

the west 4th

An abstract painting featuring two fish-like shapes, one above the other, with a central figure that resembles a person or a stylized animal. The background is a mix of pink, blue, and white, with dark green and black brushstrokes. The overall style is expressive and gestural.

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THE WEST 4TH

Edited and Published by

Jack Kontarinis

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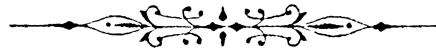
From the Editor

I had a dream recently that I was driving my truck up some snowy, very windy mountain. I got out and a couple other people and I took shelter nearby because there was a great wind that was picking up and throwing trees around and down off the mountain, like some giant's bowling game. Then all of us banded together to try and figure out what do to next. But then someone said, in a real panicky tone, that someone was coming up the mountain very slowly and shooting everyone. So panic started. And then some thugs, some real bad guys, came up and rounded us all up and were threatening to kill us, etc.

They were selecting people, to kill, the sick bastards. So they picked me. And I dug a hole deep into the ice, and one of the thugs said "come on, let's go," and I said, "hey, wait! I think I just found the first acorn!" And I was joking, of course, but he didn't laugh. And I said you guys need to laugh sometimes. And this was a kind of distraction because they did start laughing, and so I grabbed a shovel and drove it straight into the thug leader's face, and it pushed him right up against a wall. The shovel was so sharp that it just sliced all the way through and cut his head in half, but it still hung on. I kept chopping his head up but he kept waking around. And he got really nervous and said, "there aren't any graves left from before," and I knew he meant that we were in the future, a dystopian future, somehow. Then I went into another room and sliced the shovel right into the side of a thug's face, and I twisted the shovel in a circular motion. His face began to twist up and off with the shovel, making a crunching and popping and snapping noise, like teeth hitting a wall. And then I woke up and I was glad to not be in such a bad situation.

Enjoy this issue of *The West 4th!*

Jack Kontarinis, *Editor*



Fruit for the Flies

Brett Koppelman

I probably shouldn't wear sweatpants to the grocery store. It's more of a jean environment. But what's the point if I'm just going to come back and immediately put sweatpants on. I'll probably run in to my neighbor with the dogs too. How long should you pet your neighbors dogs? I can only ask so many questions about a dog I don't know. What if I misgender the dog? Eviction would surely follow. My only sweatpants are blue and I'm already wearing a blue sweatshirt. If I go blue on blue that really isn't acceptable. I'll put jeans on.

How does 75% of this building have dogs. We live in a city. I understand theres no shortage of green space but jesus christ you're 27 years old can't you find other outlets to fill the dog shaped hole in your life. And once you find them, let me know. Only a joke. Does your dog voice say a lot about you or does it not really matter. I was seeing a girl once who would seemingly fall in love with every dog she saw and referred to them as bubba. Truthfully, it irked me. Dogs are cool though. Especially if you can walk your dog without a leash. That is cool.

I saw a guy reading to a girl at a bar the other day. A chapter book, too. I wonder if before **aura farm** and **performative** became vernacular this would have still been looked down upon. I wonder how, now that these words have become vernacular, one can go about doing that without the awareness that most people will see them and think "douchebags". Is it just me thinking that? Maybe this is how they enjoy spending quality time together. Perhaps I should admire the fact that they don't care what people think and are clearly enjoying each others company. I should appreciate the fact that they are not just sitting on a couch together doom scrolling and are instead engaging in the written word. I don't think I do though.

What happened to used book stores. A city full of people more cultured than you but they only want to buy new books? Where art thine taste? You dress like a used book store. But you wouldn't buy a used book. Where'd you buy that sweater, man with greasy hair, smoking the hand roolly outside the library. Walking back to his fully furnished luxur.. oh nevermind. He's homeless. I'll keep walking.

Films in the West Village

Reuben-Cohn Gordon

Even for New York, the area around West 4th street is full of cinemas. Since moving to the neighborhood this year, I got in the habit of checking what's on around 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening, and catching a last minute showing. This is a deliberately solitary activity - I like to feel like I always have the option of leaving a film if I get bored, although out of a general sense of stubbornness, I almost never do.

New York's movie theatres fall on a spectrum from the totally normal (AMC), to the unbearably challenging (Spectacle, which is a tiny room in Williamsburg with uncomfortable benches showing things like British folk horror from the 50s. I realize that will sound like an advert to some people reading this). The cinemas around here happen to fall nicely in the middle. There's the IFC, which reliably shows new indie films, occasional late night horror screenings, and is not at all pretentious. Film Forum is a mix of new and old. There's a sign at the cafe saying that Derrida liked the banana bread; I looked this up online and there's some debate about whether he liked the specific banana bread on offer, or whether he had never had banana bread before, and just liked the concept. I would say it's pretty nice, but not a game changer in the banana bread world. The Angelika tends to show slightly more mainstream films, and the subway runs directly under it, so that your film viewing is occasionally enhanced by an atmospheric rumbling noise.

Those are the cinemas - here's a brief round up of the best things I saw in them this year:

Grand Theft Hamlet (IFC): a documentary about Hamlet, but staged in Grand Theft Auto. To be or not to be, as delivered by a man on a blimp in the multiplayer version of GTA 5. I think the basic premise was that the nihilistic violence of GTA would pair well with Shakespeare, which it does.

Hard Truths (Lincoln Center): a very depressed British woman is rude to everyone. Not a comedy, very moving.

Universal Language (Angelika): favorite film of the year. Set in Winnipeg, but Winnipeg is inexplicably also Tehran. Tim Hortons is dimly lit, with a samovar and people dancing. I loved it. In the director's words, Iranian cinema is based on 1000 years of Persian poetry, while Canadian cinema is based on 20 years of real estate commercials, so a match made in heaven.

The Ballad of Wallas Island (Angelika): a lonely annoying talkative man hires a famous musician to play a concert on his island. It's cute and feel good.

Eephus: baseball is slow. This film about baseball is slower.

Vulcanizadora (IFC): Yikes. I went to the sand dunes in Michigan this summer, and this kind of ruined it. There's one specific scene that happens there - the climax of the film - and it's a lot. General premise is that two friends at walking somewhere in the woods, but you gradually get the sense that something is very wrong with them.

Boys Go to Jupiter (IFC): bizarre animation, very soothing.

Seven Samurai (Film Forum): a classic with an intimidating 3.5 hour runtime. I read an extremely weird and great book called *The Last Samurai* which constantly referenced the plot of the film, so I mainly went to understand it. It's really fun though.

Sorry Baby (Angelika): There is a sense, which is made clearer through the film, that something bad has happened to the main character. At the same time, it's tonally very funny and sweet. I really liked it.

Left-handed Girl (Quad): as a left hander, this was mandatory viewing. Also a film where there is an implication that the characters are navigating something terrible but unspoken. Really well done.

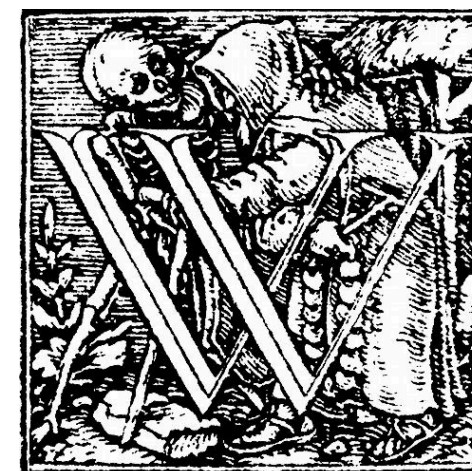
Train Dreams (IFC): sometimes people describe a film as a tone poem, which is a way of saying that nothing happens whatsoever, but in a good way. This is broadly true here, but also in a good way.

Robert Scabadorb Hunter Lyons

There's a difference between artists and creatives. To put it succinctly artists create, creatives ruminate. Everyone can be an artist, not everyone can be a creative. I imagine that many of The West 4th's readers are creatives, so in essence this is a letter to you.

Do you have anxiety? At what age did you start drinking alcohol? When did you have your first cigarette? I know half of you have pretty delinquent answers to these questions which helps illustrate the point I'm trying to make. They place you into a box, and expose the machinations of your mind. I'm probably projecting here, but my ruminations feel better with a bit of a buzz, so next time I ask you for a cigarette, can you just give me one?

EXCERPT from a Merchant's Letter to a Friend, 1614, about their sex lives*****



ell, this world will mend one day, but beware the gray mare eat not the grinding stone. I have had two satiricall letters about this matter from Mr Peacocke, wich pleased him as little as me. But I thinke he is so payed home at his owne weapon as he will take bettr head how he carpe wthout cause. It was not more too me, but broader to Mr Cox. I know the p'ties w'ch I speake of you would gladly know for your satisfaction herin. I cannot make you know myne because I thinke you, you never see her. But I thinke God made her a woman and I a w[hore]. For the other, it is such a one as hardly or no I know you would not dreame of. But yet for exposition of this ridle, consterue thus: all that is not couckholds that wear hornes. Read this reversed, ad dextro ad sinistro: OIGNITAM. What, man! What is the matter? Methinkes you make croses, for never muse at the matter, it is true. I am now grown poetticall:

He that hath a hye horse may gett a great fall
And he that hath a deaf boy, loud may he call,
And he that hath a fayr wyfe, sore may he dread
That he gett other folkes' brattes to foster & to feed.

Report from Tanzania: Where Lions Roam

Cameron Salo

I wake up before dawn. The sun has yet to crack before the Seregati. I eat on my balcony overlooking the savannah, where hours before lions roared outside my room, parallel to my ear. I jump into our jeep and make off at breakneck speed. In one ear, music plays, as I try to take some shots of leopards stalking giraffes in the trees. Just before I rewind my camera to take another shot, my driver drops into third gear, taking off and throwing me from my rooftop lookout back into my seat. He tells me his friend has seen something I must. We go off the guided tourist trail, barreling down when we suddenly drop to a crawl for a hundred meters. At last, we come to a stop. As I regain myself from being thrown around, I come back to my rooftop vantage point to see what I've been waiting for. In front of me, three cheetahs are just starting to devour an early launch. Fresh blood dripped from their chins. Surprisingly, they do not care that three jeeps are now watching them, just a matter of paces away.



Fast forward a few hours, and we've been on the trail for lions. We come across a large rock and a lone large tree in the middle of an open field. At first glance, it seemed barren. However, upon further inspection, up close against the dust are three baby cubs, and upon the rock, their lioness mother. They are unamused by our presence. It struck me. How could this be? How could they be so comfortable in their skin with us around? That's when I learned something. Lions and cheetahs can't control who they are; they just exist simply as we must. As Carl Jung said, the greatest privilege one can experience is to become oneself. Why not? What do you have to lose? Get outside your comfort zone.

Whether it's finally saying something to the person you have feelings for, leaving a dying relationship, going to grad school, or traveling the world. Time stops for no one. The doom scrolling, that job you work that you hate; everything can be changed. Do no harm to your fellow man. Seek the depths of your soul. Make a life worth living. Like the



last of the lions on the plains of Africa, endure to not only find yourself, but to keep your soul. The beauty of salvation and the kingdom of heaven reside in you. Conquer the caverns of yourself. Better to have tried than live a life of quiet wonder.

5th/59th Horse

Henry Baker

I first met the city when I was eighteen. At the station I was introduced to a horse of shiny tiles, contained with sparkle above the grime of the subway cars and rodents. There was a constant clicking, that only fell into the ears of me and the supine man, for he is whom of the people that I admire. If horses could click, I would feel as if the horse was clicking to me – undenounced to reason or the rhyme. The fault of my child-like self was to not listen to the sound of the surrounding trains or to dream of riding the horse of mosaics in a wheat-filled field - for the city has never cashed on wheat with the primary dollars of its people. My innocence saw no purpose or rhyme for such a piece being placed within its squalor – all that lay supine were subjected to squaking by the rodents. The rodents were never organisms of any privacy.

More than five years later, my ears were met with Sparklehorse. While driving in the northbounded box of cars, with a coating of white like winter, such souls were soon to dance. My Glimmerhorse, was no more than a wagon. Although never bold, I once imagined driving over the hills and rushing through the mountains. Parking it on the street of the city I met years ago was only a dream – for my commute was easier on the midnight train. Glimmerhorse though, held no heart for any mosaic for its white coat of paint was brushed with grime by the road.

One night, driving home from a hazy day – upon detransmissioning, the clicking resurfaced my ears. I was returned to grime amongst mammalian beauty in such a piece. I glistened upon a dream of blocks and tiles, of tall barns and grasses. Do I ride the subway again – for the clicking is now ever more in distance, along with intermittent mockery for the supinated – just like old times.

The supine man, I know now to be a good friend of mine. For though not one to be faced with squaking, I lay down tonight and tomorrow. I lay next to my horse and dream a quiet dream.

All Down But Nine

Michael Gosselaar

Seldom is there a flame that stays burning longer than the one in Billy Landau's heart.

It had been many Sundays since he was last back home, but on a daydream, he had leaned into the wind and let himself drift to land where he may.

His face hadn't been seen since the southbound train he jumped carried him somewhere down the line, and nobody these days remembered it. A long, dusty beard took up residence on his chin and evicted the smile that so often used to etch lines into his cheeks. His clothes, once neat and pressed, now tattered and patched with assorted fabrics of an unknown time and place. His hands, once warm with the touch of the ever-elusive love that is now confined to the walls of his mind, are now frigid and cracked, cupped around a soup can.

Upon his arrival back in town, Billy reluctantly told stories of his travels to those who asked. He told tales of dining in opulent palaces, drinking wine with kings and queens, and marching beside great armies of the east. He fought in a war; but for which side, he could not remember.

Apparently they had won.

He sauntered every backroad, perambulated over each ridge, and tromped beyond every horizon. The townsfolk were astonished at all the places he had been, but none of it seemed to faze Billy. His mind was always elsewhere, searching for something that seemed just ahead of his reach.

Nobody could understand why he kept looking; wandering over unkempt lands, only to ultimately come up empty-handed. His feet carried his body, walking the footsteps of another, and his ears heard only the sweet harmony that had graced his mind in days long past. There was nothing more real to him than the gentle murmur of the kind memories that rattled around his head.

That's all that mattered to him, so it seems.

Billy never grew tired, but he often slept. He slept at the chance to dream of the heaven that he found in the eyes of the woman who brought the morning light upon his face when he would wake. The same woman who would dance across his subconscious mind in the moments they were apart. The very same woman who laid beside him under a sky full of stars, and said one day, she may take a ladder and climb all the way up there to steal one just for him. She lay beside him no longer.

Billy had lost his senses gazing upon the face of moon, knowing one day he would search there too. And with the sad design of the human mind, any thought of respite was quickly drowned out by the whisper of the open road.

Billy's feet began to carry him forward again, leaning into the wind once more, toward the sound of a voice he'd long since forgotten. Eventually, this breeze would carry him, to some degree, to a place heaven only knows.

Until then, Billy Landau can be found staring down the wake of a ripple in the river of his mind, along some lonesome backroad his feet are wandering down.

I Am A Fundamentally

Unlikeable Person

Will Steeb

I am a fundamentally unlikeable person. Let's just get that out of the way, before you start trying to see if you can get into me. I warn you: it's scientifically impossible. Stouter hearts, better minds, bigger cocks have tried, all to negligible avail. Why is it so hard to like me? Well, for starters, saying things like "negligible avail." Who the fuck does that?

It's the kind of locution used by a guy who knows what the inside of a locker looks like, illuminated only by triple-slit-strained sweat-stippled fluorescents. The only problem is nobody ever shoved me in a locker, nobody even gave me the courtesy of trying. I say "courtesy" because if someone had, that might begin to explain – or even justify – what I am today, what I find myself doing and (gulp) being. Which in turn might garner your sympathy.

Which, again: forget it. Leave it at the door. If you have doubts about my so-called "narrative," about the "reliability" (that old chestnut!) attained by my version of events, even about the moral correctness of my (are you serious?) "character"; any such doubts that develop simply serve to demonstrate that the reader is legally alive and minimally sane. So, getting on with it, what you want to know is "what happened." (Yawn.) Very well. Where to begin? Should I begin at the beginning? Or is it more interesting to end at the beginning? Maybe it's most interesting to never begin at all, and simply continue to mock and prod you until you lose all patience and send the book twirling through the air or (more likely) exit the tab.

Well, what happened is this, and you're never going to believe it, so why bother... In fact, you might believe it, actually, now that I think of it. Because you're conditioned to be credulous and it's only a degree or two above the utterly commonplace. Maybe as everything becomes commonplace everyone becomes credulous. Or vice versa.

Anyway. The inciting incident of my story... Well, if you're going to be a crass literalist, it's when a lovehandled lass had one too many whiskey sours and let a traveling salesman hock his wares inside her personal premises, if you get what I... but I assume that's not what you meant. Don't most of us sprout form such ignoble vines?

Maybe it's best if I just tell you about myself, give you a little Wikipedia page. The "plot," the dreary business of "what happened," can fill itself in later.

For the British musician and founding member of Pink Floyd, see Roger Waters (musician). For other people of the same name, see Roger Waters (disambiguation).

Roger Waters

Roger Mephisto Waters (1993 – really? That long, still?) is a man who lives in America. He is widely known, among those who know him, for being an unrelentingly horrible person, bereft of a single redeeming quality. He has been nicknamed "Pencil dick Fuckface" by romantic partners and has used the alias "Alec" on dating profiles.

Waters has received the following distinctions; voted (unofficially) "Least Popular" and "Most Creepy" (also, runner-up for "Yellowest Teeth") by his high school yearbook staff; consistently received marks of "Meets Expectations" or "Requires Improvement" and comments of "utterly unremarkable" in performance reviews for the one office job he ever held; has received the title "Failure" and "Disowned," both verbally and in writing, from persons legally and biologically

related to him. A contemporary once pithily remarked: "He's like if there was an everyman that everybody somehow hated." Another wit dubbed him "Banality Meets Evil."

Waters is currently in dire financial straits, among the direst of those now afflicting technically able-bodied Caucasian men without a brain injury in the continental United States. His capacity to spend money that he does not, alas, have, has been described in an internal report by one junior loan officer as "rapacious" and "uncanny."

Early Life and Education

Waters was born in 1993, under a bad sign (the glow of a giant Arby's hat). His parturition occurred in a filthy backwater hospital outside a declining American city, to an unslender woman of ill repute and slender means. His father was a traveling salesman, apparently traveling from a different period in American history, whose car refused to start. The ethnic background of Waters' parents is unknown, but is presumed based on their respective appearances to be some subhuman variety of White.

Between fistfights, the Waters' occasionally gestured toward raising Roger, such as telling him to shut the fuck up. At 5, Child Protective Services placed Waters with foster parents, an educated and locally esteemed couple named Emilia and Arden Hawthorne. By the age of 6, Waters had destroyed over \$30,000 worth (non-inflation adjusted) of the Hawthorne's property, including but not limited to televisions, Hot Wheels sets, duvet covers, antimacassars, dental crowns, sciatic nerves.

At the Hawthorne's considerable expense, Waters attended a private boarding school, at which he was universally considered hopeless at cricket, breathing, and being a boy. He attended a local public high school, where many of his peers considered him a snob or a retard, but where locker-shoving had recently become passe.

Teachers remember Waters as a particularly unmemorable student. "Who?" his science teacher fondly recalled.

At a local public college, no longer accredited, Waters majored (unofficially) in Attacking Homeless People, with a double minor in Avoiding Emails from the Bursar's Office and Lying on Your Resume. He graduated, according to his resume, in two years, after which he began his career.

Career

Waters worked for four months at an industrial packaging plant, which fired him. Despite an abundance of legally cognizable causes, he was fired without cause and received a considerable severance package.

Personal Life

Waters has tried, with minimal success, to have sex with women. Waters has male acquaintances, though no real male friends, and sees women in public, although women hate to see him.

Death

It must be coming very soon.

Untitled Screenplay Excerpt

Evan Stark

Ethan: Sometimes I want to walk right out there in the ocean and never come back. I think it would be peaceful. The waves would do all the work; I just have to let it happen. The truth is I've given up a long time ago...slowly but surely my heart started to die and I just don't know how to fix it... It's like something in me broke when she left and nothing feels like it makes sense anymore. I feel out of place, like I'm walking around half a person...or I've mutated into something ugly. I just don't feel like I know where I belong or what I'm supposed to be doing... You know, I have these random breakdowns that happen. Like, I'll be eating a hot dog or drinking coffee or something and just

feel all this emotion swell up and I'll burst out crying...like ugly cry. I don't understand why I'm in so much pain, I want it to be over with.

Untitled

Carter Sessions

I need a different perspective of a space that was mine and then was not. It was mine and now it's only sometimes mine. Other times it's a memory's. I feel the memory late at night, creep over the fence and work its way into the labyrinth. It echoes off the stone walls.

Gives the pictures on the walls a different perspective.

My room is the ship of Theseus.

I've changed the sheets,

potted new plants

cleaned the closet

cracked the window

Jars full of coins move a quarter of an inch to the left

photos hang on different walls so that faces stuck in time have new things to look at.

How long until it's made shiny and new?

Excerpt from *Soft Danger*

Jackie Beck

On my way to Harlem

Kate's flat

From Columbia Rm. 612

"Final projects will be due at 11:59 p.m. on December 12. Thank you everyone you may go, enjoy the rest of your day." Four hours of academia and three honest attempts at academic speak, I walk away empty minded. I'm afraid my head is cauterized everglades. Screws dried in Cement. Holding my head up, and maybe that is okay? I leave campus and head for the train. Platypus meeting took all the fucks I had left.

When I arrive at the platform I see a folded piece of paper on the dirty floor. I circle the scrap like a rabid dog, landing on "that old man smells good." Fuck it, I lean down next to a family out of a fucking photo to see what it is.

RX Script, for David Dean official New York City

David, I found your opiate prescription on the floor of 116th and Broadway.

Come and get it.

Express train. I'm tired of learning. I opt out of knowing more things. What is the point of more? It smells like fresh cat litter on this train. I know everyone to the left of me thinks I am beautiful and everyone to the right of me, ugly. But, I don't care.

When I arrive at Kate's flat, I'm all tangled up in who I am and who Columbia is demanding me to be.

Kate and I are smoking cigs out the window again, instead of taking the elevator the 6 floors down. I try not to, but I keep bringing about Z. I tell Kate about the inconsistencies this week.

You're at a song writing retreat upstate, and your rhythm has changed.

In between puffs of Marlboro, Katie spills the tea. "I think He, is there, at the song writing retreat, with her. That's what I heard."

I imagine the trees, his hands, your knees,

your weak,

spent with your former lover, upstate. You claim, swept up by

the crisis, wings stretched
out longing for them to land, and fill the previous role, which
you did.

Innocently, tangled up, again.

I look to Kate, “And I’m just a friend on the audience end of a
love story I wish would just fucking end.”

Despite enlightenment, I remain a loving witness. You confide.
Words arrive. But my true feelings delay. And when my
emotions do show up, unbridled rage is the first to knock, and
the first to be welcomed in, and I punch the towering metal ice
box in Kate’s kitchen. The handmade resin magnets of smiling
broccoli and shrimp with sunglasses leap to the floor. Katie
stands.

At 116th,
I am fish –
looking for net.
Same line.
Same bait.
Same vein.

I make it to the gates. Columbia prison –ask me how I got
arrested on purpose. When I make it to the classroom I’ve got
a half smoked cigarette in my pocket and it reeks. Art history. I
smile at the Professor. He wants me. He’s articulate, tall, with
big teeth, like me. Subdued, but passionate. A rarity. He speaks.
He points. He asks. Hands go up. We speak. We point. We ask.
Hands go down. He laughs. Hot. He is too good at this.

My wranglers are ripping at the belt loops and I haven’t washed
these black socks in over a month, so they wont stay up around
my ankles, the weeks of sweat have stiffened them.

I’m less tired than I should be and not distracted by you
enough.

I send you a fat stack of photographs of things that make me
hot, objects of which are lying or stuck to the ground of New
York City. The first one, a sticker of curvy pink letters reads,
“Kissing Cowgirls.” You like that one. “Father Figure 24,” the
numbers 2 and 7. You like that one also.

It’s true, that, Z, drives, me, crazy. It’s true. The Ferinelli effect. I
CANNOT KEEP MY WITS ABOUT ME DEAR. *Despite
punching walls, 4 am loud guitars, grunge pedal ON. I been drinking
myself to oblivion, dropping coins and cash, locking mouths with men
in bars, THE BAR, decorated by that portrait of a drag queen with a
moving gaze that you wrote into that song you said you “never played
it for no one,”* I ring you again.



Sheryl on safari looking through her binoculars.
Photographs by Melissa Cooperman

This Morning *Vincent Sardo*

Sometimes when I wake up
I feel like little pieces of chalk
All broken and dusty
With hair strands of rigid perpendicularity
Poking out of my heavy headweight of
Mania brain and rainfog thoughts
Just laying there
Like a muckpuddle on the sidewalk
All quiet and still while plotting its strike
on its next wetsock victim

Yeah, that’s how I feel this morning

Mantled Moon *Henry Baker*

Big, big moon,
O, mantled moon.
Do you shine for me,
In terrace to tower,
Where man meets the sky.
Down and out for the scaffolded,
Do you hit the road like sleet.

Sonnet for the Pigeon King *Aidan King*

I was walking down the cracked city street
when I happened to meet The Pigeon King
an abominable and great beast
with copper eye and golden wing

and he told me about the pigeon people
how they used to serve man
Then abandoned for UPS and Email
and now, just a useless idiot clan

We became very close
The Pigeon King and I
he always flew by when I needed hope
and told me, quote, “to live is to fly”

And one day I really tried
But people can’t fly

I Think I’ll Call This One *Drew Kolenik*

We’re so briefly gorgeous
in windowed reflections under moonlight
or puddles of the future
brought to life under the slap of a black boot in rain

never now always once was or will be
current moment holding space for future memory when
anticipation sublimated to reflection
the process gets to start again

We’re so briefly gorgeous
and all the less aware
longing for the forgotten
deadening, so deafening
a mouse trap smacks and so quickly its over

Power of the Tongue (rambling)

Celine Chase

I've seen you everywhere
I look for you in everything
and everyone

I saw you pass and i ran after you
I'm not sure why I did that, because I don't even
know what I'd say to you.
And when i crossed the street you disappeared.

I look for you in everyone i met
Every kiss
Every touch
Every glance
Every laugh
I compare to you

For better,
and for worse.

I want to get to know him slowly.
Knowing you quickly,
feeling like you were my entire life
was only because it was too much at once. Not
because you were the one.
It was a scheme of late-night cravings and desires
met by those desperate to find something
real. But I knew you were never mine, I just needed
the taste.

I look for what you did.
How you made me feel-
And I know to avoid that now.
Every sign, every feeling, every held breath and bit
tongue,
I no longer desire that taste.

I learn slow and kind is a blessing
He taught me that.
It's a sign of caring.

He sent me cards for Christmas.
He sent me well-wishes and shared his family
traditions without asking for anything in return.

You broke promises you never made.
They were all in my head.
Everything I hoped for, I realized was what I
wanted that you'd never show.
And he did without even having to know he had
to.

Rushing and quick snips are cover ups.
It's a way to shield your personality.
A mask for your true identity.

To slowly ascend into love is a sign of something
real.
No more gilding over issues and thinking anyone is
the exception.
They will always show and tell you who they are
within the first meeting.

None of it should feel like falling-
waiting for the crash, waiting for flesh to splatter,
for people around you to piece you back together.

If you are falling in love, make sure there's padding. Take every
opportunity to slow down to
break the fall.

With the person who I do not need to put on a pedestal.
He is right there beside me, hand in hand, exactly what I've been
dreaming of.
no excuses.

If they talk badly about their friends,
their ex's, their coworkers,
The only underlying factor is themselves.
Run.

I start taking my own advice.
That he is out there, and it is much better being alone than to be
spending my time making
excuses,
or wondering what he is up to.
If he will hurt you.

Because he is out there, and with him, I will have always been right.
That none of the effortless flowers were a fantasy, or nights spent too
late sharing dreams.
Showing him off-
And him showing up for me.

I miss him so much,
but he will be here soon. I feel him getting closer.

The Boxers ~ after Julian Sease *Paul Jaskunas*

I'll bloody you with my fists of roses.
You'll bloody me with yours.

Candied in pain, we'll traipse red steps
all the way home.

The pavement will warm our sticky feet,
our wounds will seep fresh petals of joy.

If anyone asks for an artist's statement,
show them our tracks.

Pareidolia

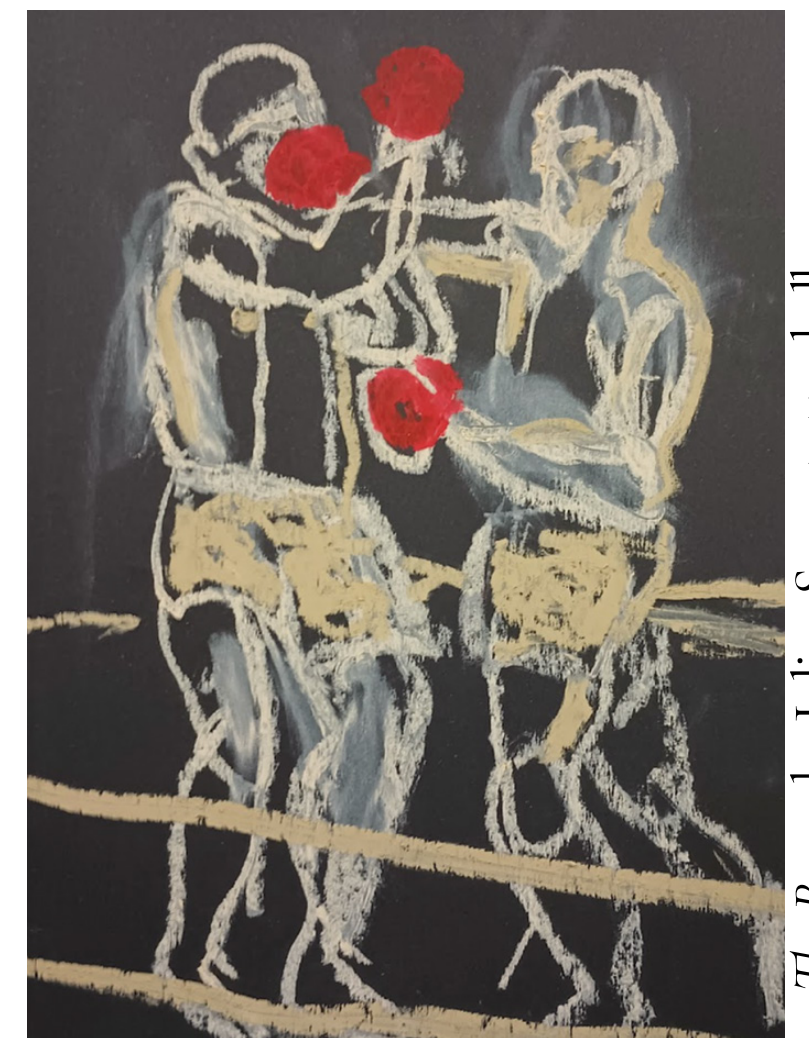
When I was small, I saw faces
in things. In wallpaper flowers
and curtains, in buttons on couches
and cast-off towels.

The hint of eyes was sufficient then
to look into mine and recognize
what mood lived and moved
through my mind, what cloud
empurpled my hours,
what thunder whelped my calm.

Eyes in milk carton spouts,
in the paisleys of my father's tie,
in church pews' lacquered skin
and a candle's pale wax dots
scattered on linen cloth –

all the cluttered world
looked out, kept watch,
saw me fall and fall
through days and nights
too dark for sight – even then

known, all of me and
all of all, known and held
by what it is
that creates to see.



The Boxers by Julian Sease, 2023, chalk on paper

Head Check

M.E. Link

Dysregulation status:
Coaxing scarce back to plenty

From New Mexico, one word:
Cullen is “melting”

Approximate whereabouts:
8th Avenue-bound L train

Lids, doors, caps, chances:
Many left askew and ajar

Red wine in old coffee cup:
Now that’s making a mark

Clockhands wave and convey:
“You there, don’t cling so hard”

Ya see, I don’t miss trains;
They reach my way
O’ how they beseech me!
Once I noticed, really,
The notion of running
To catch one became obscene

Fly

Alexander Pollock

Where have you been all this time my friend
I wanna know how your story ends
I have been waiting for you to arrive
Without ya here I’m only half alive
When you soar I fly
And when you fall I drop off the other side
When you float I swim
And when you laugh I’ve got the biggest grin
Sitting up at night
Waiting by the telephone
Expecting a call from someone to bring you home
All hung up on a life you didn’t have
But the road ahead it don’t seem all so bad

Our lives are painted in a million shades of grey
But I’ve only seen black and white leave stains
A blank canvas filled with our misdeeds
Some say it’s written
I’ll have to disagree
When you soar I fly
And when you fall I drop off the other side
When you float I swim
And when you laugh I’ve got the biggest grin
[guitar solo]
Where have you gone
What have you seen
How’d you fair
Who have you bean

The world is changing in so many different ways
But your the constant of my brightest days
When you soar I fly
And when you fall I drop off the other side
When you float I swim
And when you laugh I’ve got the biggest grin

HOFFMAN

Drew Kolenik

1000 years from now the last unclaimed thesis is
written.

She writes of dovetail joints and super structures
in the sky,

The Russian Masters and math behind raindrop
movement on the windowsill.

What effects does jazz have on the cutest snails in
her parents’s garden?

She studies what remains of the Amazon
and who really broke up The Beatles.

Pondering the 2576 sweater vest renaissance of
Paris No. 2
and meteor showers over Saturn

Economics of the dollar slice,
the plight of the subway rat.

Why were they all Goose stepping?
and what do those clouds mean?

She checks the long lonely aisles
searching for the one book written
on how beautiful, broken glass can be, when the
sun hits it just right.

Many days are shaken hands, she concludes.
And it all ties together so neatly
under the passage of time.

Silent Mary

Parker Otto

Silent Mary’s dead and gone
Took my love across the plains
Is she ever coming back?
Probably see her when it rains

Silent Mary stole my heart
Smoked it right between her teeth
Locked the embers in a trunk
Hid it down in Tennessee

Silent Mary was my friend
Til she left me for a man
Who charmed a snake with his lies
Took her in his caravan

Silent Mary had a voice
Lost it when she went away
Keeps it stored inside a jar
May she come another day

Silent Mary left Liar dead
Drowned upon his hubris
Now today she speaks again
Words that whisper on the mist

Take My Breath

Parker Otto

Take My Breath
It’s yours
It’s my gift to you
Take My Breath
You had it the moment
Your lips met mine
Steal My Eyes
They’re forever fixated on
Your dazzling sight

Steal My Eyes
When I look into yours
They’re already in possession

Hold My Heart
Be gentle, yet firm
It’s been broken before
Hold My Heart
It is afraid but will manage
It’s reassured

New Socks

John Vincent Sardo

Today I think I’ll be okay
Because I have new socks
And though it’s still cold
And the pain of your leaving
still hurts
My feet will be warm
And I don’t think I will die

Thieves' Agony

M.E. Link

With rugged hands and
tender throat,
Did I forage bundles of sage
Was I once a seraphim
As alpenglow fades from a
peak?

With doubts quelled by
fragrant smoke,
Did I scribble upon a page:
“Contra kleptum dolorem—
Against the agony of thieves”

Untitled

Jack Keegan

We drove into the lot of a manufacturing company.
A man went to the back of his pickup.
That was the first time I saw a confederate flag.
I asked my father questions.
I had a bowl cut.

East Village Summer *Dean Milkey*

I stepped out onto riverside drive and flew my dad's motorcycle down the west side highway. It was hot as hell between the 220 degree engine and the sun beating off the concrete so I rode down the Hudson with a heavy wrist to try and generate some wind. I cut in at 18th and a lady pulling her brown Ford out of a parking lot between fifth and sixth almost sent me. I had told sam to meet at 2:30 pm on 12th and 2nd and I ended up parking the bike on 11th between 2nd and 3rd next to the old church where I saw a woman in her car with the hood up talking to a sweaty guy helping her with a jump. "Thaaank you."

I stepped into a thrift shop across the street to kill time but I didn't need any clothes. I was mostly interested to see if there were any band pins and trinkets but the store smelled stale and the stuff looked tired too so I just walked the aisles looking at the other people taking shelter from the heat.

Sam got to the spot early too and was dying for a \$1 slice. My girlfriend desperately wanted him to make a catalogue reviewing the best \$1 slice spots. I was pretty sure it had been done but sam liked the idea, he likes most ideas for small projects. I thought he just wanted to eat the stuff anyways which he did when we met up but not before we said, "MY BLOOD" on the streets of New York and hugged one another.

Sam got two slices and a Coke on fourteenth. It was five dollars which didn't add up cause that would make the coke can three bucks. When I asked he said with a sad smile that there was a five dollar card minimum and had no cash. He seemed in good spirits though and told me between bites that he was tired of couch surfing around the city and dutifully seeing all the friends he needed to while living out of his backpack.

After he finished we walked over to Tompkins and it took us a while to figure out where to sit. Sam didn't want to sit too close to a sun-bathing couple because he thought it was creepy but I insisted after making a couple of awkward circles that it was the sensible spot with yellow green grass and some shade. So we settled in. I took off my backpack and he took off his shoes and his socks and I read to him a letter that Hunter Thompson had written to a friend who asked for his advice about what to do with his life. He liked the letter and for a while we talked about whether it's better to swim with purpose or to float and let whatever tide direct you. He likes to float and I find myself in between. Half float half flail. We talked about how you have company if you swim and company if you float, in the sense that everyone's headed towards the same cliff. We read some more while he smoked more of his dad's cigarettes. Nights before we had worked on a song of his called "don't smoke a dead man's cigarettes". We talked until we smoked five each and called it the cost of conversation. Then he picked each one up, put them into his palm and walked over to the trash where he saw someone else's butt and he picked that one up too and put them all in the bin.

Then because we had some time to spare before he took the subway down to Red Hook Sam said excitedly, "Wait! We gotta buy scratch tickets." So we stopped at the bodega by the Stomp theatre and bought two crossword scratch tickets and posted outside with our quarters and scratched and looked and scratched and looked. He said scratching on the street was a real bum move and we laughed about it. It dawned on sam quickly that he hadn't won but because I didn't know the rules I didn't realize that I HAD won until he told me. Four dollars. Just enough to cover the price of the tickets. Sam said I was lucky. I told him I'd give him my winnings and put my seltzer down on the street to go inside the bodega to collect. At the counter I watched a man through the

store glass discover the bottle, pick it up, take a swig and put it in his backpack. SO I lost my seltzer but I won the lottery. But shit it was hot and I was really thirsty. Sam walked me to the motorcycle and we made plans to meet in Massachusetts or San Francisco and spend more time together doing much of the same which was nothing but get mixed up in the streets for a few hours before he moves back to Spain.

A Screen *Johnny Discipline*

An alphabet of beautiful silent things, a parallelogram of late morning sun. Resplendent, reclining on the divan, she said, "there is otherness, there is meaning!"

Standing at the top of the step, Melody. She, free floating, almost dreamlike, sensuous, a lot of colors, very flowery, pink, bathing suit, France, beach house, Melody. Melody came from above fully formed, flowed down the stairs in white, a a-a-a-and over and over again my language evaporated. I excavated nothing. She said that that entire afternoon I'd spent crying at the piano, like a sunsoaked animal, writing "Boléro".

I said something about recalling prerational modes, medieval concepts of cyclical time, of cycles of civilizations, of a world unspeakably old, of a continual exchange of fire for all things. I said there was gold at the bottom of the cave. Needless to say, everyone worried terribly at the telegraph. So ill, I asked: was it not a single bright thought that made things cohere with this bitumen? (I wake every morning an innocent in a troubling symmetry, caught between a matter of the abyss (which foils the image) and a certain sweetness (which misunderstands soft abandon) and how antlers define a space as they turn). They came out and demanded: now, make an ostrich out of a thimble—for word has reached us! They wanted me to do a trick, they knew how I played the piano.

They heard that in the forest with no name the downpour became part of the performance and revealed a certain imbalance in me. That twisted trees and dark foreboding cypresses revealed my melancholy pierced by shaded openings and a somewhat haunting image with great optical depth. In the mirror I ask myself: now, why don't we just digest eyes and brain? There is, after all, no more need to see or to think. I've had enough half formed black grey shapes, blue and white lights at indeterminate distances, cathedrals of light and meaning, duty free stalls, owls hunted to extinction, false visions provoking an undying faith, livings made without work, soothing reflections and blue dancing lights flickering dimly a the TV screen, crucially, critically, necessarily as ignorable as it is interesting. If you open your focus and soften your gaze you might as well say that bodily intrusions are welcomed, but that you are still part of a singleminded supercrowd, so the line you used to draw was in sand, but still! So kept in company you are! Still, you can eat the sweetish segment or spit it out, because you are free. In the memory of a child, it was purple and the ground was constantly shifting. Certain sculptures on medieval cathedrals were invisible to the spectator on ground level, but they writhed and danced for the entire bureaucracy of archangels looking down from pink rococo skies, dreamlike, sensuous, a lot of colors, very flowery, pink, bathing suit, France, beach house, Melody.

Meeting an Old Friend At the Yemeni Restaurant

Jon Swiss

Today I met my friend Chris, who moved out of New York a few years ago, at the Yemeni restaurant, in west Harlem. We ate some chicken shawarma and talked for a while. We are very good friends and it was quite nice to see him. When we arrived there, I went to the counter to order my plate but Chris said, "no, I will order, pay me later," and so I sat down and looked around.

Chris ordered the food in Arabic and the Yemeni workers made sure that it was made fresh. He had grown up in Lebanon. While he ordered I noticed that they were giving out free Qurans. "Awesome." I thought. I grabbed one and shook hands with all of the people there and they all were happy that I was going to read it. A lot of people probably tell them that they will, the holy book ending up on some dusty bookshelf or kicked under the bed. I think they understood that **I am built differently** than them.

We talked for a while and went back to my friend Steele's apartment, where he was staying, and I hung out with him while he cold-called people for donations to his non-profit christian organization.

Many of my friends, myself included, have temporarily lived on Steele's couch in difficult times. He and his two roommates, Eric and Rakan, also dear friends of mine, have been there for me more times than I can remember. Anyway, none of them were home, and so it was just Chris and me. Professionally, he is basically a diplomat, but not in a bad way. Like a diplomat, if a diplomat were a diplomat.

Eventually I left. We used to smoke a lot of cannabis together but I did not feel like smoking. We had a great time all the same, although a few moments we could not help but bring up that this was perhaps one of the first times that we had ever hung out together sober. What times we have had. But he was upset with me because I started smoking cigarettes again, but we had fun, all the same.

Later, I arrived at my apartment and my room-mate, Jimmy, was packing his gear and equipment for the ice-pick climbing trip which he was going on the next day. We caught up and joked around and he eventually left to his girlfriends' place and we said goodbye. I retired to my room and listened to some Pop-Smoke, an incredibly talented New York rapper who was killed way before his time, if one subscribes to the idea that people have times.

The young man, just like 50 Cent or Biggie Smalls, was very talented, and his music, as aggressive as it can become surfaces as something genius. If Mozart were born in Brooklyn or Queens and repped a set then he perhaps would have been PopSmoke or 50 Cent or Biggie (all artists are the results of their environments, for the artist reflects the world which he perceives. So to say, that there is a world which he believes in, a world quite different from perhaps the one which actually exists).

While I listened to the music, I heard a noise emanate from the other room, and I realized that my other roommate, Hunter, was home and had been the whole time. I knocked on his door and we caught up. He showed me some of the music which he was producing and then we smoked a joint. It was then that Hunter noticed the Quran on my bed. We picked it up and began reading it. I had never read it before (more than a few passages), and nor had he.

Later, at the Deli, Hunter told the Muslim deli clerk that we were currently reading the Quran and it made him optimistic, he said. We live in Harlem.

Now it is almost ten-O'clock. My friend just called me and so I will now leave you, reader, and call her back. Perhaps I will go out tonight, or perhaps that I will not.

My Review of the film *Marty Supreme*.

The next day...

Reader, I am returned, the next day. I ended up not seeing that particular friend but instead went to the theatre to watch the new Chalomet flic, *Marty Supreme*, with my dear friend, Steele (the friend at who's apartment Chris was staying) who offered me my ticket, which was very kind of him. He is my brother and we have known each other for almost a decade. A very generous person and the type of friend who has proven again and again that he is dependable.

Regarding the film, I thought that it was incredibly decent. It was a great picture, attempting to pursue a forest Gump type of route but having lost course and shipwrecked somewhere actually quite nice. Perhaps not a classic, but a damned good film nonetheless.

Life is hard, but life is good.

Jon Swiss, The Giovanni Safarella Brand

No Whole Foods On Grand

M. E. Link

Persnickety proclivity
Of a loose destiny
Romance in your every wad of spit
As it dangles, drops and hits
Manhattan's filthy streets

Persnickety proclivity
Rampant paywall frustrations
I sure hope that disease
Has a good accountant
We are poor; it is greedy

Persnickety proclivity
Of a noble fray
Abandoned conundrums
Like appetites for getting drunk
Landlord arsonists' flagrant little faces

Excerpt from *Dokhtarān-e Irān: Genealogy, Memory and Migration*

By Asal Azari

Chapter Three

“All I can piece together nearly seven years later is that part of me wanted to die that night but another part of me wanted to live. Sort of a beautiful thing, the brain. The brain wants you alive! Something else in you seeks to die but the brain survives to live your life.”

“I’m also gonna auction off my medical reports from my childhood. Toss that trauma. Here’s an X-ray of my foot, this can be used for an art piece... It seems like nobody wants this stuff but you’re gonna have it anyways.”

“Hello! I’m your Iranian Girlfriend, Totally new skin.”

Excerpts from Iranian Girlfriend by SB Tennent.

On the morning of June 14th, 2025, I woke up in a twin cabin across the room from Madison. She was still asleep. We were approaching the end of our stay at the Celebration Barn in a week-long artist training intensive in South Paris, Maine. I remember checking my phone first thing. A quotidian detail, if not reflexive. Opening Instagram, my algorithm had landed on a post by the New York Times—debris from Meta’s media cyclone titled, “What to Know About Israel’s Attacks on Iran.” I called my mother and she didn’t respond. Sure. I was three hours ahead. But then I called Mina, Sima, Reza, Naser. Eight hours behind and I could not reach them. Madison was still asleep. The alarm hadn’t gone off. Soon after, I learned that on June 13th, 2025, Israel launched a series of air strikes against the Islamic Republic of Iran. A number of nuclear scientists, military officials, and over a hundred nuclear sites were among those targeted across the country over the course of twelve days according to Alia Chughtai with Al Jazeera. By the 20th of June, Iran had lost communication with the outside world in a complete internet blackout (Amiri). By the 24th of June, over four thousand civilians were wounded and six-hundred-and-ten were killed (Chughtai).

A stark contrast to the wreckage of the world unfolding on our screens, Madison and I found ourselves being productive in a Bushwick café upon returning to New York. I hadn’t heard from my family in days. It was after Madison and I had parted ways that afternoon, that my phone started ringing. It was my Dae Reza trying to call me. And I kept trying to answer, hanging up and calling again and again and again because the connection wouldn’t go through. At that exact moment, I received a notification on my phone that my hometown had been struck by Israeli forces. What followed was fission. I split into two. I realize now that my body had surrendered to terror then. My feet stood on a sidewalk stained with urine, and my body, it was there, but I began to tremor and my hearing compressed into a high-pitched ring. There was no direction that seemed appropriate to walk in. In fact, my legs decided to collapse as I fell into the arms of a stranger on the street who kindly sat me down, offered a tissue and a cigarette.

Up until then I had thought, if I can suppress this feeling, it might go away. But I felt my devotion pounding in my chest—for my family, my people, my nation. Overwhelmed by its sheer magnitude, it felt as if my devotion was attempting to expel itself from my body. As I watched pedestrians cross Irving Avenue, I selfishly wished to detach myself from the conditions of the global periphery. Yet, I later realized that they were inherent to my being. Shirin Neshat shares this sentiment in the assertion that her work as an Iranian artist is inherently political because she, being

Iranian, is inherently political (Zomorodi). I was sitting on a stranger’s stoop in Bushwick, leaking devotion with nowhere to go. I was alone with my body and my love. Neither could bear the weight of this grief, this inexorable fear.

The internet blackout fluctuated throughout the conflict, making communication with my family difficult, though not impossible. Time would emerge as the deciding factor and despite being familiar with solitude as an only child, I did not wish to be alone. It was at that time, the end of June 2025, that I unexpectedly received a message from Iranian theater director SB Tennent to meet for coffee. I had met Tennent as a first-year student in my undergraduate studies. She was a substitute teacher for a directing course of mine at Playwrights Horizons Theater School. Three years later, we sat across from each other at Blink Coffee amidst war, uncertainty, and fear, in true SB fashion—to work: “Wanna be in this play?” The piece was called Iranian Girlfriend, an autofiction performance installation written, directed, and performed by Tennent alongside two ensemble members, Shiva Kiani and myself. Over coffee with her, a knowing glance, squeeze of my hand, it dawned on me that I need not be alone if I did not wish to be. Business went on as usual in New York City, whereas I felt slowly and silently engulfed by my own fear. I occupied a cross-spatial and -temporal reality in that my memory recall confused where I was. My body did not understand that it was safe. My body did not understand why it could not publicly collapse into grief. That afternoon, Tennent modeled for me as an artist what my own mother sought out as an immigrant: possibility. Here was an opportunity to craft different realities through play while tending to our own at the same time.

Tennent’s piece offered what seemed impossible: a liberated space in which to hear the echoes of genealogy, memory, and migration in our voices, our bodies, and our desires. To hear them, negotiate them, and come to embody them on our own terms, shamelessly, unabashedly, both on and off the stage. To hear them, negotiate them, and come to embody them on our own terms, shamelessly, unabashedly, both on and off the stage. In chapter one, I introduce my case studies as informing a cumulative structure to my analysis of genealogical memory post-migration and developing in women. Whereas Shirin Neshat’s Rapture is regarded as the initial rupture to genealogical memory in its primary event of departure post-revolution, and Soliloquy underscores an inflamed psychological rift in Neshat’s self-perception, Iranian Girlfriend’s dark comedy and literary precision situates the witness in a present-day series of events from a first- and second-generation point of view. Tennent’s piece culminates this thesis from a contemporary perspective of genealogical development as the third and final progression of my analysis.

...
As a theater-maker and artist, Tennent claims her personal history in an act of raw creation. On the political nature of her work, she comments, “Shirin Neshat says that every Iranian artist is political in one form or another. I would add that we are uniquely positioned to electrify culture and galvanize communities. I create imaginative wild experiences in a variety of mediums intended to transform, enchant, and provoke viewers” (New Georges). Tennent herself was born in California and moved to a post-revolution Iran when she was six years old before moving back to the United States. She offers in a description of her process, “...Family history has profoundly shaped my worldview: geopolitical concepts like mortality, power, and loss found their way into my work just as naturally as pleasure, humor, and joy” (New Georges). Tennent holds both realities of grief and emotional restoration simultaneously.