

# ZENIADA



WINTER 2022



# ZENIADA

POETRY & ART MAGAZINE

Johns Hopkins University

**ZENIADA** seeks poetry that TALKS HARD and art that CURLS  
the floorboards like smoke billowing from the mouth of a small  
god and SMACKS like 5 gum and a mean girl's SLAP.

*Cover art: Scan It by Sijja Ma.*

# WINTER 2022

Sijia Ma, <i>Scan It</i>	cover
Claire Goudreau, <i>BLESSING</i>	3
Harper Klotz, <i>Catania</i>	4
Alejandro Derieux-Cerezo, <i>Funny Story</i>	6
Isioma Nwonye, <i>Ipseity</i>	7
Harper Klotz, <i>"When You Want to See the World as it is, Observe a Bird Seemingly Grieving -- and Assume it is so"</i>	8
Sijia Ma, <i>Home</i>	10
Claire Goudreau, <i>Fox Trap in the Undergrowth</i>	11
Sijia Ma, <i>Study of Yulan</i>	12
Cat Gille, <i>touch.</i>	13
Morgan Elrod-Erickson, <i>Bodysseus</i>	14
Isabel Torio, <i>I Wish You Had the Answers</i>	15
Sijia Ma, <i>Desire</i>	17
Isioma Nwonye, <i>Decaffeinated</i>	staff



# BLESSING

My father ran his thumb across my forehead  
soft and swift with holy water,  
more a crossroads than a cross.

*"May God Bless You And Protect You."*

That night I dreamt of crumbling spires,  
of Max Ernst and *Saint Cecilia*,  
of my father's hymns and the Casio keyboard.

*"But I'm Not Tired Yet."*

Two more children awaited his blessing,  
long past midnight pilgrimages to my mother's bed,  
so I did not pinch myself when the teeth grew in.

*"Go To Sleep. I'll See You Tomorrow. I Love You."*

The commuter train always left before my mother woke me.

CLAIRE GOUDREAU

## Catania

If you had sailed across the Tyrrhenian Sea, waded through the salt, waved to the Strait of Gibraltar and nodded politely to Tangier,

You could have avoided the outrageous costs of decalcification.

Instead there is a woman whose name is a soft, unpronounceable curve

in your mouth living in carbon monoxide. She will study how to fix you without the money that you have been barred from wiring since

your porous mouth coughed an  $f$  and not an  $m$  during the dictation of *acismo*, both of which words you borrowed from the television.

You pretend it is too bright to see Tunis across the street, say that they did not teach you to read in other languages and you can no longer turn the page with igneous fingers,

but it's true you can no longer speak either, and *universale* does not mean the universe. Soft-curved young women cannot sail to you through magma.



That is not covered by her fresh-faced countrymen. With carbon monoxide poisoning she is calmly watching television, learns for the second time about Vulcan, but you cannot reach the phone.

If only there was no port in Palermo, no straight shot to surname change, you could forget fearing the sight out of your window again, focus on

washing the black sand out of tonight's fish dinner, and taking comfort in the fact that you haven't seen anywhere across the street or on television where this is their ritual.

There's too many naturally porous people across the sea that don't wash their fish this way, and you could see the doctor now if he wasn't vacating himself of the village calcium at Carthage.

HARPER KLOTZ

## Funny Story

When I was a child, my mother's Facebook was hacked. She called the police for help. At the door the officer looked at me. I said, *I want—*

For my mother to hold me and I remember it. The memory a stiff board in my mind—a stag beetle pinned to a wall. My roommate tells me they accept every friend request they receive, *unless they're really creepy*. My mother has seven ignored friend requests from her mother.

A stag beetle dies, legs caught in my carpet. Dead stag beetle from the window, fall. It cradles in the arm of a branch. A cicada plays a fugue: *I am no one I have ever wanted to be.*

ALEJANDRO DERIEUX-CEREZO



ISIOMA NWONYE, IPSEITY

## “When You Want to See the World as it is, Observe a Bird Seemingly Grieving -- and Assume it is so”

After the article “Do Birds Grieve?” by the Audubon Society

*The mother’s nudging of the tiny body with her bill, the vocalizing, [is] the camaraderie of Sometimes, when*

1. *The crow has been struck and killed by a passing car. The grass grows over its mouth, dirt fills its body like a lost work of art.*
2. *A fleet of fellow crows [will] descend from the trees and will circle back*

*To where their fellow bird has fallen.*

- *If they gather together will the pain soften to silt? silt running through their talons and into the street below where a man in a long black car will attempt to wash it away with windshield wiper fluid -- azure, the azure of the sky in which heaven resides, In which all notions of heaven can be spread and cleaned --*

*but it’s more likely a result of confusion.*

3. *Do birds grieve?*

- Do birds sense last breath?  
See how their neighbor's feathers float gracefully down as they fly?
- Do birds have favorite hymns?  
Does the wind know how to whistle Amazing Grace through the down of their offspring?
- What purpose would it serve a bird to grieve? It is a masterpiece of skin and muscle and bone and dirt.

*To wake the magpies placing clips of grass alongside the departed bird,  
cry out*

HARPER KLOTZ

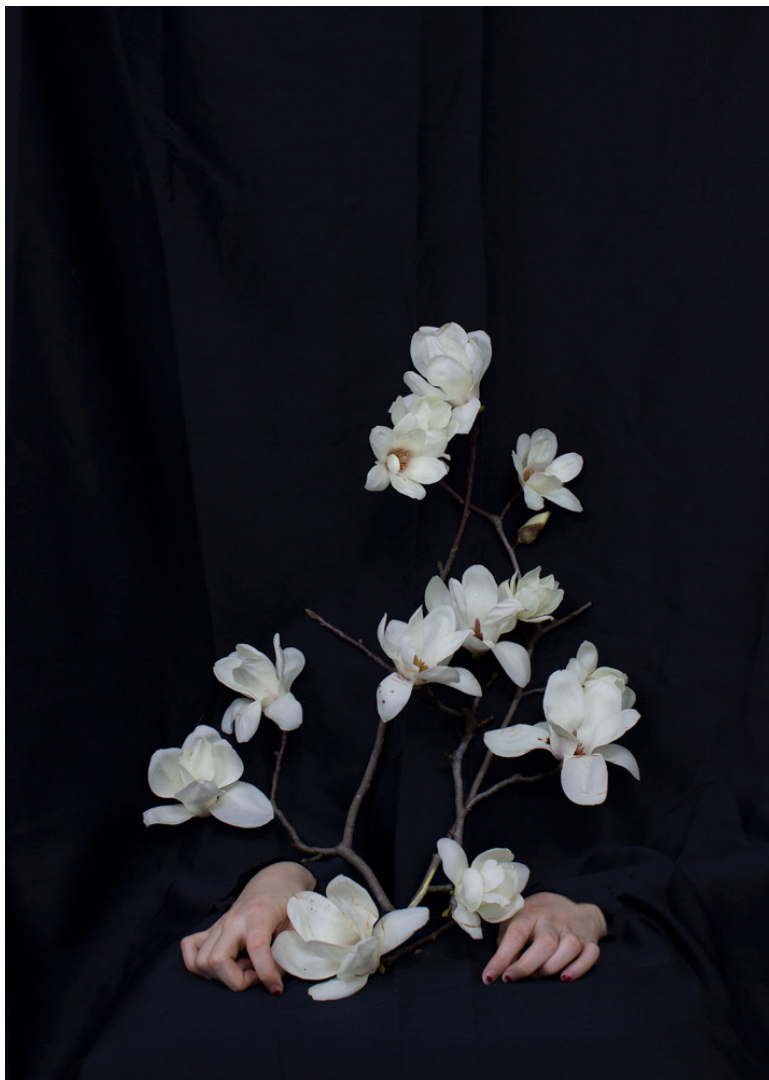


*SIJIA MA, HOME*

## Fox Trap in the Undergrowth

You kissed me as a fox  
would gnaw off his own leg,  
fingers caught in the brambles of my hair,  
lopsided blackberries pressed into my neck  
for me to hide tomorrow.

*CLAIRE GOUDREAU*



*SIJIA MA, STUDY OF YULAN*



## touch.

a world swirls through  
the ridges of finger  
tips one by one massaging  
cravings into the palms  
of aching hearts

freckles mistaken  
for galaxies that shine  
brightly in the wake  
of tender flesh;  
malleable, crumbling

against rigid mountains  
knuckles of soft pink  
ice caps leak onto  
to elbows and heels  
melting into the  
grooves of a new terrain

cupping slender fingers  
intertwining two worlds  
on the brink of collapse,  
saved by the tender rush  
of pink and full glory

CAT GILLE

# Bodysseus

He will emerge from the echoing  
cave of lightning and branches,  
spelunk through bulbous sinuses  
and climb his fibrous mustache.

He will plant a flag on his desolate  
forehead and lay claim to wrinkles,  
pale as moon. He will wade on,  
knee-deep in blood and oil flows,

and he will dance, and he will run  
unabashed over plains of scar  
tissue and thrice-picked scabs,  
and there he will build his home.

He will dwell not in the velveteen  
smooth of his skin, but in its craters  
and deserts, in its blue fragility  
pulsing just beneath the surface.

He will eat his fill and belch,  
for there will be no listeners.  
He will face the coming dusk,  
open his mouth wide, and sing.

MORGAN ELROD-ERICKSON

# I Wish You Had the Answers

when God created the world He told me to dip my finger  
in the rice pot and flood it to the joint  
so that the white grains giggle like polished pearls.

I said, "God, you're crazy" and He said if you don't believe  
in me  
go ask Korean Grandmother (they are on a first name basis).

so I went to Korean Grandmother and She said yes,  
wait until it feels right, then let the waste muddied water  
rumble in the sink. Listen to the swish of the rice mill back  
home,  
and let the motions guide the remaking.  
now I remember, I said. I have been doing this for years.

Korean Grandmother said here, step up on this stool  
so I may dress you in hanbok as golden as the mound of  
your Great Grandmother's grave.

you look so pretty, She said as She sewed the silk together.  
yes, but it itches and pats my skin on the head like a dog.  
you're right, She agreed, you do not look Korean. so, so  
pretty.  
I thought about descending and walking out, dress half-  
patched and all,  
to the turned backs of white clapboard houses and a lone  
and howling dog.

instead I said, Grandma, am I really that old? She said no,  
but soon  
you will be. and when you lay in your grave, this blue silk  
will ripple deeper than your knees and unravel into the dirt,  
decomposed by morning.  
So what's the point of its creation but suffering,  
I asked, and She told me to go ask Grandfather.

so I got in my car and drove to the hill and sat down  
on dewy grass to wait for Him to wake up. I said  
Grandfather,  
I know how to measure rice and I have dressed in your  
country's clothes  
as God told me to. but who is this God anyway, and  
why is Grandmother making me a dress  
that I know I cannot ever live in?

I wait. He does not respond.  
I say across the water: I wish you had the answers.

*ISABEL TORIO*



*SIJIA MA, DESIRE*





# CONTRIBUTORS

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MORGAN ELROD-ERICKSON is a Tennessee native who is currently studying English, Chinese, and chemistry at Vanderbilt University. When he's not writing fiction or poetry, he enjoys ballroom dance, heavy metal, and Dungeons & Dragons.

CAT GILLE is a poet and fiction writer based out of Washington, D.C. She is currently a senior at The George Washington University working towards a double degree in English & creative writing and art history. Within her work, she likes to explore the tension between emotion and identity.

CLAIRE GOUDREAU is a senior at Johns Hopkins University double majoring in international studies and political science. She's been a member of *Zeniada's* editorial board since 2018, and watches several films a week.



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HARPER KLOTZ is a senior at the University of Michigan studying creative writing and communications. In her free time, she can be found playing video games, watching campy movies, and making crafts. Despite a mild fear of birds, they are one of her greatest poetic inspirations.

SIJIA MA is a visual artist based in Shanghai and Massachusetts. She is currently pursuing a B.A. in studio arts and quantitative economics at Smith College. Sijia has worked to develop image-based projects, using the language of photography to explore the complexity of today's Chinese identity in a subtler way.

ISIOMA NWONYE is a freshman studying medicine, science, and the humanities at Johns Hopkins University. She loves to research the effects of narcotic addictions and draws artistic inspiration from her findings. She dreams of becoming a pediatrician and creating medical graphic narratives for her patients so they can better understand their ailments.

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