

# ZENIADA



SPRING 2021



# 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: going swimming with my friends *by Camille Gros.*

# SPRING 2021

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## First Proteus

In my mother's bathroom,  
I unravel my yarn  
in the labyrinth of mirrors,  
as she twists  
hot tubers into her hair,  
sprays a cotton-candy cloud  
around her halo-style.

I watch her bend her face into a garden,  
bend her smile into a dance floor,  
bend her eyes into pools of summer rain.

I watch her hold court on her fingernails,  
declare siege on her leg hair,  
as she amphibians  
into the other-Her,  
the otHer,  
the one who can slip men  
between her hands like powder,  
like sea foam,  
like blood-turned sex god.

The thousand eyes of the room  
watch me back,  
my eyes her eyes,  
the otHer eyes  
as I, too, metamorphosize.

The gills crack  
out of my ribcage,  
an egg is crushed  
between my thighs,

I'm Proteusing.

My mother turns,  
and the otHer turns,  
and she grabs my hands,  
the Her, the thousand Hers,  
and the Me, the thousand Mes,  
reach back and into myself.

*ALENA COLEMAN*





GWYNNA DILLE, *KICK ME HARDER, KNOCK ME OUT*

## A Styrofoam Poetics

I need something right now that I don't have ...  
I need dogs and cats and a spatula, an ass  
to pat with it, lightly,  
                          a buccula  
                          and a keyboard,  
magic well-sprung from the blockhouse,  
  my friend,  
my teammate,  
I love you.

The marketing is fabulous ...  
You really had me going, going  
right to your doorstep with that frog  
you said you wanted,  
  that martian  
frog  
that looks like your grandfather,  
that devilish looking frog with glowing appendages,  
that frog from  
  Frankenmuth.

So sorry I couldn't massage your temples  
and \* your eyelids tonight,  
I have no hats in this race, no rabbits, no        -consoles.

( ☐ )

MICHAEL WATKINS

## these days

pass like a geyser clawing bloody-fingernailed to the horizon  
where she will spread angel wings of rabid foam and spit unabashedly against the firmament  
and i wonder, sometimes, a lot, how it feels to  
be unfettered or  
finish cooking (boil over) at a scale so enormous  
three million people come to watch every year?

or maybe The End is not an explosion, but a timer shouting about roasted tomatoes  
or two palms closed cuff-link-pretty around two bird-thin wrists  
or the streetlights blinking to life in a row like christmas rockettes  
or the sting of falling through water from a height, the smack of cracking something soft  
or a jazz riff, a horn squawking shrill in your ear *ALRIGHT ALRIGHT*  
or maybe The End is not an explosion, but a whisper you ought to listen for (*alright alright*)

it is funny to think about ends when i am so enormous, i am so e-fucking-ternal that  
a body couldn't hold me if it tried  
can you *imagine* trying to *fit?* to fit? in this? where would you land?  
three-degrees-left-of-the-heart-meat, a perfect shadowy nook, or maybe  
in my liver-space, where i keep my discontent like an ice cube  
so thick that even a geyser couldn't crack its brave way through?

## Yonic

I've heard there are yonic words  
but don't know what to make of this.

The hollow inside of a conch shell  
like the hollow o's of the word 'hollow'  
or every word starting with the letter 'v.'  
Vulvar, vowel, vibrato, Venus flytrap—  
maybe it has to do with the fertility of language.

Slopping wet wedges of grapefruit into a bowl,  
letting them fill empty stomachs with acid,  
dropping sunflower petals into a wishing well  
with offerings of papaya meat & silver charm bracelets.

MIRA STONE



OLIVIA SPRINGBERG, ACID REFLUX

## six closets

this isn't a poem about coming out.

I.

this is about swimming lessons,  
and the safe arms of dresser drawers  
but never safe from the arms of your father,  
who held your head under the water so you wouldn't drown.

II.

this is about paper plates and plastic forks,  
enough for a party of one toddler.  
you scattered the cupboard on the linoleum,  
and choked on a spoon before the cake was ever served.

III.

this is about lovesickness and an ipod nano.  
a bed too small for the fantasy  
and the summer you started hating her instead.  
some crawl-space she shared with the next girl you loved.

IV.

this is about fire-escapes and watercolors.  
skinned knees worth twenty bucks  
and blood brushed meticulously across a medicine cabinet,  
painting yourself a more beautiful way out of this body.

V.

this is about the Truman Show,  
the steel toed boots that kicked your ribs in.  
"they'd better drag her away from her fucking mother,"  
rewinded your life and despaired over narcissistic details

VI.

this is about a psych ward,  
force fed you tv dinners while you drowned in an industrial sink.  
because those swimming lessons never stuck  
instead those safe arms bent you into fetal position.

## DREAM 2

A bird flies around my room until it becomes  
a moth. My fingers stretch into untouchable  
wind chimes and under my pillow. I find a rib  
shaped like a woman. I cannot tell if the bone loved  
or created me. I slip it into the pocket of my  
pocketless jeans, where it struggles like a frog  
hardening into a mother. The mattress shakes me  
upside down until I fall out. Into a field full  
of railroad track endings, and stone men. All  
husbands, once. The warped grass drifts over  
their granite feet. They are still. They don't speak  
anymore. The clouds duplicate like a cell. I pull  
the pocketed charm into my hand. Where it swells  
into an apple, red and smooth as my mother's  
silence. I cleave the fruit. Each parent half rests  
in my two hands. In the meat, I notice a face.

CLARE O'GARA



*OLIVIA SPRINGBERG, SUNDAY EVENING SELF PORTRAIT*



## Could you point me in the direction of home?

Home is a maple tree and each yearly circle creates space to invite a grander gathering of souls in bodies as lists of loved ones grow.

Observe me crossing 35th and Clinton to clear throat and ask the individual locked behind picket fence and grey mane. If home is where someone is thinking about you, do you need a physical return?

The dirt under her nails spills into wooden flower beds and faint hummings of Scarlet Begonias flow over the fence to wash the sidewalk and tug against the hem of my jeans.

Please know I will continue to wish on each eyelash for you.

Before, there was a month when my house did not have heat. And while on a walk with friend, we would stop and point at each yellow, blue, and red residence to whisper: I bet their house is warm! We disembarked into laughter.

I believe that was a home for a moment.

GABRIELLE LAFRATTA

# INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO SHARE

In order to share you must want to hurt yourself. You must rip a grapefruit in half, taking the skin and pulp in one nail-sharpened grasp. You have to be both grapefruit and hand. You do not get to use the grapefruit. Sharing does not involve you.<sup>1</sup>

To begin, take what you treasure the most.<sup>2</sup> It's deflecting, and you know that, and the fact that you know that while sharing something banal – greatest hopes, favorite food, desert island – makes you a bad person.

Good people share things unabashedly. They are made of grapefruits. They are a pyramid of grapefruit in the middle of a grocery store. They know how to take the ones from the bottom without disrupting the top.

Once you have the bottommost grapefruit in your reach<sup>3</sup> – clutch it in both hands until your nails sink deeply into the thick, zested flesh. You must feel the meat.

Under no circumstances should your nails sink into the fruit.<sup>4</sup> Instead, begin your descent, if necessary, or turn around. A crowd will have formed during your task, and they will have looks of hope plastered on their faces.<sup>5</sup> This is the part that will hurt, if the citrus is not already stinging your cuticles.

Unclench your hands and hold the grapefruit where the

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1 Please see "How to be Selfish" or "Desserts to Make with Surplus Grapefruit" if this is more of your intention.

2 Sharing something meaningless is not sharing.

3 Ladders, high heels, and single step boosters used by children to reach the sink are encouraged in this pursuit.

4 If your fingers, for any reason, puncture into the meat and extract its juices, climb down the ladder, throw away the fruit, and begin the self-loathing.

5 The mob is allowed to do whatever they want. You should be emotionally prepared for clapping, disbelief, or tears – none of which may come from you.

two palms meet. Ensure everyone has seen it. Then, once a full show has been made, rotate your hands so they face each other, pinching the grapefruit between them.<sup>6</sup> Rip the grapefruit in two, then four, then eight, until you have enough for all who have come. Leave the skin on, as it provides a natural plate.

Watch them eat, their lips stinging and pink and shining under the fluorescents. Wipe your hands on your pants. Find a new treasure.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> At no point should a different grapefruit fall from the pyramid. An avalanche, however minimal, will overwhelm the crowd to the point they think you are mocking them.

<sup>7</sup> Return to top, repeat.

MARYAM GILANSHAH

# CONTRIBUTORS

ALENA COLEMAN grew up in New Harmony, Indiana-- a utopian experiment turned living museum. She studies English and Spanish at the University of Notre Dame, but wishes she could be a puppeteer. She hopes that all your fences have gates.

CHARLIE COLLINS is a sophomore psychology major at Goucher College. They hope to get their masters in counseling psychology and become a gender therapist someday. Writing poetry is a favorite hobby of theirs, and they live in western Massachusetts.

GWYNNA DILLE studies painting at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), where she is a sophomore. To see more of her work, visit [gwynnadille.com](http://gwynnadille.com).

MARYAM GILANSHAH is a graduating senior studying creative writing and English at The George Washington University. From Northern Virginia, her work has been published by *Catfish Creek*, *Paper Shell Review*, and *The International Writing Centers Association*. Maryam enjoys writing at the intersection of film and prose, with a focus on myopia, insecurity, and the female perspective.

HAYDEN GOLDBERG is a junior studying painting at RISD. His paintings balance elements of chance and control through various methods of applying paint. More of his work can be found at [hayden-goldberg.com](http://hayden-goldberg.com) or at [@haypaint](https://www.instagram.com/haypaint) on Instagram.

CAMILLE GROS is studying at RISD. They are a multidisciplinary artist, craftsman, and lover. They are from Florida, and miss tropical thunderstorms.

GABRIELLE LAFRATTA (Gabri for short) grew up on the north shore of Kaua'i and is a senior English major at

# CONTRIBUTORS

Reed College. In her free time, she can be found teaching herself to crochet so that she can one day have a crocheted bucket hat that looks like a strawberry. This is the first time her work has been published!

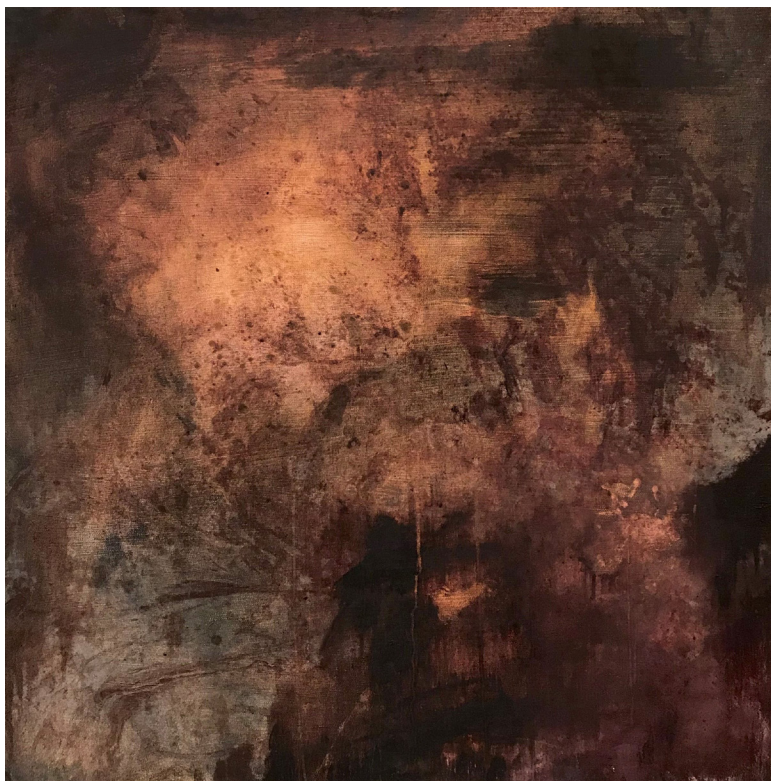
CLARE O'GARA is a Smith College undergraduate studying English, film and media studies, and poetry. She has forthcoming work in *The Oakland Arts Review*.

OLIVIA SPRINGBERG is a multi-media artist from Washington, DC who is currently studying painting at RISD. Charged by tactility and material exploration, her work employs various media, including sound, sculpture, and printmaking. Her pieces play off remembrances, visions, and feelings, presenting carefully manipulated narratives. Her work serves as a meditation and a way of dissecting and evaluating relationships, both inter and intrapersonal.

MIRA STONE is a junior at Johns Hopkins University, where she studies writing seminars and Spanish. This is her second poem published in *Zeniada*.

FRANCESCA TANGRETI is a student at Rutgers University studying English and creative writing. When not up to her elbows in Lord Byron, she enjoys spending time with her dog Monty, watching Gilmore Girls, and baking exorbitant amounts of bread.

MICHAEL WATKINS is a snow bird who wishes he knew what lay further than a few feet in front of his beak. If he were not a bird, but instead a giant with hairy feet, he would swing from the branches of high trees while eating an apple. He is graduating with a B.A. degree in English with a sub-concentration in creative writing from the University of Michigan.



*HAYDEN GOLDBERG, RUST*

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