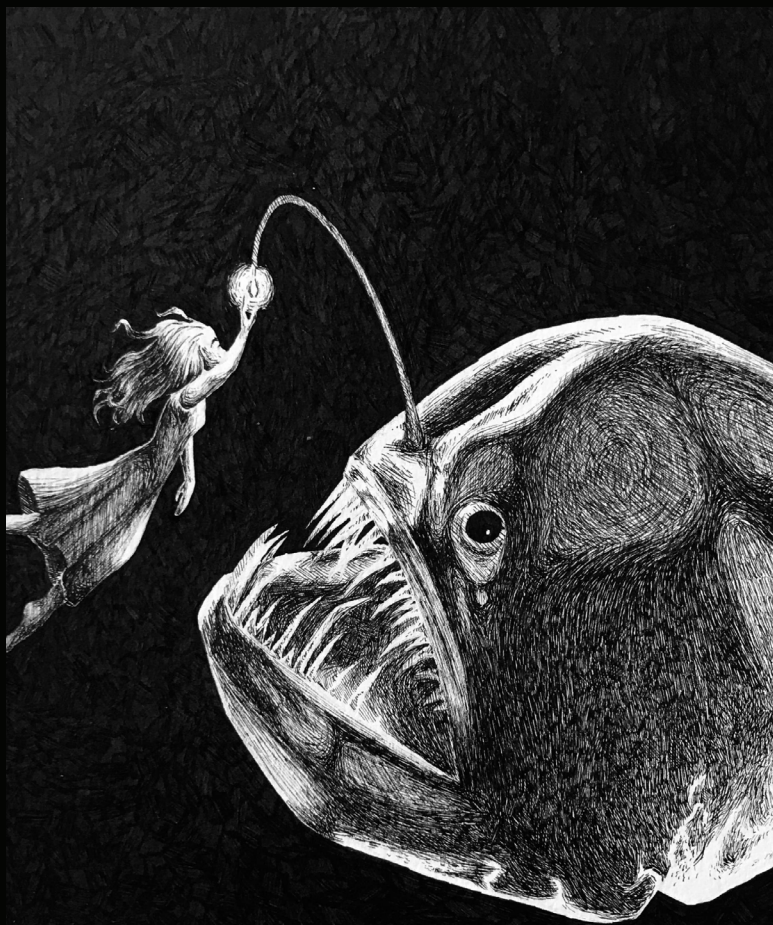


ZENIADA



FALL 2020

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 and Back art: Diptych by Emily Nakayama.

FALL 2020

Emily Nakayama	Cover
Mira Stone	3
Therese Livonne	4
Clara McMillan	5
Michael Harper	7
Yvette Bailey-Emberson	8
Cat Crochunis-Brown	9
Soo Young Yun	10
Tess Solomon	11
Therese Livonne	13
Chili Shi	14
Chili Shi	15

Jacó Beach

I'll watch the night seep into my open mouth
and crunch dozens of stars between my teeth.
We won't be dancing to stomach-pump blues—
reggaetón hits only— and if we vomit,
it'll only be so we can drink some more.
Tonight, I'll be your guaro-tongued temptress,
and we'll dangle the disco-ball moon
from our uvulas, sing crass melodies,
skate over the five-a.m. sidewalk.
Drop that crinkled can of Four Loko, baby.
Hold my fucking hand. I can tolerate you
in this drunk dark. Stray dogs piss in our path.
You jump at baby spiders. You take me home
to a bare-walled, liquor-colored palace.
Come seven, I'll slip out your threadbare sheets
into a guava sky, let it gulp me down again.

MIRA STONE



THERESE LIVONNE, NEA

July Gloves

I say,
though plain to those who have been,
that gravity pulls stronger in Minnesota.

I navigate by the heft of lakes,
by the sacramental pull of ground.

Moving away to fall more in love,
Why, that is the whole food pyramid.

I'll lean against these grains,
rest my head on the produce.
I'll get vertigo trying to make out that
particular Minneapolis oil.

But on these new South sidewalks,
I have the Bends.
Shot up, like cheap dorm vodka,
my hands feel the humid newness,
like a taut July glove.

Talking to you is like talking
to someone else's dream.

You are but vaguely remembered,
fragmented and plot-less.

And the They,
The Theys whose boots march
so appropriately on these
pavements pregnant with heat,
They look at you like Mom.
Like you lack the cold riches you harvest.

Though no biology protects them by
you,
They run to you at the school-bell.

I am not welcome here,
no mat welcomes me to Broadway.
Her patinated river too littered for baptism,
I keep my name for now.

Goodnight Nashville,
Goodnight float,
Goodnight to all you light places,

For when I dream it cannot be of you.

CLARA MCMILLAN

Laundry Haiku

I found a quarter,
a chrome-glazed Martian bedecked
in purple-lint robes.

The machine breaks down
the fabric of its passion,
soiled and unsoiled too.

The crimson daughter
of some other wash cycle
is found in the whites.

Many rags and socks,
wet with an old garlic smell
of sick peasantry.

The undergarment
clings to the inner drum wall,
a body with hope.

MICHAEL HARPER



YVETTE BAILEY-EMBERSON, PLANT MOM

Fragments

After H.D.

I.

I don't know what to do.

Lurid pop songs in the grocery store
overlap and static-wipe
my mind.

As a cheap zipper hitches
halfway between sealing and splitting,
fluorescent light may catch on it,
refract, and like a white knife
sliver flush between the eyes.

So my mind splits
into compartments as your shoes unlace.
One mind's a shining mirror poised to break
Another lodges in the corner of your ceiling
and listens quietly, and waits.

II.

I don't know what to do.

I didn't begin to shiver until two
days later. Each offhand message
grows; projects on every wall.

Were there needles so thin

I didn't feel them then? Am I the needle
or the record? Point me to the creature
you saw that can't appear in mirrors; I
would tranquilize it. Fragments break through
my gums and knit together by some
strange design. My mind is sealed again
but with something embedded.

A code runs through and animates
my hands. I type and type.

CAT CROCHUNIS-BROWN

A Translator's Note

It pains me to tell you
that I cannot, in fact, read Korean.
That is, I can read read, just like how
you can read the contents of
a shampoo bottle, straight and methodical
and undeceiving. What I mean is that
I cannot distinguish which words are on display
just for show, long abandoned and collecting
dustmites in the corners of the dictionary.
What I mean is that I only recently realized
that Koreans do not use pronouns, lest you
want to mirror the melodramatic air
of a soap opera. What I mean is that
I have heard my grandmother utter these same
sentences, that I have learned the reflexes, to giggle
and frown at the dinner table, but that I don't know
what they mean to you. What I mean
is that I wish I knew how to swear
like a taxi driver, without the shh sounds
getting caught in my teeth. What I mean
is that I know my name inside out, have memorized
each stroke and slash of it in aged Chinese, but my handwriting
falls short of making me an adult. What I mean
is that I slaved away to blur
the slur in my words, so you can't catch me
in my disguise, combing through
so that everything I deliver
is correct, but not too correct. What I mean
is that I am a native speaker by blood, that
I speak five languages
and none.

SOO YOUNG YUN

A thought started somewhere else but ended up being about myself

It takes me four tries to pull off the highway
into a gas station. The sound of the dark
buckles me onto the road, and in the air of the vestibule,

stillness careening through the night, I hold my
breath for a moment to come to a stop. The window
opens to the exhalations of wind, damp, cold, gray,

backlit by neon striations, adorning murmurs, faraway keening.
The cars there on the highway flash, glide, slow,
and I am still. I don't want to hear anything

I've ever heard before. Through the windshield
I feel I could touch it: the despair in the seat that holds me,
that carries me through the frank precepts of Americana,

insurance advertisements, addiction hotlines,
Eckleburgian lawyers, fat doctors, injunctions to pray,
balanced suddenly by the beauty of it all,

the lamps, their counterfeit phosphorescence,
the clambering vastness of the earthworks by headlight,
how dark it all is, how young I am, and how late at night,

the gas station architecture, the edifices taller
than they need to be, estranging yet somehow
comprehensible. This,

I decide, this topography the locus of my mortality.
Where I've come to know if I'll continue.
Through the windshield I felt I could touch it.

TESS SOLOMON



THERESE LIVONNE, HOPELESSNESS

Battle Cry of the Roach

- 0: if there is a final place of rest
 for us unlucky bludgeoned people
 it will be in a tomb of petunias
 rest pretty vague silver head
 in that crypt of dust
- 1: seasons come to us with level looks
 shelved between sheared toilet covers
 old books make buds for a coiled tongue
 we go out like lights in a serpent's jaw
 in blinking patterns, soft
- 2: but this: even the hideous cockroach
 exerts a hiss of will: a foamy spray
 of insect piss and insect desire: bug
 love and bug shame, into the green
 abyss, make no move; enrage:

CHILI SHI

Satanic Dog

By now, an orphanage of talking heads
wants me to sell my least precious organs.

Please, they beg, salivating as each limb
and liver of mine ripen. You don't need

those ill-shaped lungs like synthetic molds
of an unnamed virus. And you don't need

that cauliflower lobe, lubed with years
of bad drama workshops and puberty

trauma. In the end I shave off a finger
by the first knuckle and kiss each child's

rabid cheek; I reek of blood and futility.
I reek of the bruised flesh-body I occupy.

Please, I beg, I'm only here to see my uncle
who has tuberculosis and has lost his teeth.

Please, look past me with those translucent
black eyeballs. An elephantine robot nurse

leads me to his ward, where woodpeckers
with siren voice boxes sing a rusted elegy:

he was a great man and he's left you nothing.
Hands pale and exorcised, my uncle is still

as a pebble in an airless bog. Purple veins
run riverbeds north and south of his vessel,

map the boyish devil he once was: shaven
eyebrows and two rural fiances, vermilion

handmade student signs in the romance
of the Chinese eighties. I can only pray

to dopey yellow beads and press the plate
of my forehead to this evil linoleum floor.

On my way out, the talking heads whinny
and pine. I give in and shed my palms

into sterilized plastic bags, the eerie skin
whittled away too flaccidly, as if malignant

to begin with. In the car, fumes sting
my chin and cartilage. I taste my uncle's rot

and rigor mortis; the carnations by his sick
pillow drip sweetly into imagined afterlife.

CHILI SHI

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