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Lit + Art

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Lit + Art

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# From the Editor

In the nonfiction essay “The Wilmington Airship of 1897,” author LeeAnna Lawrence equates a mass UFO sighting with a mandala, a symbol for a subconscious craving for unity and wholeness. The people of Wilmington, North Carolina looked up to the sky and yearned for cohesion and peace after years of racial tension, but an end to the tension came in a very human and horrific form.

Lawrence believes history is repeating itself, and stepping out of her piece for a moment, she could be right. In recent news, UFO sightings have popped up around the country, and not just sightings in the middle of nowhere we can easily brush off. Sightings are being reported from retired Navy pilots and intelligence officers, and our own government admitted to spending \$22 million to investigate “anomalous aerospace threats” from 2007 to 2012. If we use Lawrence’s habit of looking at the issue “sideways,” can we conclude this rash of sightings is also an attempt at a mandala from the collective unconscious? A cry for wholeness and peace from our fissured, communal psyche?

In “Blueblood,” author Robin Gow feels an affinity for the scarred bodies of female horseshoe crabs that resemble his own scarred forearms. Though the female crabs are scarred when male crabs fight over them, Gow’s scars are from self-harm. Gow notes how wild horseshoe crab populations have declined drastically, partially from being “abducted” by humans, milked in labs for their precious blue blood, and returned to the ocean where many of them die from the process. Blood from farmed horseshoe crabs doesn’t have the same medical properties, so wild populations are all we have. Gow believes, “We’re all kidnapping horseshoe crabs...by not knowing about it—by taking part in the world’s largest occurrence of the bystander effect.” Are we all kidnappers? Are we all responsible?

We certainly all are stuck in vicious cycles, as the authors of this issue’s pieces note. We fish horseshoe crabs for their life-saving blood, yet the process might kill off our crustaceous saviors, and then where will we be? We harm ourselves, and then punish ourselves for it by harming ourselves some more. We ignore the part we’ve played in the deterioration of relationships, like the main character does in Kent Kosack’s piece, “The Mannequin Game.” We scoff at those who have it better than us, while secretly wishing we were them as Samantha Krause does in her nonfiction piece, “Rich Houses.” We yearn to be someone else, somewhere else, like Gow. We all crave peace, but our individual version of peace are conflicting and lead to the bloodshed Lawrence chronicles.

We look up for extraterrestrial saviors, a mandala in the stars to heal our cracks and tears, instead of looking inward. If loneliness truly is the human condition, the pieces in this issue are attempts to reach out, not to aliens in the sky, but to each other. We need these attempts, these connections, to have the courage to acknowledge and then shed our shells, our scars, our pasts, and move into the future, together.

Stephanie Katz, Editor-In-Cheif

# Contents

## Fiction

Kent Kosack, *The Mannequin Game* 12

## Nonfiction

Robin Gow, *Blueblood* 8  
LeeAnna Lawrence, *The Wilmington Airship of 1897* 4  
Samantha Krause, *Rich Houses* 19

## Poetry

Catherine Fisher, *On Loss* 16  
Thomas Jarrell, *Suffering* 7  
Anna Maria Little, *Tribute to My Mother* 2

## Art

Cover: Annett Müller-Dorn, *The legs of the actress*

Matteo Bona, *Tulips* 6  
Ciro Flores, *The Beginning, the Middle, and the End* 3  
Rees Nielsen, *Pride Up the Backstretch* 18  
*Time Slips Away* 15  
Lauren Segarra, *Annamaria* 11

## Bios

21



# The legs of the actress

Annett Müller-Dorn

# Tribute to My Mother

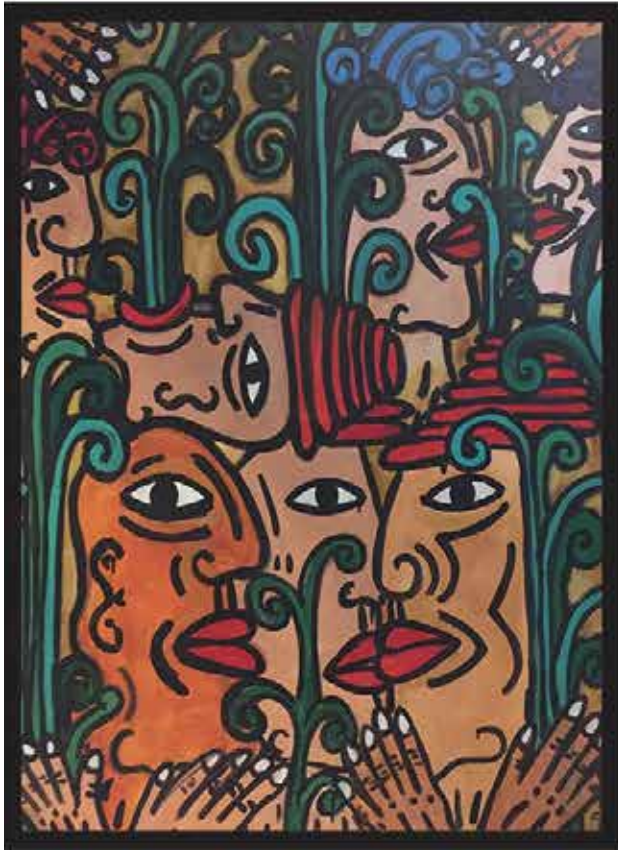
Anna Maria Little

when I was carved from my mother's marble stomach  
she opened up her hands to the sky  
and begged it for rain

but I am just a broken piece of her  
and rocks don't grow like flowers do

now, I wonder if rubble can blush  
if statues really have hearts  
in those tidy parcels  
of the guts  
of the earth





## Ciro Flores

The Beginning, the Middle, and the End

# The Wilmington Airship of 1897

LeeAnna Lawrence

One of my earliest memories is of  
standing beneath a tree by the side of the road,  
at night, with my mother, father, aunt, and uncle,  
listening to them exclaim upon  
a light in the sky.

*It's the evening star,* my mother insisted.

*But it's moving,* said my aunt.

I don't remember any more.

My mother doesn't remember it at all.

UFOs baffled my friend Carl, a very thoughtful man. He could never decide if they actually existed, or if they were something like a mass hallucination. He leaned toward the belief they were metaphors, modern myths, and that it didn't matter if they were real or not; what was important about a UFO wasn't the thing itself but what it signified. Look at the phenomenon sideways, he told me; at who talks about them, and how they're talked about; at who reacts, and why. Carl even went so far as to suggest that UFOs manifested the unconscious collective cravings of those who claimed to see them.

Aliens, well—I don't believe in them. That doesn't mean I don't find them compelling. Carl taught me well; whenever I hear of a UFO sighting, I look at the story sideways. Using this technique usually reveals something all too entirely human. Humans, well—

Not long ago I ran across a curious headline in *The Wilmington Messenger* of April 6, 1897, that said, "Was it An Airship?" The article read, in part:

*Hundreds of people were out in the streets and wharves last night, looking at a brilliant floating mass in the heavens to the west of town. It was moving very rapidly and many persons saw a network about the aerial wonder. The best and most reliable citizens averred that the ship appeared to come from the ocean, passed near the Market Street Dock and turned in the direction of the Navassa Guano Works. It seemed to have something like a searchlight, facing earthwards.*

(I wonder what they meant by "network.")

This was not the first UFO sighting that year. Prior to the April event, on March 31st and April 4th, an airship had been observed over Omaha and Kansas City, respectively. Someone, it might seem, was touring the continent. To tell the truth, the very idea of airships was, well, in the air in those days. Lots of folks had been introduced to the concept during the Civil War, when the blue and gray launched manned observation balloons to monitor troop movements. Then, in 1886, Jules Verne wrote a popular novel about an airship, *The Clipper of the Clouds*. H. G. Wells heard about the Wilmington sighting, and was inspired to write *War of the Worlds*, published in 1898. In 1904, Verne revisited *The Clipper of the Clouds* with a sequel, *The Master of the World*, in which his protagonist keeps a UFO in a secret base in Morganton, North Carolina.

Both of Verne's novels involve powerful men making bad choices and darkly warn of the perils of totalitarianism. Wells' tale, better known to us perhaps, concerns an unfriendly extraterrestrial race out to destroy humanity.

Let's look sideways at the airship sighting of 1897.

Following the Civil War, Wilmington had scrambled back on its feet to become the largest and most thriving city in North Carolina. The majority of those who stared skywards that April night, wide-eyed and dazzled in the searchlight's glare, were black. Two-thirds of Wilmington's population was African-American: In 1890, for example, Wilmington's census indicated 11,324 African-Americans, as opposed to 8,731 whites.

To African-Americans, Wilmington was a symbol of hope and accomplishment. By 1897, African-Americans owned barbershops, tailoring establishments, restaurants, and drug stores. They bought homes, held positions as firemen and policemen, and participated in politics. The *Wilmington Daily Record*, the city's African-American newspaper owned by Alex Manly, was a testament to the high literacy rates among the African-American population, which among black males was higher than that of the city's white men.

Folks, both black and white, were experiencing peace and prosperity. My friend Carl would say that's what the glowing circular

UFO was all about, really—everyone’s craving for unity and homogeneity flung into the night sky in a kind of mass cathartic explosion from the collective unconscious. Keep in mind that it was only thirty-some years since the Civil War; the national psyche was still dismembered—so the airship could have been a mandala, a symbol of desperately desired wholeness that simply manifested in a form that people found understandable. Several millennia ago it might have looked like choirs of angels. Ezekiel saw chariots and wheels within wheels. We see what’s appropriate to our time and culture.

(I’m still bothered by the searchlight, though. That’s hard to explain away...)

All that would seem positive enough, but humans, well—they don’t always fulfill their potential or transcend their past. They drag the past behind them like a rotting corpse and pretend that it isn’t *that* disgusting. *It doesn’t smell much at all, really*, they say, and sweep the maggots under the rug, averting their eyes. *Life goes on*, they say, when actually, it isn’t going anywhere: it’s looping back on itself. People do the same horrible things again and again because they can’t bring themselves to face how alienated they are from their own motives. That’s not looking sideways; that’s just denial.

*We’re* the aliens. We’re disconnected from our own cultural reality. To put it succinctly, we’re socially psychotic. Do I seem harsh? Looking sideways can do that to you.

A year after the effervescent airship appeared over Wilmington, on November 7th, 1898, Alfred Moore Waddell, a prominent Democrat, gave a speech before the upcoming November 8th election. The Democrats in those days favored white supremacy, as you might infer from Waddell’s speech:

*You are Anglo-Saxons.*

*You are armed and prepared, and you will do your duty. Be ready  
at a moment’s notice.*

*Go to the polls tomorrow, and if you  
find the Negro out voting, tell him  
to leave the polls  
and if he refuses, kill—  
shoot him down in his tracks.*

*We shall win tomorrow if we have to do it with guns.*

Nobody was killed on Election Day.

On November 10th, however, about 500 armed white men broke into the *Wilmington Daily Record* and destroyed Manly’s printing press, then burned the building to the ground. They paused for a picture in front of the destroyed newspaper building before moving on. By this point the mob had swelled to 2,000 men, all with guns; some were Waddell’s goons, but

others were clergymen, lawyers, bankers, and business owners—and some, I assume, were nice people—whose fears had been stoked by a shrewdly cynical and viciously racist propaganda machine.

The mob then began to hunt African-American citizens through the streets of Wilmington. No one knows exactly how many black people were killed that day; rumor had it that bodies were thrown into the Cape Fear River to make the body count more difficult. However, we know for sure that 25 African-American men were shot down in a firefight near the intersection of Fourth and Harnett Streets. Other men became targets as they headed home on their lunch break or ran to check on their families. By noon, the mob had penetrated deep into the African-American neighborhood of Manhattan Park, and we know at least three more people were killed there.

“Whites Kill Negroes and Seize City of Wilmington,” said the next Friday’s *New York Herald*.” “Hours of Terror Throughout the City; Governor Russell Declares the City Under Martial Law And Rapid Fire Guns Are Ready—Negro Office Holders ‘Resign’ and Leader of Uprising is Chosen Mayor.” By 4 p.m. on November 10th, Waddell and his entourage demanded the resignations of the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen. Waddell was “elected” mayor by a new Board of Aldermen composed of his cronies from the mob.

All black civil employees were fired. Many prominent black leaders were arrested and jailed. The next day, they were declared hostile aliens and marched, under armed guard, to the train station and were told they’d be killed if they ever returned. Hundreds of African-American families left Wilmington; those who remained faced a harshly racist environment and seriously reduced pay.

This event was, as far as I know, the first and (so far) only coup d’état in American history.

When I tell people about these two events—the airship sighting of 1897 and the massacre of 1898—which one do you think they want to disbelieve? People tell me that the pogrom of 1898 couldn’t happen now, in our time. Sometimes I look at the stars and wish that something out there would come down in a bright ship and recalibrate us. Wake up, kids. Nobody’s coming. I’d take care of it myself, if I didn’t have to keep ignoring that awful stinking thing over there, under the rug.







**Tulips**  
Matteo Bona

# Suffering

Thomas Jarrell

Once I thought it was something that you had to carry around  
in your mouth like the mother macaque at the Mysore Zoo,  
who carried the stiffened corpse of her young in her hands  
and mouth for two days after its death. For a long time  
I thought it was something that you had to care for and stroke,  
grooming it like she did with her long fingers in a tree's tallest fork  
while its wide eyes forever returned your gaze.

Now I know it's relieved by smothering,  
not in the way a grease fire is extinguished with a pan-lid.  
But rather like the snow monkey, who after losing her baby,  
goes into the wilderness to grieve  
and is followed by her troop that buries her in a mound  
of their warm bodies for some prolonged period of time.

There was the day my father called to tell me  
my grandmother died. You said you could hear  
that something was off by the sound of my voice,  
so you came from the other room and straddled me  
on the couch, your body eclipsing mine,  
your shirt wet with my tears.

# Blueblood

Robin Gow

The sky was the color of a healing bruise when we set foot on the shivering New Jersey beach. Sky murmured in indigo and maroon like the tender skin of my knees. I had slipped perching on the shore rocks the day before. This sunset is the only time I can remember actually watching the night take hold of the horizon. I was there with my college coastal ecology class to help the local conservancy take counts for the largest horseshoe crab migration on earth.

I signed up for coastal ecology because I needed a lab science, and the class fulfilled my college's requirement. I was the only English major in a cluster of pre-med biology majors. They took runs with each other every day after our field work, while I would break off alone to return to the maritime forests we had visited during the day. I ate my afternoon apple listening to the rustle of golden rod and common reed bouquets on each side of a gnarled wooden bench.

The class haunts me with too much knowledge about the animals and wildlife of Stone Harbor. I recall at random the obscure names of estuary foliage, and I can distinguish the subtle differences between a sandpiper and a red knot—like the length of their tooth-pick legs and the curvature of their specialized beaks. Red knots are the shorebirds that eat horseshoe crab eggs. I find myself replaying each unnecessary detail of the current issues with shorebird reproduction. Big surprise, like always, humans are the sole cause of a population's decline. Everyone is sorry because birds are cute, but not sorry enough to stop building boardwalks. For the majority of plovers, sandpipers, and other shorebirds, populations have decreased every year since the 90s.

Sometimes when I'm alone, I think about the horseshoe crab's copper-based blue blood. It's phantasmal and alien. We use their blood to clean medical equipment. The blood's amebocyte cells find toxins and cluster around them in congealed globs of cells. Horseshoe crab blood is milked from their bodies like cows in factories—ancient legs scrambling in the grip of a conveyor belt, while the increasing pressure of a metal needle snaps through shell.

Horseshoe crabs are over four-hundred million years old. Their blood has tasted oceans without humans. Without fish hooks. Without aluminum. Without syringes. Without crumpled burger wrappers from the boardwalk.

When our professor lectured to us the morning before the migration, I had wondered who exactly who takes the horseshoe crabs from the ocean? Scientists don't like to name names. Environmental injustice is so often a distant "they"—a starched white unknown corporation. I think it helps them forget that in some way we are all contributing to the devastation of our planet. I imagined men with white gloves—masks—thick meshed nets. I have scoured Google and concluded horseshoe crabs are kidnapped by people without names—tall buildings by the ocean with gravel parking lots. Smiling scientists who praise the blood of another

creature as a medical miracle. There is no transfusion here—there are only carcasses of a species that is so old they’ve learned to build themselves helmets.

I have determined it’s all of us. We’re all kidnapping the horseshoe crabs. We are kidnapping by not knowing about it—by taking part in the world’s largest occurrence of the bystander effect. We don’t think dropping a candy wrapper on the side of the highway or not recycling a coke can are the same thing as kidnapping an entire species but they’re all linked together—feeding the mass complacency we have taken towards our environment. It is so much easier to accept that the harvest of horse shoe crabs is being done by “someone else” than to acknowledge how we are not far removed from all environmental injustice.

The class was taking counts of horseshoe crabs that night, because the species has been so over-fished that their populations are now closely monitored by conservation efforts. Unable to recuperate after the needle plunged through their chest, these creature’s weak, blood-milked bodies often die after they are tossed back into the water. Horseshoe crabs have seen a 90% decline in population over the last decade due to a combination of pollution, over-fishing, and lack of spawning sites.

On the beach, a conservancy worker in thigh-high rubber boots and a ponytail gave us each a measuring grid to lie down in the water and count the number of crabs spawning within the grid. The class would take randomized numbers of steps that we read off a clip board as we walked—recording numbers down ten miles of chilly star-dipped beach.

The last blush of the sun dunked over the rolls of sand. On the other side of the street rows of houses on stilts perched with lamps that looked like lighthouses trapped in terrariums.

The street waited still.

The other students walked faster than me. I was bundled in three sweaters and fingerless gloves. My body doesn’t regulate temperature, and this May night was still tinged with remnants of winter chill. Something about the beach made my skin feel like paper that evening. I felt my body becoming less and less real. I stopped walking for a second and saw the other students in their windbreakers and black rubber boots illuminated under the full belly of the moon.

The moon. I looked up at a moon. An empty dinner plate poised among shy constellations competing with the lights of the boardwalk attractions. Horseshoe crabs follow the pull of the moon. That was the first time that night I looked out at the whole beach. The whole surface was moving. I let the group walk farther and farther away from me, and listened as their voices got devoured by the rush of the lunar tides.

The body of a horseshoe crab reminds me of a salad bowl with a long rudder of a tail. The male horseshoe crabs are sharp and tiny compared to the females—they’re all running away from one another on legs stolen from spiders and washed in brine. They are so many sizes of

males, from quarters to punch bowls—all clamoring for the body of a female. The females are huge—barnacle-shelled, gnarled by salt and scratch of sand. They take wounds from men fighting over their body.

I think of the scars on my forearms from match sticks. Some people cut their wrists, but my struggle with self-harm has always been with fire. There are so many ways to be hurt in water and fire and sand and stone. Standing there on the beach, I thought of my skin as cold as a horseshoe crab shell—the blue blood showing through my veins as freezing as the night water—stars still floating in each rise and fall of the waves.

It was also the class’s job to flip stranded horseshoe crabs over if their long, thin rapier tails couldn’t flip them back onto their legs. Without assistance, they will struggle through the night and rage there till the sun boils and eats the flesh from their shells. I flipped one over with my foot and didn’t feel like much of a savior. I wondered why the horseshoe crabs don’t flip each other over when they get stuck. I looked up at the rest of my class turning into muffled shadows in the dark. My skin glowed whiter without their collective flashlights, and I turned the complexion of the moon—tinged with the blue-blood cords strung in my wrists.

I was hungry and hadn’t eaten enough that day. I still forget what horseshoe crabs eat. The gust off the ocean made my ribs into wind chimes. I took a step forward to flip over another horseshoe crab that looked stuck. I discovered that it was only the top shell—meat all rotted out by the sun and foraging gulls. I wondered if its children were spawning here, or if they got stranded with no human to flip them over. The waves made it hard for the crabs to hold onto each other.

I wondered what they would sound like if they could scream—would the females scream? The males? Both? I took them as the pensive type of creature that wouldn’t want to waste sound on the sensation of pain.

I picked up the dead horseshoe crab shell. It’s big so I can tell it was a female. There were still some pieces of meat inside and it looked like the carcass might have been picked at by plovers because of the beak marks.

At my feet, a struggling orgy of males groped the body of a female as she hauled her egg-laden body to a place to release them. I wanted to tell her to push them off—that more than half her eggs would probably be eaten in the morning when the red knots arrived from Tierra del Fuego in Argentina. Red knots have one of the largest migratory paths of any species, and they choose to nourish themselves solely on a gluttonous feast of horseshoe crab eggs spilled out under the moon.

I hunched down on my knees—crouched above the same female to touch her surface.

On the boat trip we took the day before, we went dredging for microbes in the bay, and the tour-guide told us that it was good luck to kiss horseshoe crabs. I picked one up on the ship and kissed its forehead in

front of the class while the other students took pictures with their iPhone. I tossed the horseshoe crab back off the bow of the ship and listened as her body smacked against the water. There was a photographer from the school.

It felt wrong, and I had been looking for a way to make up for it. I wondered if she would be okay from the fall or if this performance had hurt her. I touched the forehead of this other horseshoe crab still weighed down by three males. I wanted to pull them off, but I resisted the urge to intervene again. I kissed her there under the moon and the tail of one of the males tweaked my head.

I looked at her false eyes on the top of the shell. They are to trick predators but they only ever looked like little goat horns to me. Horseshoe crabs' real eyes line their entire body around the perimeter as well as five clustered on the tip of their head and two near their mouth.

I put my hand out for her to see, and I imagined what it would be like to see the whole beach in panorama—to be jostled by waves and watch the whole world turn with you. I closed my eyes and brushed my cold fingers on her shell. I forgot whether or not they can feel through their exoskeletons. I was tired. It was late, past midnight.

We had gotten up early that morning around 8am and toured at an oyster fishery. I didn't really sleep the night before. I'm just as bad at sleeping as I am at eating. On the cold beach, I thought about how absurd sleep is and if the horseshoe crabs think it's silly that humans waste so much time in darkness. Horseshoe crabs don't sleep and neither do most crustaceans. I wonder if they long to sleep—to rest. I slept on average about three hours during the field research portion of the class because I suffered from a mixture of sleep anxiety and night terrors that kept me from sleeping for more than a few hours at a time. These were agitated by the new environment and not really knowing anyone in the class.

I actually really liked the other students—I'm just the kind of person who fades into themselves easily. I talked little outside of the lab, yet I felt more alive inside my body than I had for a long time. I talked to myself more. I kept analyzing each inch of my skin—the ripples left by my bones. I was discovering remnants of animals tucked away in my own framework—forearms of shorebird wings, turtle-toe bones.

I loathed the cold and the rain that persisted through our trip, but in retrospect, I appreciate how much they made me think about the sensation of touch, my skin, and my own body. I undressed at the end of each day and sat in my hotel room, alone, looking at my naked body in the full-length bathroom mirror.

I was very thin—thinner than I should have been. I had given up running daily in an attempt to gain more weight back—stop controlling food so much—get back some form of stable. There was something haunting about my own gaunt body in that mirror. My bones moved under my moon skin like the horns of horseshoe crabs—each bone rippled like

their many legs rippling in the flicker of waves refracting the moon.

Sitting on the beach, I let my eyes close and I could feel that my body wanted to fold and just lay on the beach—rest in the damp sand and sleep coiled in cold. Maybe I would grow an exoskeleton. I made a joke to myself that I was born as the wrong animal—that I could never sleep because I was meant to be a horseshoe crab.

I touched the female crab again. I should have been moving more to finish the grid with the rest of the group but the lingering of the empty plate moon and the celestial body of the horseshoe crab held me there. She reached out her tweezer claws and pinched my finger. It didn't hurt because horseshoe crabs have the same legs as spiders—they're more related to arachnids than crustaceans.

I stood up and felt dizzy. When I was hunched, I could pull my top layer of sweater over my knees and keep my body warmer. I moved without thinking—counting the calliopes of horseshoe crab bodies in the parameters of my squares. Somehow, I found myself caught up with the group about an hour later. One boy lent me his jersey and I was a little bit warmer. The teacher's assistant, Anne, smiled and rubbed my shoulders. She had seen me shivering. She told me, "We were almost done, sweetie, hang in there." I appreciated the compassion. I know it's infantile but I wanted someone to carry me back to where I'd kissed the second horseshoe crab—I just wanted to stay there. I imagined taking on the life of a horseshoe crab—giving up trying to have warm blood.

I was too tired to actually hear how many we counted that night, but that migration has on average 10,000 horseshoe crabs leaving between 60,000 and 120,000 eggs. I slept the whole way back to the hotel in the back of the van with residual cold still heavy in my bones. I felt my blood blue congealing all through my veins.

The next morning we watched birders from all over the world push in front of us to lend a hand clipping tags on the ankles of red knots ransacking the shoreline. I was too sleepy to think of anything other than the present image of the birds. From a distance, without my binoculars, in the blurry morning sun, the beach looked like it was moving again. The whole shore was speckled with maroon feathers and beaks full of tiny orangish horseshoe crab eggs.

I sat away from the group. I sipped coffee that pulsed strangely in my eye lids. I thought of myself as the carcass of a horseshoe crab that no one flipped over. I let the sun stain my skin and pan-fry my freckles like inverted stars. I waited for the red knots to pick me apart too. I felt ancient. I looked down at my wrists to remind myself of the scarred exo-skeletons we share and the blue wires we both wear as veins.







**Annamaria**  
Lauren Segarra

# The Mannequin Game

Kent Kosack

My kid's last project was out of sight. Really. I helped her with the idea, sure, but just that. The beauty of it was all hers. Out of cardboard, she brought Jim Thorpe to life. Conjured this iconic athlete up into her third-grade classroom with nothing but markers, scissors, tape, a glue stick, bits of construction paper and the box that our new flat-screen came in (The image on it is incredible. You wouldn't know I got it for half-off. Thing takes up half the wall of our living room. Feels like a first-rate theater. Very professional. The kind of place you could watch TV and movies, but also films. Not that I get to watch anything on it now. It's only technically my living room now. I don't actually live there).

So she had this project, that I might have helped her with—what kind of father would I be if I refused to help my little girl when she needs it? This assignment to make a big figure. I thought she meant an important figure at first. Like George Washington or Ronald McDonald or Steve Jobs, but then I realized she meant big as in life-sized. I think she liked the idea because it reminded her of this mannequin game she plays with her friends in the mall. They're an odd group but what the hell do I know about little girls? You'd think my wife would. I mean, she was once a little girl. Or maybe not. Maybe she was born a rattlesnake and I've just been misjudging her all these years. That would explain a few things.

Anyway, mannequin. Every time my girl or one of her friends sees a mannequin in the mall, whoever sees it first shouts "mannequin!" and the other have to freeze. Like mannequins. Freeze right there, in the middle of the aisle or trying on a sweater or leaning on the watch counter—mannequins. They become mannequins. I don't get it. We played red light, green light, when I was a kid. Red you stop, green you go. Simple rules. Couldn't be clearer. But I can't understand this game for the life of me. Sooner or later, based on some bizarre rule, they become unfrozen and move on. Until the next mannequin. It makes shopping exhausting. Takes hours to buy a pack of undershirts. They're nice kids, fine enough. But there's a time and a place, right?

But when she told me about her latest project I was thrilled. Meg, my little girl, used to ask me for help with everything. With her spelling and her reading. With her essays. With her arithmetic, which I'll be honest, isn't my strongest subject, but like I said, if your kid asks for help, you help. Period. Though recently she hasn't been asking for too much help. At first, I thought it was because she was getting older. Growing up. Becoming capable. All stuff a dad should want. Then I thought it was a phase. Her showing me she could go it alone. Showing me her independence. But now I know it was my cunt of a wife spreading bullshit about me. Trying to sour her on me. Ruin our good relationship. Soon-to-be cunt of an ex-wife, thank god. Though not ex-cunt, I'll bet. But that's a problem for the next sap.

She's been spending Tuesday nights with me, Meg has. And every other weekend. It's not an official schedule or anything. Nothing a lawyer

has cooked up. Just something we—me and the mother of my daughter whose name may as well be dirt—agreed on for the time being. My soon-to-be-ex is living in our house. I've got an apartment. A typical bachelor-dump but it's livable. So, anyway, on one of these pleasant Tuesdays over a pizza I'd ordered—a Philly cheesesteak pie, enough grease dripping off it to fry a thousand fries, Meg's favorite, and mine, though my arteries can't handle it, but parents have to make sacrifices—my little girl told me about her project.

"No, dad." She always saying "no, dad" now. It's cute, her teaching me. But I worry about what she's picking up from her mother the rest of the week. "It's not a statue. It's like a poster. A famous person-poster. And big," she said, putting her hand above her head.

"Like a mannequin then?" She froze for a second after I said it.

"Don't worry, I didn't see a mannequin, did I?" I said.

"So?" She asked with the barest movement of her lips.

"So you don't have to freeze now, right?"

She shook her head, breaking the spell. "I can't play this with you. You don't understand the rules at all."

I was thinking of asking her to teach me but I've already asked her plenty and truth be told was never any good at remembering rules. It used to drive her mother nuts. Every time we played cards, I'd screw up the game by playing by the wrong rule. If we played poker, I'd yell gin and throw down my cards. If we played old maid, I'd keep telling everyone to "go fish." Driving her nuts, for me, was the best part of the games. Fucking with her was my royal flush.

"Listen. It's like a poster I said. Of a famous person. Mom wants me to make one of Gandhi."

"Who the hell is that?" I knew, but doubted she did.

She frowned. Cute as a button even when she's fed-up with me. That kind of sweet, if you know what I mean. "Dad. Don't be silly. He freed India."

"Did he? So what?"

"What?"

"So what? Are you Indian?"

"Maybe."

"Since when?"

"On Indigenous People's Day, we learned that the Indians were here first."

"Those are different Indians."

"So?"

"Plus, I don't think you can call them Indians."

She sighed. Another of her mother's mannerisms. I wondered if I could get custody of her gestures to keep her mother's from seeping in.

"Dad. They were here first."

"So?"

"It's like the deli."

"The city?" I thought she was still on about India.

"What?"

"What deli?"

"George's deli with the corned beef you like."

"What about it?"

"First come, first served."

This was on a strip of paper taped to the wall above the meat slicer and they made a hell of a sandwich. Baked their own rye too. So I couldn't argue with her there, ethnicity or nationality mix-up aside.

"Do you want to make a poster of Gandhi?"

"A figure."

"Ok. Do you want to make a poster-figure, that's not a mannequin, of Gandhi?"

She shrugged. "I want to respect the Indigenous Peoples."

I thought on that for a moment. I remember little Meg in my lap watching the Superbowl and the hundreds of questions she used to ask.

"Why is it called football when they use their hands? Why are the Giants so small? Why are they called the Cardinals if there are no birds in the game? She was curious about anything I liked back then. Up to only a year ago. Before all this shit with her mother. "What about Jim Thorpe," I asked.

"Is he like Gandhi?"

"If Gandhi had been able to run the ball like a beast, sure. Gandhi in cleats."

"What did he do?"

"You name it. He was in the Olympics. He played football. He played basketball. Baseball too. A phenom across the board."

"What's a phenom?"

"Someone really good at something. Or lots of somethings."

"Like Gandhi?"

"Sure."

"Like mom?" She often asked me about her mother, testing me I think. Waiting to see if I'd talk shit. I wanted to. God, how I wanted to. But I figured it would be wise to wait until the custody hearings and all that fun stuff was settled.

"Yeah. Sure. Your mom is phenomenal at lots of stuff." A phenomenal bitch, I thought. A phenomenal liar, sneak, manipulator. And yes, a phenomenal fuck.

"What stuff?"

"You'll have to ask her that. Come on. Eat up. If we don't finish this it has to go back to Philly."

She eyed me suspiciously. A year ago, she would have bought that line without question. "Why?"

"Those are the rules."

“What rules?”

“Hell if I know. You’ll have to ask the mayor of Philadelphia. His name is Bob Cheesesteak. He made the rules.”

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I never got to help her with the project though. Her mother wouldn’t have it. Complained I was confusing her. Trifling with her education. Mocking her school, the Native Americans, Gandhi. I told her over the phone that I was the one who said she shouldn’t call them Indians but it didn’t matter. She was phenomenal alright.

But Meg called me and told me about her presentation two weeks later. All of the kids were doing a sort of show and tell on a stage with their respective projects. It’s a very progressive school. Something to do with Waldorf though when my wife first mentioned it I thought she was referring to the salad, which I never liked. Grapes and mayonnaise? Fucking gross.

Traffic was a bitch getting over there. Of course. It always is at that hour. Which I knew, and planned for by leaving a half an hour earlier than usual. But an accident on the northbound side led to rubbernecking on the southbound side which led to a frozen fucking interstate on a Friday night in June. A miserable situation any time of year or day of the week but somehow worse for me, a bad omen for the legal shit unfolding over the rest of the summer. And, who knows, the fall too. If Meg’s mother had her way, unfolding for the rest of my life.

I got to her school forty minutes late and wasn’t sure if she’d gone yet. The sun was just setting and the school in that light looked like the one I’d gone to as a kid. A squat, yellow-bricked fortress right out of the 50s. I found the gym and a seat in the back. No sign of Meg’s mother, which was nice. A bit of good luck for once. Some kid on stage was parading around a poster of Nelson Mandela. I thought it was Morgan Freeman. But I heard a couple of parents in front of me talking about apartheid so I put two and two together. A few more kids went. A pair, twins maybe, had a pair of posters too. They were neon green. Almost glowing. I realized from what they were saying—something about radioactivity and discovering the radio and France being great and making great cheese—that they were supposed to be paper-cut out versions of Marie and Pierre Curie.

Meg came on next, hauling two limp-looking cutouts of brown men. One, I could tell right off from the toga-like wrap and excellently-done wire glasses, was Gandhi. He looked very dignified up there, despite the bad lighting and the distance from the nose-bleed section. The second figure was less exact. Looked kind of lumpy, with odd bulges on his shoulders and knees and a malformed head. Then I heard her. My girl. Meg.

“Gandhi and Jim Thorpe were both great. Gandhi freed India. Was a vegetarian. Fought the British. And helped salt. He even made his own

sandals. He was very smart. And Jim Thorpe was great too. He played lots of sports and was great at all of them. He won a gold medal. He was fast and strong and ran the ball like a beast.” She waved the cut-outs back and forth. The motion almost made them real. “They were phenoms. God bless them.” She took a bow and Gandhi and Thorpe bowed with her.

Meg found me in the back after the show. She could always find me in a crowd.

“Dad, did you see? Did you see?”

“Yeah, I saw honey.”

“Was it phenomenal?”

“Better than.”

“What’s better than phenomenal?”

I couldn’t think of a word. I just stood there looking at her. A little thing arm-in-arm with flat phenoms.

“Why aren’t you moving? Did someone call mannequin?” She turned to look for her friends, for whoever had started the game that I, though not really knowing the rules, was in the middle of playing. I reached for her but she slipped away, leaving me with paper-Gandhi and paper-Thorpe. I stayed seated. I held them. They felt thin and light. Up close I noticed she’d used glitter on Gandhi’s glasses and Thorpe’s helmet. A bit of flair. It came off, dusting my shirt and the floor. I wasn’t sure if I should get up and follow her or if I had to wait for a signal. If she’d come back and release me. She was right. I didn’t know the rules.







**Time Slips Away**  
Rees Nielsen



# On Loss

Catherine Fisher

I.

The kitchen smells green, green with cilantro,  
fresh scent released from the violence of blade on leaf.  
Green like jealousy, counting portions of  
piles fresh from frying: juicy and full.

Feel the space left for filling in  
the emptiness of stomachs  
made to receive.

On dumpling day, some are always frozen.  
Don't let this feel like abandon.

II.

My aunt died. I doubt she ever made dumplings.  
She got red, red, when she drank.  
She would say it was because her ancestors  
were raped by Genghis Kahn.  
This was probably wrong.

She was a great cook but I doubt  
she ever made dumplings.  
I cannot ask her now.  
She got red, red, when she drank  
but it never stopped her. She hired  
workers to cook at holidays but she was a great cook.

At the funeral the Rabbi reminded that we throw  
in a shovelful of dirt to ensure strangers don't bury  
our loved ones. We don't come into this world alone  
and we won't go out alone.

I watched women in  
high heels struggle with the weight.  
I struggled with the weight.

The sound of dirt hitting a mostly hollow casket.

The sound of prayers, mostly forgotten, I now hear most often when death calls.

Her sister stole her favorite book from the library  
and put it in the casket with her but I've forgotten  
the book and this time I am red, red with forgetting  
I am red, red with forgetting

and this, let this feel like abandon.

### III.

Their home is on a lake in Michigan. Not one  
of the Great Lakes although it is a great lake, one I learned  
to swim in. I didn't actually but that would make for a better story.

Walking into a house sitting *shiva*, you pour water over  
your hands. There was a pitcher sitting on a folding  
table outside the door. The cold cascade sucked red  
swell from my hands, returning them yellow and slight,  
nothing like dumplings.

At the *shiva* there were bagels. Bagels are a lot like dumplings.  
Dough in a glass bowl, thick palms grinding flour into water.  
To make a good bagel you must boil it, then bake it.  
To make a good dumpling you must fry it, then add water to steam.  
Both are chewy and dense to preoccupy the mouth.

I can talk of nothing meaningful. I find myself absent kitchened,  
asking for recipes, how she made thing after thing.  
The recipe for a laugh is two parts humor and one part  
loss.

Her laugh echoes in my head when its quiet and it might make me crazy.

Frantic fractions and Fractured fantasies: these are the answers I get,  
scrawled in her hand on index cards and leafed between standard cookbooks.

At the *shiva*, the tears I did not want turned each bagel,  
whether poppy or sesame or egg into salt.  
Salt most traditional of all.

When we leave, they give us bagels in ziplock bags.  
Upon arriving home, we put some in the freezer to extend the taste of family.

And this, this is abandon.



## Pride Up the Backstretch

Rees Nielsen

# Rich Houses

Samantha Krause

I don't remember how it started. It would be a summer night, or weekend winter morning, or Sunday afternoon anytime of year. The house would be in its usual quiet state, my mother napping upstairs and the dogs asleep on the couch. My dad would find me, reading in my room or in some other idle activity. He would ask, "Feel like going for a drive?" And always, I would.

While there was rarely an explicit destination, we always seemed to end up going to see the rich houses. There weren't any in our little town of a thousand, but the closer you got to Madison, the easier they were to find. We had a few go-to neighborhoods we liked best, with names like Glenwood or Eldenbrook or Goldenberry Acres. Most were suburb developments that had been tacked onto the edges of the city as afterthoughts, made up of houses that looked clean and cold. If we grew tired of these, there were always more, further back into the hills, up larger smoother winding roads.

It was a funny thing to do, especially considering we weren't poor at all—my parents had steady, well-paying jobs. The house we lived in was big and white and sat at the edge of our small town, looking out at fields of corn that lit up in the sun. Yet there was still a clear distinction between my pretty white home and these orderly neighborhoods, these extravagant mansions with driveways so long we had to admire most from afar.

My dad would inch along the pavement so we could both take in the grand, three-story or more estates, some with marble pillars, gargoyles, elaborate fountains, five-car garages. We would point out these details to each other, saying what we liked and didn't, laughing at the stone baby statues or the strangely coiffed shrubs. "Look at how silly the big things are," we would seem to say with our gestures. "We would never be so silly as that."

Though we laughed, I never thought of this activity as malicious or sad. In my head that's why my mother never came along—not because she would have necessarily been these things, but because it would be more painful than fun for her. She would have become unhappy at seeing something without being able to hold it for her own. I tried not to blame her for this longing that sprung up in her fairly often—we couldn't go swimming without her mentioning her desire for our own pool, or hear of a relative's vacation without her expressing her kind-hearted envy. These desires bothered me more than they probably should have, after all, it's not a crime to want. I only thought that she should be happier with all that we had, or at least *pretend* to be. Things weren't going to drastically change, and we had plenty, so what was the use in lusting for more?

This is what I asked myself as we ambled through the quiet neighborhoods. My father and I didn't want these houses—or so I thought. We only wanted to imagine being the people who lived in them or the *kind* of people who lived in them. People who had maids and landscapers and chandeliers and pools. People who were doctors or dentists or lawyers—

who were just like us but somehow very different. In my mind these people wore suits regularly, and they bought their cars from lots, shiny and unused. They took family vacations to Europe and filled their homes with the memories of the trips, smiling in Paris and smiling in Florence. When bills came in the mail, they didn't worry because there was nothing to worry about.

Okay, yes, my father and I wanted these things. The real difference between us and my mother was that we knew we weren't meant for that sort of life. This was a simple rule of the universe that I learned from my father on these drives early on. We could look—even touch—but there was an impassable sort of space between those buildings and us, a kind of life we could pretend to know but would never live inside of ourselves.

Neither of my parents finished college. Through their twenties, they lived in shitty apartments and worked shitty jobs in bars and bakeries, always taking graveyard shifts. Eventually they fell into their careers as office people doing office things and met in a copy room. There was marriage, then me, then a tiny house in a tiny town, and then my brother. Then, by some stroke of luck, a job for my father that paid him more than he ever thought he could earn with only a high school diploma. This allowed us to have mostly everything that we needed, including a bigger, prettier house on the edge of town.

And yet the rich houses called to us still. The ones that sat on the edge of Lake Mendota were my favorite. They were a little older, built into the hill of the shoreline, some with windows so huge you could see right through the first floor and out to the water. A few of these my father had been in many years ago, when he went to the big city high school and got invited to parties by star athletes and other rich kids. He never went into great detail about them, but I imagined the parties from movies—parents out of town, kegs tapped by football players, stereos blasting in low-lit rooms. And my dad, young and unaware of all his life to come, maybe sitting out by the water with some friends.

I loved to imagine twirling on those hardwood floors all alone, looking out at the blue, the sun coming in. From inside the car I wondered if the people who lived there ever got used to their view, if it ever seemed to them less spectacular than it seemed to me as we rode by and glanced briefly in. That was the only animosity I felt, if any—the worry that the residents couldn't appreciate what they had as much as I would if it were mine.

The ritual continued all through my high school years. Often we would be on the way back from somewhere else, the grocery store or my grandma's house, and decide to take the long way home. I knew most of the neighborhoods by then, and had seen the houses in them many times. Still, we would inch along in the same slow way, inspecting the landscaping and catching glimpses of people in the windows. At one of the more extravagant houses he would sometimes stop the car completely for a

moment.

“There's where you'll live after your best-selling novel makes millions,” he'd say, half joking, half not. The first time he said this it took me by surprise. Out of nowhere he had broken his own rule of allowing himself to really believe in these houses as places for us. Now I see that he had only meant the rule for himself, and that, without knowing it, I had always been exempt. He saw a lifetime of potential waiting for me, a life in which I would belong in all the places he never did. All his stories of washing dishes in fancy hotel kitchens, of serving people with club memberships and endless bar tabs, came back to me at a new angle. From his angle.

But all I could do was laugh: at the stone lions guarding the driveway, at the likelihood of making any real money as a writer, and at the thought that I'd ever live in such a uselessly big house. I didn't know a lot, yet, about what I wanted out of life. But I couldn't imagine any scenario in which I ended up that close to where I started, alone or with some sort of family, looking out the window at the cars driving slowly by.

When I was old enough, I would go alone and look at them sometimes. I'd go when I wanted to escape my own life and imagine others for myself, lives in which I wasn't me, but someone else entirely. I would drive in the same slow way, peering into the windows of lavish possibility. I would pass people walking with their dogs, or children, or alone, and imagine myself in their bodies, with their thoughts and worries and desires instead of mine, which were getting old and tedious.

I can still hear the radio playing in the background, still smell the coffee in my dad's metal thermos and hear the stories he told me about the impressive adventures of his twenties. Going to see the rich houses was a normal tradition to us. It was treasured time spent together—once every month or every few. Then, after we had finally seen enough, he would turn the car around, and we would go home.





# Artist + Author Bios

**Matteo Bona** was born in Asti in the Piemonte region of Italy. He studied Applied Sciences at the Public Scientific Lyceum Francesco Vercelli. He is currently studying Foreign Languages and Modern Literature at the Università del Piemonte Orientale. He published his poetry collections *Beyond the Poetry* in 2015 and *Nothingness Sense* in 2017. In 2016, he won the Roma 3's Academic Prize, Apollo Dionisiaco, for an unpublished poem and the Cesare Beccaria Prize for the Figurative Art.

**Catherine Fisher** is a senior at Whitman College where she studies English and Race and Ethnic Studies. She has been published by *Pacific Literary Review* and *Linden Avenue Literary Journal*. She works as a line-cook at an Italian taverna and spends her free time dancing.

Born in Honduras, **Ciro Flores'** fascination with art started at a very young age. He spent countless hours tracing his favorite comic book characters onto onion-skinned tracing paper and sold the work to his cousins and friends. When he immigrated to the United States at age 11, Flores rediscovered his love for drawing and painting. As he grew older and his desire to develop his talent emerged, Flores became fascinated by Egyptian hieroglyphics, Mayan wall paintings, the works of the Mexican muralists, the folk artists of his home country, modern American artists, and graffiti art. Flores' work is inspired by concepts of voyeurism, the perception of beauty, human interaction, social consciousness, politics, current events, fantasy vs reality, and the appropriation of imagery and newspaper advertisements reimaged to change the narrative of the image.

**Robin Gow's** poetry has been published in *Synaesthesia*, *The Write Launch*, and *FIVE:2:ONE*. Gow is an undergraduate student at Ursinus College studying English, Creative Writing, and Spanish but poetry is always his passion. He runs a poetry blog and serves as the production editor of the *Lantern Literary Magazine*.

**Thomas Jarrell** has an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of California, Irvine. He currently lives, writes, and teaches in Los Angeles.

**Kent Kosack** is a writer and MFA candidate at the University of Pittsburgh. He is working on a novel and a collection of short stories. His work has been published or is forthcoming in *45th Parallel*, *Gravel*, *Noctua Review*, and elsewhere.

**Samantha Krause** recently graduated from Bennington College where she studied creative writing and French. She is currently living near Madison, Wisconsin. She has been published by *Fiction Attic Press* and *Waylander Magazine*.

**LeeAnna Lawrence** teaches Humanities at the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, NC. She works in mixed media art and is a member of the NC Storytellers' Guild. Her interests include gardening and collecting strange tales of North Carolina and attempting to understand them through a contemporary perspective.

**Anna Maria Little** earned a Bachelor's in English from the University of North Georgia and is living the quintessential life of an English-major-punchline: reading, writing, and waitressing. Her work has been published in *Dirty Chai Magazine*, *Ricochet Review*, the Georgia Writer's Association, and the *Chestatee Review* and is forthcoming in *Paragon Journal*.

**Annett Müller-Dorn's** photography has been displayed in Germany, England, and the United States. She believes photography is a wonderful tool for expressing the closeness and connection she feels with the subjects of her photos.

**Rees Nielsen** farmed stonefruit with his family for 35 years in California's San Joaquin Valley. After the passing of his wife, Riina, he moved to Indianola, Iowa to take part in the day by day lives of his grandchildren, Marshall and Adelaide Taylor. He has had prose, poetry, and visual art accepted in numerous publications here and in the UK.

**Lauren E. O. Segarra** is an artist, poet, and botany enthusiast living in the Pacific Northwest. She has a B.S. in Bio/Ecology and Chemistry from Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. Her photographs and illustrations have been published in *The Peel Literature and Arts Review* by Appalachian State University.





Lit + Art

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