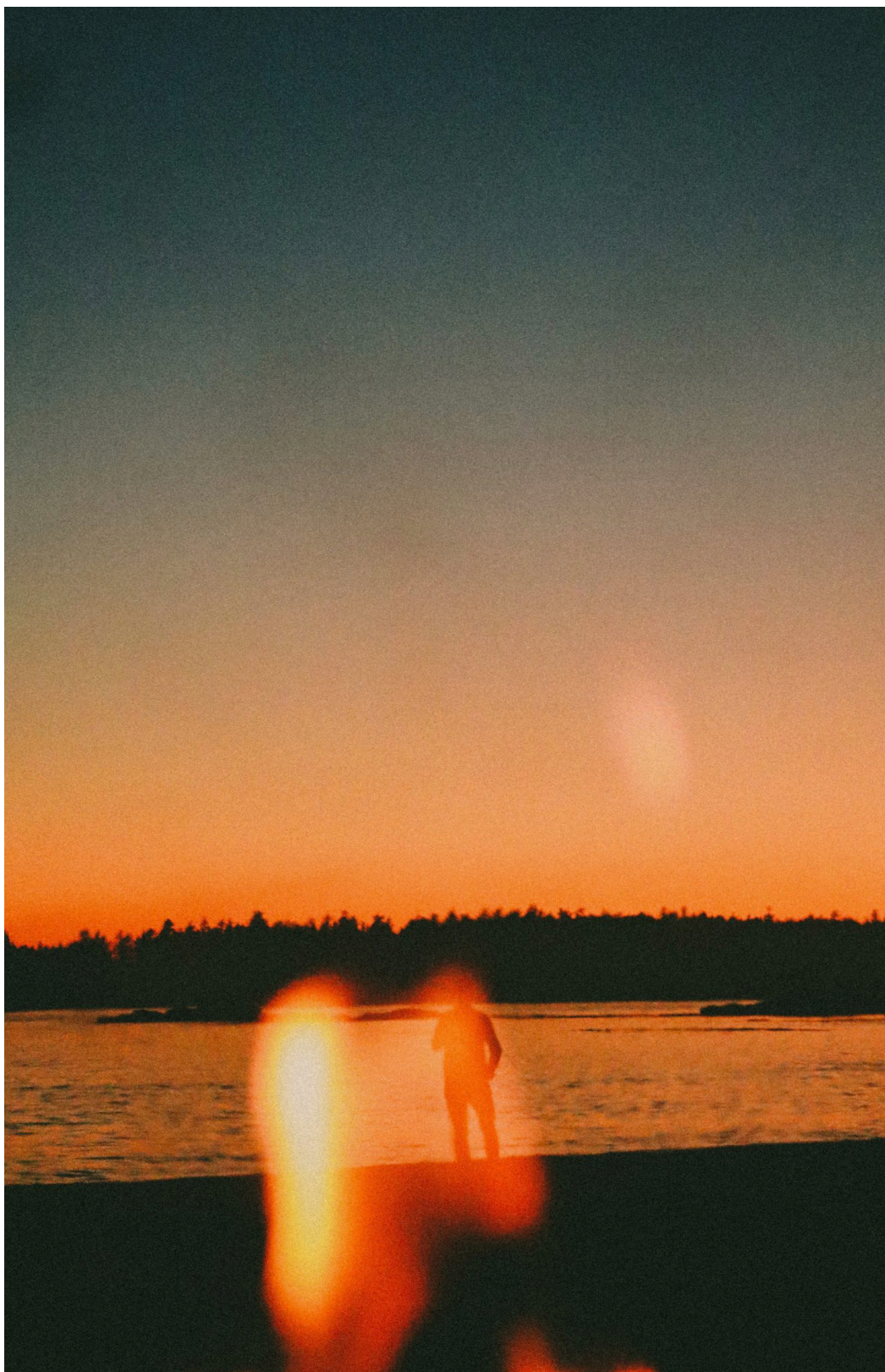
I've been dreaming about
Africa and summer,
and clothes that stick to my skin.
You and me,
we still feel like a fever dream.
I fall asleep in my cold sheets
and wake up in night sweats
beside you,
with your arm loose
around my waist.
There's something about the birds
and the midnight sermons
that was so comforting
to fall asleep to:
the way the Nile smells at night
and the dust that fills my lungs.
I think I left myself there,
in the red dirt and jackfruit trees.
Maybe you'll find me one day,
maybe you'll wake up
and the air won't sting
and you'll repave your broken skin
with all the parts I left behind.



DUSK, AND THEN DAWN (TOFINO, SEPTEMBER 2020)

CAYLIE WARKENTIN

I intended to take a photo of a stranger standing solitary on the shoreline, looking out towards Wickaninnish Island as dusk descended on what is currently known as Tofino, British Columbia, on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the *ł̓aʔuukʷiʔaḥ* (Tla-o-qui-aht) and *nuučaahnulʔaḥ nismá* (Nuu-chah-nulth) First Nations. Instead I captured the silhouette of a man enveloped and illuminated by the burnt orange glow of a stray campfire spark that flew from the embers like a firefly and hovered, ever so briefly, before my lens. The more I look at the photo, the more memory and vision become blurred. I begin to get the sense that he is both looking outwards towards the horizon while at the same time looking before him, at the glow of a hundred campfires along Mackenzie Beach, and to the people huddled around them – familiar constellations in a new sky. When I reflect back on the photos I captured during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is this photo that remains at the forefront of my mind, of man standing alone – frighteningly small, but awash in the light of others; at times lonely, but never alone.



LIGHT GREMLIN

AILSA MCFADYEN-MUNGALL



This series, which has garnered the name Light Gremlin, attempts to recreate the contradictory and confusing feelings of depression, while simultaneously suggesting that beauty can be found anywhere, even in dark moments. Light Gremlin is a turn to gratitude for conscious experience, regardless of what that may entail. The figures are muddled, drawn-out, confused: they both blend into the shadowy background, and are yet distinct from it. Time seems to fall away, with light smeared across the photo through use of a slow shutter speed, yet the figures are nonetheless stuck in distorted positions within the confines of the frame. The figures are anguished, yet seem to rest in some divine light despite their turmoil. Light Gremlin invites the viewer to relish the confusion, the ignorance, and the immense sorrow that is essential to the human experience. It asks them to sit in their uncomfortable thoughts, and to search for beauty in even the most troubling of places. It asks them to be a gremlin, in the light.





AERODYNAMICS

FINLAY POGUE

No town looked less aerodynamic than Des Moines, Iowa, when the Earharts moved there in the autumn of 1907. It was all a special kind of coal-dust black, from the blocky Fourth Street high-rises towering some six-seven stories over the little blackened alleys; the charred brick Episcopal churches, their desperate crosses reaching meekly into the sky—to the parks, like sunken, hungry cheeks, and the flat endless corn wastes that enveloped the Earharts as they crept into the city on the trembling back of their Model A. Amelia felt a heaviness, perched on the towering luggage lashed down and swaying on the boot of the car, as if the setting sun was hauling the corn and dirt and coal dust down with it into the night. Pidge was lolled asleep in Mother's arms and her head bobbed casually out over the road. Amelia noticed, her mind wandering, that as her sister's drool escaped her mouth it was whipped into the evening in the car's slipstream like moonlight on the wings of bats. She closed her eyes too and, atop the engine's wild snorting, drifted away over the wingless city.

Δ

Under a violet sky the great pinstriped balloon hurtled towards the spires of rust rock that waited like knives to thrash the Explorigator and its crew. The Moon People in their glowing orb-ships pursued—maybe six-seven of them—and on board the Explorigator the crew could hear their howls of fury. Captain Earhart gripped the great wooden wheel of the airship and hollered back to the coal-shovelers, "Give it all you've got, boys!" But the engine, a complex tangle of black tubes and glass dials that looked like spiders' eyes, was billowing jet smoke into the balloon's slipstream. One of the Moon People had tampered with the wires in the night so that, in a wretched ball of flame, the engine had erupted and the Explorigator had begun its harrowing course down to the hostile and hungry-looking desert world below.

Admiral Pidge sat glumly at the captain's side, binoculars hanging heavy around her neck—all hope lost. Bracing the steering wheel with her knee, Captain Earhart grabbed the moody crewmember and shook her, yelling, "Snap out of it! I can't do this without you, Admiral!" The captain's eyes were frenzied, and Pidge, though reluctant, almost couldn't help but smile and gamely raise her binoculars, despite the roar of creosote smoke, the war-cries of the Moon People, and the ravenous air whipping over the

windshield. “What’s the situation, Admiral?”

But it was too late, and Captain Earhart knew it. With a supersonic boom, like a million birds exploding all at once, and a terrifying shudder that threw the whole crew onto the ship’s wooden floor, the Explorigator began wheeling out of control, the balloon’s air shrieking out of some unseen hole, propelling them with incomprehensible speed directly towards the ground. Pidge began crying, but in her last moments of life, Captain Earhart felt finally in complete control and, gripping the spokes of the steering wheel, felt with satisfaction the Explorigator’s tremulous death rattle.



During her lunch breaks, which were just fifteen minutes in the snow on the stone steps of Spadina Hospital, Amelia watched the planes come in and out of Armour Heights airfield to the north. Sometimes Aircos and what looked like S.E.5s would fly directly overhead, and even though they were high enough to pass like needles through the winter clouds, to Amelia they might as well have pollarded the nude, black-boned maples that lined Spadina Avenue. Redfaced, she sat wrapped in a hospital blanket savouring air that didn’t smell like blood or hypochlorite, clicking her jaw which was gently throbbing in the cold. Her hands had started shaking recently, trembling like the year’s last colourless leaves; like her father’s hands had in St. Paul the last time she’d seen him, struggling with his keys in the wasted streets. Years ago. She watched her hands intently, as if her red knuckles and long white fingers were picking up clandestine radio frequencies. Her sister was here, somewhere, in this low, snow-scrabble city... She missed her; hadn’t spoken, the two of them, in almost two weeks. It was too hard. Amelia spent twelve hours a day at the hospital, either in the kitchen or in the pharmacy sorting medicine into little white paper cups. Making her rounds, she walked through the rows of white iron beds filled with men folded like scrap metal into myriad positions, some thrashing, some twitching, some contorted in sleep. The single-paned hallways rung at all times with screams that sounded to Amelia like the distant engines of failing prop-airplanes. But out on the steps, all she could hear was the rattle of trucks along the frozen roads and the blood pulsing in her ears. She watched her breath in the air and the poor, hobbling people, soldiers, streaming along the Spadina grounds in the arms of nurses. And, to the south, an airplane emerged like a black knucklebone just grazing the sky. It moved so precisely, so unerringly forwards, it seemed to be riding the 79th meridian like a Model T off a factory line. For a moment she forgot to breathe, and her heart ossified inside her; she stood, draped in hospital greys, staring at the plane, and only then realized her hands had stopped trembling entirely.



The max. speed of her Kinner Airster was 85mph, cruising speed 70, all wind conditions considered. Amelia sat goggled in the shadow of the biplane's top-wing glaring through the wooden blur of the fix-pitch propeller turning 1200 times a minute. She kept a close eye on the altimeter as she took her yellow-winged bird, "The Canary" down through the white into the deep, expanding green of Los Padres, the endless hills poking through the fog like drops of motor-oil on canvas. Around her streaked the erasure of the wind, the keening of the dappled outboard world taking the top layer of skin off her lips, scrabbling the plywood sides of the plane with its clockwise hands looking for loose rivets, surging through the rudder stick clenched between her knees, taking with it the fear of the mountains looming like mid-Pacific waves on all sides, taking her feet and legs and blowing her brains in a red mess out into the sky. When the fog closed in again she pulled "The Canary" up out of the black manzanita into a steep skyward climb towards the weak sun; as the delicate dials each crept towards the red, and her body became heavy in her seat (her mother had crowed, "She makes her own gravity!") her bloodied lips parted in a smile, and the wind whistled through the middle-gap in her teeth like it did the wings of her little plane.



They'd told her to dress the part. Pidge could see the hydroelectricity in Millie's eyes, the vast Atlantic seething in their cold pale blue, pushing her to pluck her eyebrows and nose-hairs and practice her mysterious close-lipped smile in the bathroom mirror. As they drove in Captain Railey's car to the landing strip ("It's a runway, Pidge!" Amelia had corrected her, turning her hands into planes swooping into the sky) Amelia leaned over and, with a conspiratorial glint, asked Pidge if she knew where they were going. Uneasy, Pidge replied, "Trepassey Harbor." "Means 'dead men', in Canadian French," Amelia whispered, clearly thrilled. She turned back towards the water, and Pidge, looking out the window after her, could see pirates in her sister's eyes, gunpowder and gasoline and the flames of some imagined adventure raging in the blood of her thin reflected face.

At the runway, Amelia was met with bursting bulbs and camera smoke, whipped in circles by the wind, and a whole selection of gray men who looked like dwarves at her feet. They followed her to the short grassy runway and told her to pose in front of the ugly, hulking plane. The plane (a Fokker F.VII, she'd been told enthusiastically) looked like the Atlantic lobster they'd seen in tanks in St. John's and on Sunday Amelia was going to fly it out over the desolate June sea.

Pidge stood with Captain Railey by the car and watched her sister play the part she'd dressed for, alone on the landing strip, in the lobster arms of her plane. She was a Woman Aviator, tapped for tomorrow's flight because she'd cut her hair off and the press thought she looked like Charles Lindbergh, American Aviator. They'd told her to



wear a dress and Amelia said they wanted to take her out of the sky; she was worried she looked like someone's wife, like a bottle of champagne breaking against the side of a boat. But, Pidge thought, staring at her sister with a dreadful kind of awe, in her cloche hat and her silk dress Amelia looked more like an airplane stretched with speed across the sky.

△

The illustration of Amelia's face that appeared in the 1928 advertising campaign for Lucky Strike cigarettes was the only time Pidge had ever seen her sister look uneasy. Somehow, for some reason, the ad featured Amelia—in her flying cap, signature leather bomber, and black tie—looking up out of frame right with alarming pathos. Pidge first saw the ad when she purchased an issue of *The Atlantic*, on a whim, from the local Medford paperboy, and had taken it along Clippership Drive towards the park. There, as if by fate, a Mystic River wind had blown the paper open to the ad and Amelia's haunting hand-drawn face, and Pidge had shrieked in her small, inward way. There

was something dreadful behind Amelia's eyes, some deeply anxious conspiracy between her eyebrows, rising towards each other like airplanes set to collide mid-air, and her solemn, unsmiling mouth. What was she looking at? Was it, as the advertisement suggested, an aeroplane that Amelia, the "Queen of the Air," was gazing at with such desperate longing? Or was it something else? Pidge couldn't help but think she saw guilt blackening the worried lines of Amelia's face—Amelia, who'd never smoked or had a drink in her life, as far as Pidge knew, the new face of Lucky Strike cigarettes... Beyond that, Pidge felt the way she had that day at Trepassey Harbour, months ago—the way she had been in bouts of legless, imagined pain ever since—a kind of vague farrago of jealousy and loss, as if here, on the banks of the Mystic, she was watching her sister disappear over the Atlantic once again... She couldn't help thinking that Amelia was somehow looking into the future—looking past the politics of ad campaigns, past funding opportunities, photo ops, celebrity engagements—into some noumenal, shimmering, presence that only she could see, and that Pidge could see only in her sister's tremulous eyes. Later that evening, still shaken, Pidge telephoned Amelia in California just to hear her sister's wonderful voice.



They arrived in Harbour Grace before the sun could burn the spring fog off the water and Bernt said in his solemn Norwegian way, "You can smell the salt. This is a good day." Amelia parked the Jeep by the small empty guardhouse, and they sat on the tarmac in silence listening to the engine settling in the cold, wet air. Her Lockheed Vega 5B was straight ahead, looking alone, its red plywood fuselage grey in the fog. She was already in the air, she had been all night—had been, in a way, since that day at the Toronto Exposition when a Great War Ace had flown so low that she'd heard the plane's mechanical whispering as it tore the hats off the ladies and gentlemen on the lawns. Airplanes still whispered to her, and as she and Bernt worked methodically through the Vega, she counted each groan, each buckle rattle and rubber thump as words in a language that, at some level, she understood more deeply than American English.

She'd bought a newspaper for a timestamp as they'd left the hotel, as if the eighteen-hour flight ahead meant some passage between worlds, as if the Telegraph-Journal in the glove compartment could attest to something she could not. The paper was an antique to her already, made of pulped trees and iron sulfates that seemed heavier than Vega itself.

As they worked, the fog cleared, and a new void materialized: the Atlantic, looking like the unpainted wings of a Fokker F.VII. By the time they'd finished the sky was a clean white and a wind had started cutting off the tops of the waves and throwing them like fish heads against the rocks. Bernt loaded film into his camera and told Amelia

to move a little to the left. The camera's black lens hole reminded her of certain nights spent gliding over farmland, feeling the black outside press in against the windshield, seeing her face reflected in it, in turn, pale and alone. She felt comfortable in front of the camera, confident in her place inside the red machine behind her. She stood, alive as a turning propellor, looking up into the endless sky, her blue eyes reflecting back the world, condensing it a white, solitary, spark.



The band was playing a forceful rendition of "Midnight, the Stars and You," and black-tie couples were foxtrotting around the parquet floor, wheeling and dipping in the brocade of chandelier light. The room was hot and filled with the smoke of a hundred cigarettes in slender holders and the smell of gin and crushed olives gave the scene an olfactory bite. People were streaming into the warm evening from the open French-doors, disappearing behind black draping willows along the lakeside, or else sneaking into the house's many rooms for quick, squealing "ren-des-vous." There hadn't been a party like this in Toluca Lake since W.C. Fields had moved in the previous year, and there was an overwhelming sense of release in the air.

From the right angle, you could see Amelia at the heart of a constantly changing node of avid professionals, mostly men, each looking almost hungry, clutching cocktails and cigars, their elbows slipping frequently off the mahogany bar. Amelia held them rapt, making frequent swooping gestures with her glowing white hands and, though the clarinet carried her voice away into the atmosphere of the room, she spoke with such vehemence that those around her looked like ironworkers at the gates of a forge. The eyes of the whole evening were on Amelia and people moved in patterns through her, drawn in consciously or not, until she was speaking directly to each one in turn, her hard American vowels grabbing and slapping awake each boozy, slumped-shouldered man, each morphine-limbed woman, who found themselves finally in her audience.

And yet, for all the swooning and gin-stained awe—all the sounds and smells of human life that swirled around her—there was something mechanical in Amelia's intercourse, as if half of her didn't care in the least about the shiny Hollywood faces pressed in around her, and the other half wasn't even aware that she was speaking to them all. Instead, according to some, Amelia resembled a Pratt & Whitney R-985 Wasp Junior radial engine howling through the thin clouds ten-thousand miles over the sea, the people around her passing through her nine-cylinder blur like high-octane gasoline. That evening, Amelia was the engineered center of Toluca Lake, and even from across the room, through the low-hanging tobacco smog and the walla-walla of so many cavorting men and women, it was clear she was taking us places.



Pidge hadn't seen Amelia in almost two years, since Christmas with her and her husband George in Hollywood in 1935. They'd spoken on the telephone many times since then, but gradually Amelia's voice had faded into the black static phone lines, and after a while Pidge couldn't tell her sister's voice from any other; Amelia's characteristic verve seemed to be harmonized out, or else it had become part of the telephone itself, an elusive mechanic vibration that disappeared into the holes in the phone's black mouthpiece. Maybe it was the distance, or the time; maybe they were growing apart—they were both married now, and privately Pidge felt that she knew her sister more from memory, and from Macy's ads, than she did from Amelia herself. Accordingly, when Amelia called to invite Pidge to Florida, Pidge almost hung up, thinking someone had the wrong number. Only when Amelia hollered "Pidge!" with the receiver halfway to the holster, did Pidge recognize her sister.

Three weeks later Pidge stepped off an overnight bus in the remote, muggy township of Opa-locka, Florida. It was 6:30 in the morning, and to the east the sun was struggling through wide bands of clouds along the horizon. Everything was damp, and Pidge remembered only in that moment—as the bus heaved itself into the township's strange, Moorish streets—that she had not packed at all for the south Florida heat. Feeling moist, she walked south-west along Ali Baba Avenue and, rounding a corner, through a distant metal fence she could see the desolate Opa-locka airfield, and a lone plane parked dully in its palm.

Today, a couple hours from now, Amelia was going to fly around the world. Pidge had read in the Medford Mercury that her sister's first attempt had ground out somewhere in the Pacific, and Amelia had told her on the phone (and, through the line, Pidge had detected a momentary crackle of her sister's old conspiracy) that this time her departure was Top Secret. As Pidge neared the edge of the facility, she saw George in the distance coming towards her; he was overdressed too, and from a hundred feet away, Pidge could see his prodigious, moonlike forehead gleaming in the sheenless sun.

They embraced in a stiff siblings-in-law kind of way, and George led Pidge (he called her Grace) towards the plane along a tamped dirt roadway lined with crabgrass. Pidge could see now, as they approached, two or three silhouetted figures moving mutely under the wings to the right the hanger slunk low, its tin roof some depthless combination of blinding and matte-blank. Pidge was struck by the silence of it all—the plane, the crew, even her own footsteps—everything moving, working, sweating and yet, in the strange light under the convex Florida sky, it all seemed trapped, in a way, like no human feat could take wing under such a devouring lens.

From under the plane's fuselage, Amelia saw her sister walking towards her through the sky; she whooped and, righting the world, came scrambling out to meet her. Pidge had seen her before in multiple publications looking the same: black trousers, a grease-lined flannel shirt, her hair short and mussed. She smiled the way she did in photos too, her mouth closed tight and her eyes squinting like something newly born. The

only thing that came as a surprise, to Pidge, was just how much Amelia had begun to resemble their father. It might have been the way her cheekbones piled up into her eyes when she smiled, but truthfully Pidge couldn't quite remember her father's face anymore; he was warmth, and weight, and the smell of gin. Maybe it was just a symptom of family, heirloom resemblances, Earhart auras. When Amelia hugged her, Pidge smelled the satin reek of oil.

Amelia walked Pidge around the plane—a Model 10 Electra—pointing out its various modified features and discussing with glee the particularly fraught sections of her upcoming flight plan. Pidge mostly listened, but at times found herself staring deadfly at her sister, watching Amelia's hands run over the plane's aluminum wings, its clean shadows running in turn over the lines around her sister's eyes. It was hard to believe this baffling, broad-chested machine was a tool, no different than a screwdriver, and that Amelia, turn by turn, would ride it around the world. But Amelia had been explaining aerodynamics to Pidge, in one way or another, since they'd been girls—in Des Moines, climbing from the wooden wreckage of the apple box she'd ridden over the roof edge, Amelia had claimed that if the wind had only been in her favour, and if she'd just had a little canned hydrogen, she would have made it—and Pidge had always listened, feeling a quiet sense of adventure in her sister's every word. But it had also always seemed preposterous in a way, Amelia's obsession with sky machines, like every moment she spent in orbit a part of Iowa or Kansas cornland disappeared. Maybe it felt like she was leaving, constantly, like she'd never really been at home; like Amelia's planes were all doorbells to other places, and each flight a moment, suspended, waiting for someone unseen to open the door.

A quarter of an hour later, Amelia shook hands with the ground crew, gave George a swift, confident kiss, and hugged Pidge with a steeliness that, were it anyone else, would have seemed impersonal and cold; as it was, Pidge felt like the Electra had folded its wings around her while Amelia waited on the runway. When the engines rolled over (to Pidge they sounded like pigs rooting in tin troughs), and the propstorm wind began flinging gravel and dandelion heads at the watchers, Pidge was jolted briefly out of the middle-distance and reminded, suddenly, of the oceanic scope of her surroundings—the porcine plane, howling into position, the concrete runways hammered into the ground like plywood over broken windows, the bellyboard horizon towards which the Electra's nose now turned like a blind, subterranean beast. Pidge closed her eyes and tried to think of Amelia—to picture her at home in the twin-engined maw, among the blasting pistons and spider-eyed dials—but as the engine began heaving the plane down the runway, and all sound and smell was sucked into its wake, all Pidge could see was a black dot in the great white sky.

INVITATION

IRIS ZHANG

Momo tries. She really does. Wanting to make a good impression on her fiancée's dad, they specifically took time off work so that she could visit Ying Yue's dad and get to know him, then invite him to their wedding. They had previously told Mr. Jiang the news of their engagement and he had congratulated them over the phone, but this would be the first time they would meet in person.

So far, it's going badly.

Momo doesn't know what's wrong or how to fix it.

All of the conversations they have are short and distant. His low and halting voice never speaks more than a few words to her, and he won't look at her for longer than necessary. In the first few days of their arrival, it wasn't obvious, but the longer she's here, the more Momo realizes that her potential father-in-law is avoiding her.

Ying Yue had pulled her aside before their visit, telling Momo that because her dad had never fully recovered from her mother's death seven years ago, Momo shouldn't mind if he acts withdrawn. But Momo had also heard Ying Yue mention how caring and loving Mr. Jiang could be. She had seen for herself the care packages, Lunar New Year red envelopes, and handwritten birthday cards he had mailed to their doorstep, yet Momo herself has yet to experience those sides of her fiancée's father.

Being the first to wake up, Momo had decided to make brunch for the three of them. As she was prepping their meal in the kitchen, Mr. Jiang suddenly appeared, freezing in the doorway. Bewildered, Momo made her way over to him, but before she could reach him, Mr. Jiang rushed out. He didn't reappear, not for brunch, and not even four hours later, when she and Ying Yue left to go grocery shopping for dinner. The congee and bok choy side dish Momo had prepared for Mr. Jiang remained on the counter, cold and untouched.

Currently, Ying Yue and she are sitting at the beach shore, hands interlocked as they watch the sun go down. The waves lap steadily onto the shoreline and, above them, are seagulls swooping overhead, letting out shrill cries every now and then. The sky is a brilliant coral hue as the sun lowers itself towards the horizon, and the muggy summer heat is blown away by the ocean's salty breeze.

Today is a beautiful day, but Momo just isn't feeling it. She has her legs curled up into her chest and buries her face into her knees. The incident from this morning leaves her feeling drained and nauseous. How can she make things better, when she's clearly disliked by her potential father-in-law?

"Ying Yue, what do I do?" Momo whispers. "I don't think your dad likes me."

Ying Yue grimaces. She picks up a pebble with her free hand and flings it across the water. It manages to skip thrice before sinking. "That geezer is so–," she breaks off with a frustrated sigh. "I'm sorry, Momo. I don't know why he's like this."

"You don't think it has anything to do with our sexuality, do you? I mean, isn't Mr. Jiang super conservative?"

"No!" Ying Yue turns to look at Momo, aghast. "It's not because of that. You know, he even told me when we got engaged that he didn't care who I married or if I married – he just wants me to be happy." She plants a kiss on Momo's cheek. "I swear. Lao Ba has changed."

"Oh." Momo drops her gaze to her feet. She wiggles her toes into the sand. "What if, by the time we leave, he still doesn't like me? I wanted to hand our wedding invitation to him at the end of our stay, but . . ."

"That's easy! We elope!"

A startled laugh bursts out from Momo. "What? Are you serious?"

Ying Yue sniffs faux haughtily. "Honey, I'll have you know, if we elope, we could skip straight to the honeymoon after our wedding. With no guests to feed, no venue to book . . . it would be so much cheaper!"

Momo shoves her fiancée playfully. "Cheapskate."

"Excuse you, it's called being pragmatic." Ying Yue brushes Momo's bangs away from her eyes. "But seriously. Don't overthink it. Lao Ba hasn't really been himself since Mom's death. Sometimes even I'm at a loss as to how to communicate with him. It's not your fault, okay? We'll give him the invitation, but with or without him, we'll still have our wedding, yeah?"

Momo hums in agreement. "But it would be nice if I could get along with my future father-in-law, though."

Ying Yue knocks their shoulders together. "Yeah, I know. If possible, I'd like him at our wedding, too." She rises, dusting off her shorts, then extends her hand to Momo. "Well, the best way to my dad's heart is his stomach, and since your food is absolutely scrumptious, how about we win him over by cooking dinner together?"

At Ying Yue's reassurance, Momo feels her shoulders loosen. She smiles up at her fiancée, before accepting the extended hand to haul herself up. "All right. I'll try again."

They quickly unload the groceries when they arrive home, then crowd together in the kitchen. Momo insists on doing the majority of the cooking herself and only allows Ying Yue to soak the meat, put the washed rice in the rice cooker, and cut the vegetables.

On the left side of the stove, Ying Yue blanches the beef, prodding at the cubed meat with a spoon. On her right, Momo tosses in a handful of spices into the wok: peppercorn, star anise, cinnamon, and bay leaves. She scoops out a dollop of Sichuan bean paste into the hot oil then slides the ginger slices, garlic, and chili off the cutting board and into the mixture.

“Mm,” Ying Yue inhales deeply. “That has got to be the best smell in the entire world.”

Momo hums in agreement. The sharp, fragrant aroma permeating throughout the room is one of her favourites, too.

When Ying Yue is done skimming the fat off the meat, she wordlessly helps plop the blanched chunks into the wok. She then bumps her hip against Momo’s, gently pushing her aside to slosh in some cooking wine into the mixture.

They work together in a comfortable silence, and after stewing the beef for an hour, Momo plates the beef and adds the finishing touch by sprinkling chopped green onions on top of the ruddy, red-brown dish. While Momo scoops the rice into bowls and sets the table, Ying Yue goes upstairs to call her dad down.

As Mr. Jiang comes down the stairs, Momo’s hands tremble, but she merely tugs her sleeves down to conceal her nerves. “Mr. Jiang.” Momo greets him with a meek smile. “I recall you didn’t eat brunch earlier, so I made a lot for dinner. Please help yourself!” She presents a bowl of steaming rice to him, then gestures to the table where the main dish was.

“A-ah.” Mr. Jiang reaches for the bowl, but his eyes don’t leave her face. He’s staring at her strangely, wearing the same look he had this morning in the kitchen. Momo does her best to remain undeterred and carefully places the bowl into his hand. “Here. Eat while it’s warm.”

As she lets go, she accidentally brushes against his fingers. Mr. Jiang’s hand spasms, and he drops the bowl. Momo, ears ringing, stares at the shards of porcelain and clumps of rice on the ground.

The screech of a chair being shoved back startles Momo back into the present. “Lao Ba!” Ying Yue roars. “Momo spent two hours in the kitchen cooking for you, and you smash it in front of her?” Her voice rises in anger. “I know you’ve never fully recovered, and I’ve tried to be understanding, but this is unacceptable!” Ying Yue moves to stand in front of Momo, shielding Momo from her father. “What gives you the right to treat my fiancée like this? You ignore Momo, won’t talk to her, won’t look at her, and now you refuse to eat her cooking by smashing it in front of her? Fuck off!”

Mr. Jiang opens his mouth, but no words escape his breath. Momo inhales shakily, trying to ignore the burning building up behind her eyes. Mr. Jiang looks at Momo, but when she doesn’t look back, he stares, defeated, at the ground.

Impatient, Ying Yue exhales sharply. “Fine. You know what? We’re leaving.”

Mr. Jiang jerks his head up. She glares back at him.

“I’m not staying somewhere where my fiancée isn’t respected.” She turns away and tugs Momo along with her. “Come on, Momo. We’re leaving this damn house.”

“W-Wait. Ying Yue.” Momo can’t help but look back at Mr. Jiang. His head hangs low and his back is hunched over. He looks so small and lonely. “Can’t we wait to hear his reply?”

Ying Yue picks up her pace and storms up the stairs. “No. I know my dad; he never

bothers saying shit and bottles it all up. I gave him more than enough time. We're leaving. Besides, I don't want him at our wedding anyways if he's going to be like this."

Momo bites her lips, feeling torn, but packs everything into her suitcase anyway. She's zipping everything up when she sees their wedding invitation on the desk.

The envelope is a pale pink, the exact shade of the cherry blossoms that bloomed on the streets of her hometown in Nagasaki, and is adorned with a pastel-yellow ribbon – a combination of her and Ying Yue's favourite colours.

"Done?"

Momo shoves the invitation into her pocket before turning to face Ying Yue, who has all of her luggage ready by their doorway. "Oh. Yeah."

"Okay. Let's go before it gets too dark."

They head out the door. When they leave, Momo finds Mr. Jiang standing in the same place they had left him when they went upstairs. Ying Yue doesn't even spare her father a single glance as she storms past him. Momo does glance at Mr. Jiang, but he's still staring down at the shards on the floor and won't meet her gaze. Momo dips her head at him and mumbles a quiet farewell before heading outside.

Ying Yue quickly places their luggage in the trunk, then ducks into the driver's seat. Clearly, Ying Yue's eager to leave, but Momo finds herself hesitating. She stands outside the opened passenger door and looks back at the entrance.

She grips the envelope in her pocket. "Wait, I forgot something."

"Oh? Okay. I'll be here."

Momo closes the door and rushes towards the house. At the sound of the door being opened, Mr. Jiang raises his head and, upon seeing her, emits a surprised noise.

"Mr. Jiang." Momo takes out the bent envelope and hands it to him. His hands shake, but he holds the envelope carefully in his grasps. "Ying Yue and I are getting married next spring, and we wanted you to be there."

She pauses, but when he doesn't say anything, she continues: "I don't know what you think of me, but it would mean a lot to the both of us if you could attend our wedding. I hope we will see you there?"

Mr. Jiang stares at her then at the envelope. He smooths out the bent corners and, eventually, gives her a small nod. "It would be my pleasure," he replies hoarsely.

Momo's eyes widen with delight and she smiles at him. "Thank you so much, Mr. Jiang. Have a good night."

When the front door closes, Mr. Jiang carefully opens the invitation. A photo of his daughter and Momo comes attached with the invitation; he stares back at the two faces beaming at the camera. Mr. Jiang fumbles with the invitation, transferring it to his left hand as he takes out his wallet with the right. He flips it open to reveal an old photograph of him and his wife on their wedding day. With trembling hands, he holds the two pictures close together.

"It's because you remind me too much of her."



ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Helena Almeida is in the fifth and final year of her BA completing an English Literature Honours and a Psychology major, and will begin an MA in English Literature in the fall of 2021. She is the Founder and Director of the Writing Memories Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to interviewing elders and writing memoirs, and is currently the President of the UBC English Students' Association. She is particularly interested in contemporary metafiction and early modern drama, and in researching the role literature and art can play in generating empathy, inspiring wonder, and shaping our identities.

Morgan Govier is in the final year of her degree in English Literature. Besides poetry, her greatest loves are Shakespeare and her dog, Mateo. She currently works as a writer for a non-profit in Ottawa, Ontario.

Ailsa McFadyen-Mungall is a fifth-year Honours English major and History minor at UBC. She lives and works on the traditional and unceded land of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish Peoples.

Francois Peloquin is a nonfiction writer, poet, and playwright in the final year of his Creative Writing BFA at UBC. Born into the Children of God as the seventh of eleven siblings, Francois' work has been staged at the Brave New Play Rites festival and featured in previous issues of The Garden Statuary.

Finlay Pogue is in his fourth and final year of an English Literature degree, heading to the Creative Writing MA program at the University of Toronto in the fall. The primary influences on his writing are Thomas Pynchon, William T. Vollmann, and Paul Thomas Anderson.

Elli Takenaka is a fifth-year Honours English student with a keen interest in contemporary Canadian and young adult literature. When not inciting passionate conversations about The Hunger Games, she can be found eating her weight in grapes and redecorating her entire Animal Crossing island for the 37th time.

Chase Thomson is a fourth-year English Literature major/Creative Writing minor with a passion for studying the life narratives of marginalized communities. Beyond academia, Chase works as an English Instructor at a private learning institution and enjoys photography and vintage clothing. He wants to thank takeout and caffeine for getting him through his undergrad.

Caylie Warkentin is a fourth-year Anthropology major and English Literature minor who loves local adventures, especially when tidal pools and wetsuits are involved. She dabbles in photography and when she's not writing articles for The Ubysey or academic papers that go past the word limit, she can be found writing bad poetry in the notes app on her phone. You can usually find her in her kitchen making some Instagrammable meal and singing off-key

to Unscent by Alanis Morissette, which she hopes one day to not relate to.

Cicely Williams is a third year English honours student who takes poetic inspiration from vintage fashion, old Hollywood films, cocktail lists, and the 'it girls' of modernist literature like Virginia Woolf and Anais Nin. Her academic interests are, like her poetry, concerned with surrealism, introspection and (hyper) femininity. She hopes to get her PhD and, per her Okanagan roots, to never run out of wine, beaches, and cherries.

Iris Zhang is currently a third-year student majoring in Asian Language and Culture with a minor in creative writing. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking and drawing. A concern of hers these days is if she's watered her hibiscus plant enough (because why do its leaves always seem to be wilting?).