

Spring 2017

Pathos, Spring 2017

Portland State University. Student Publications Board

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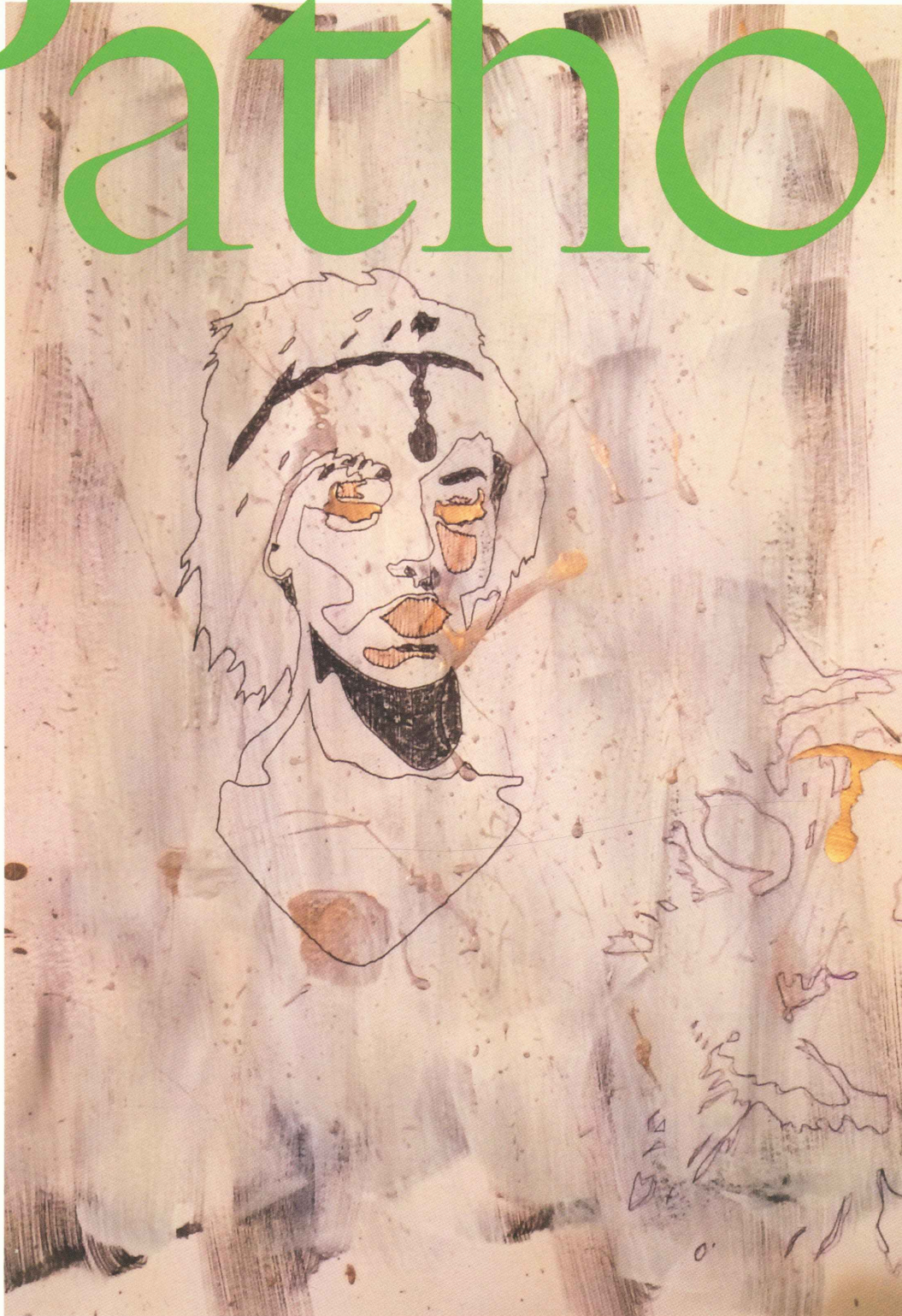
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Portland State University. Student Publications Board, "Pathos, Spring 2017" (2017). *Pathos*. 31.
<https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/pathos/31>

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VOLUME 11 • ISSUE 3

Pathos



Literary Magazine

Letter from the Editor

Hi there! Welcome back to another issue of *Pathos*! All of us at *Pathos* are particularly excited about the work that's going into this Spring issue. Earlier this Spring, we were all anxiously awaiting the arrival of submissions on Submittable without getting nearly any. Thankfully, towards the end of the term, we were bombarded with loads of beautiful submissions. We've never been so pumped to share so much great prose, poetry, and visual art with the PSU community.

As per usual, I'd like to send out a big thank you to all of our contributors this term. The pieces that are featured in this issue are a real treat to anyone who experiences them. If it wasn't for folks like you all who continue to share your work with the public then this magazine wouldn't exist. And if it wasn't for folks like you being so greatly talented then this magazine wouldn't be as great as it is!

I'd also like to send another big thank you out to my *Pathos* staff. Working on *Pathos* this past year has been a treat and it's been particularly great being able to work alongside some very creative and passionate individuals. So thank you Tyler, Juliana, and Hayley! Also, if it wasn't for the *Pathos* staff, then this magazine would definitely not be here today. This issue is my last issue of *Pathos*. Working on *Pathos* this last year has been a really amazing experience. I had no idea how great the work was that PSU puts out into the community. I'm excited for what *Pathos* will bring to PSU in the future.

SO....! Enjoy our Spring Issue!

Sincerely,
Jessica Moore

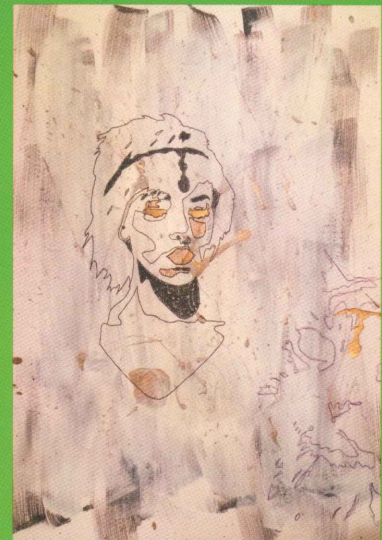
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On our cover:
Bound by Glamour
by Riley Dillard

Poetry

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Chicago

Jeremy Husseri

Snow is falling
 The lights are bright
 Its cold outside.
 I see blue and red lights.
 The wailing of sirens.
 The yellow tape.
 The hectic yelling of police.
 The curious wail of news vans.
 A kid with his head in the cold concrete street.
 His face in a pool of blood.
 Not moving.
 A cop who is sitting in an ambulance
 a blanket on him
 The steam from his coffee looks like the smoke
 from his gun.
 I know what happened here.
 The same thing that happens too often
 Another kid shot.
 I walk back home.
 In the dead of night.
 I see the flickering of all the lights.
 I think of the kid.
 Years younger than me.
 I go into my house.
 I don't remember opening the door.
 I walk in
 I turn the TV on
 All I see are excuses and exemptions.
 I see it.
 Protesters for the kid.
 Politicians against him
 Nowhere.
 I turn the TV off.
 I turn the lights off.

If The Rivers Froze

Joseph Drevets

If the rivers froze, and the winds changed, maybe I
 wouldn't lose track of your shape. If I had diamonds
 instead of tubulars, maybe I wouldn't sweat blood.

I want to dance all night to the rhythm of your
 coal-burning stove. I pray the snow will come carry me to
 my Trans-Siberian home.

There is a young girl who lives in my tool shed. She will
 teach you all the constellations only women can see.
 Her name is Thishka, 'The sound of leaves.' She prays
 twice a night.

When I come home smelling of whiskey, I can see an old
 woman sitting on my stairs. She tells me in Russian that
 Babayaga is the bedmate of those who live as I.

When I wash my dishes I use the best dish soap. When I
 wash my dishes I think of mother. If I die, lay me down
 beside her.

Vegetables

Marnie Sager

It's important to me
 to be able to grow
 vegetables
 I need to see
 the little seeds from a bag
 hoist themselves out of the
 world of the dead
 and into action
 movement, life
 I need to prove
 time and time again
 that life can still spring from me
 that death hasn't become me
 yet

You Can't Wear Pink Tights on 82nd Avenue

Christine Bailey Claringbold

You can't wear pink tights on 82nd Avenue.
 You should know this.
 Your spring brights, cotton candy legs of crayon fuchsia,
 mulberry, salmon, or orchid are all the same
 To the johns in the cars,
 they all color the picture with sex
 And if you have to walk on the avenue of roses
 With sunset hued petals peeking under your skirt
 You should know
 They will want to buy it from you.
 So don't do it.
 Don't walk one car-lotted block,
 One gray sidewalk of grease spots, bus stops, Asian
 restaurants, in those shoes
 unless you want to know what it feels like to be one of
 them,
 The whore your father always said you were.
 Then pull on the pink hose, ribbed,
 textured, fishnet or sheer

Did I one for one second
 contemplate accepting his
 offer of a job
 In what split universe did I consider
 Doing it, saying yes – naming my price
 Crossing back the side street and sliding
 pink legs into his clean beige
 passenger seat
 What a prize I'd be
 What a purse for me
 In pink tights hideous as global
 warmed camellias in the spring
 of winter.

cosmically, we exist in bliss

Juliana Tattoli

love
 how else could everything coexist so perfect
 & create such a symbiotic existence

my mind spins & spins on the axis
 of creative thought
 & hallucinogenic visualization
 purple pink blue yellow orange green
 stars scatter the sky
 in all these colors
 & they dance flicker tease
 & play

I visit the stars
 & sing with them
 & listen to them
 & be with them
 & they tell me about their lives
 up here beyond the sky

& we are feeling
 nostalgic of memories
 that have yet to exist

/menu of in between/

Alexandra Gomez

Have you ever tasted lonely

air (?)

They

say it's warm but my

body only wants to

touch skin-covered knee-caps

seamless likes ribs

verbs to breast.

Disappear

with me

under a fire wrapped

in soft.

Tongue

my language in between

the dirty creases of uneven

teeth

bite

the scars that grew over

tea.

Power lines

birth snakes

two-headed and moaning.

June 9th

Christian Orellana Bauer

"It's a cathartic moment when you look up into the sky and realize summer is our destiny"

She cocks her head at me and gives me a grin

Not a smile

But a grin

And despite her gaze facing my direction, I feel that her eyes are still on the clouds

It's like she was born a June baby, looking up

Right off the bat trying to decipher shapes in the amorphous fluffs that graced the sky with their presence

And her once colorless eyes were plastered by the sheer immensity of the intermingling white and blue that seems to go on and on endlessly beyond the universe as the infant her knew it.

That's a lot for an infant you know.

Left her dumbfounded.

Struck with the summer sky in her eyes.

That best day ever blue

Those vanilla cotton candy white streaks that swirled and twirled getting caught in a mix round her pupil

Leaving her eyes forever fixated on

that vast expanse above her

Leaving her always a little more in awe of everything

I mean from the get go mother earth wowed her

So you see she couldn't help but pick up rocks

Watch em close

Put em with the rest of the nice ones she found

And stare at the sun for as long as she could when others would all look away

With her overalls snapped on and her

cap firmly in place she would look out the window of the car on a road trip just watching the world go by

Couldn't help it

Always rushing too fast in excitement when there was something cool outside to see

And you always knew when she was looking out the window

She'd forget the bill of her hat would always win the race to the glass

Thunk

Silly girl found something nice to look at outside again

Climbing trees higher than most adults and her sister would recommend just to get that cool stick she had seen from the ground

And then; after a few scratches and a couple moments that damn near stopped her sisters heart, she'd return to earth to once again run under that blue Leap across those rocks that got her to the other side of the brook

Stick collections and cool stones rattling around proudly in her bright yellow well used backpack as she pioneered her way into the unknown

And if ever she fell she'd just shake herself off and do a quick inventory

before walking away all over again with that little trot of an explorer

So excited by her expedition that she tripped over her own feet a few times

always to get back up ready for more. Even show off her scars to her friends

"This is from the tree behind the school"

"This is from my bike"

"This is from getting up on the roof for lunch"

"This is from falling on my way to class"

All the while giving her parents a sincere

sorry and an "oops" with an audible giggle thrown in for good measure In the cold months when she had scraped knees she'd just bandage up and walk it off

"No time for dawdling if you're an explorer! The weather can slow us down but wont stop us"

Never minded which way she was going as long as she was going somewhere

Her friends would come with their bruised elbows and bandaged knees

Their broken hearts and tattered jeans She'd laugh and give em a hug

"Yeah but dude summers gonna be awesome"

It's what she was born to do

Our destiny lies in those fluffy white, blown across seemingly spotless blue skies

And I know she's right

Were gonna be fine

So I grin back and give her a "hell yeah".

She; grin still in place; lays back down on green grass and resumes her wondrous gaze of the sky

It's talking to her as it tends to do

And I don't know what it's saying but I'm sure it's grand

Softly she closes her eyes

Maybe it's a technique she learned through the years to better hear the blue

Whatever the case it must be effective cause after a minute or two she

murmurs a short laugh

A huff of amusement

Opens her eyes

Cocks her head at me from the ground and gives me a smile

Not a grin

But a smile

"Yeah man summers gonna be awesome"

Capitalist Oblige

Alexander Henry

I

Throughout the world, music plays. I can't hear anything besides the cascading lyrics of songs I've never heard. The drums join with the plosives: laterals with the strings. Then suddenly, there's nothing. And a sickly infection fills the room.

II

"What's the problem with a language dying?" she asks eighty years after the beekeepers in Kenya cut off their tongues and buried them under their conquerors' feet.

III

'Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.'

IV

"Yeah, that's the African term for a n---r," he says, having just returned from a trip to record dying tongues.

V

Whose duty is it to listen to the music? To dissect & disengage? If they cut off their tongues willingly then maybe we should just let them.

VI

"Should the United States allow them to educate their own children?" he asks, genuinely, for he is just so curious about this history.

VII

Yet still, the music goes on, and we pretend to listen, and we pretend it is too loud to ignore. Then it fades.



(al niente)

Your Name

Marnie Sager

The newness and anxiety of the
unknown
sheltered by utter safety and
sninimity.

The anonymous sext
finds it's own unique joy
the thrill of her real and living
presence
the freedom
of your imagination
together you can write
such beautiful poetry
and only afterwards,
exchange names

Sanctuary

Leslie Grollman

blue light
emergency
 a pole says
 in case people
 need to climb
 out of a situation
 NYC: me on the
 A train three a.m.
I'm not a victim of
the world I see
 to drown out
 the fear smell
 there are blooms
 still on Lincoln
 Hall's bushes
 the cold nights
 not a threat
 yet
 a yellow hydrant
 wears a sign
 'fire use only'
 good thing
 I don't own a gun
 I might misunderstand
 like the time I
 thought you said *want*
 two statues loom
 like guards
 who do they keep
 out of my
 eye a man's zebra
 shoes walk easy
 walk in not
 needing the blue
 light walk knowing
 the blue light is there
 if a hunter comes

Truth Lie

W.R. Soasey

sticky webbed feet splat splat splatting up the
 wall of my ribs you feed at the bloody trough of
 my heart I doze to the lap lap lapping of your
 lizard tongue until you are done

does the truth lie
 at the back of your eye?

the greedy frack frack fracking of your lovemak-
 ing shakes my subterranean strata 'til it's quake
 quake quaking you dab at your lips push the
 chair back from the table and leave no tip

does the truth lie
 in the spread of my thigh?

your scrape scrape scraping becomes all kinds of
 violating hide the seeds of my escaping 'neath
 the fake fake faking I plow the scorched earth
 unbound to free my solid ground

does the truth lie
 in the belly of the sky?

The Throne

Andrew Viceroy

I sit on the toilet when I shave.

I use an electric razor and a folding mirror on a long wooden counter.

Last summer, after a piss-drunk waitress did her business, I found that mirror turned and pushed all the way back to the wall. An accusation that I'd thoughtlessly compelled her to bear witness to her toilet faces. Now I keep it pointed away from the seat. So sometimes when I'm on The Throne, I forget who I am. I forget who I am. But that's fine. We'll call it *flow*.

Every spring, ants invade the bathroom first.

Maybe they like splattered bubblegum toothpaste or fig-scented candles.

As I shave, scouts crawl across the Great Plains below: sand colored tiles with marbled veins, exactly alike, but rotated, so each appears unique. The ants are bemused as they encounter similar configurations in each quadrant—another left turn at Albuquerque—fated to replicate crooked circles, like an urban couple driving around the same cornfield in a slasher film.

Gilliam's foot crushes them one by one.

But it's smarter to set up an all-night-poison-diner with take-out for the queen.

When they pinch that bait, they carry that weight with a song in their hearts. Some get lost. Maybe it's the toxin. Maybe they're just curious. Or maybe it's something more than intentional stance. When one approaches the infinite stripe between two slates, maybe she is Maya Angelou at the train tracks or Siddhartha at the river. Maybe it's you or me or both you and me.

.
.

.

When burdened with suffering, we say, 'Everything happens for a reason.' We presume a lesson is meant to be extracted from every experience. Something a decent preacher could craft into a Sunday sermon. But given the billions of hours in history we've been compelled to relieve our bowels and bladders, how many enlightening homilies and divine revelations have been commensurately devoted to piss-and-shit metaphors? Not-a-one. As a Great Big Being on The Throne, with all these ants before me, if they could understand, I would tell them that their death does happen for a reason: I don't want them near me. Creeping across my toes like never-ending supplications. Go piss and shit elsewhere. Away from me. That's fine. Just go. Or face my wrath. We'll call it *flow*.

Off Path

Christine Bailey Claringbold

Grass bounces back beneath our waffled boots,
buds peep, mud squeaks, yet feet are warm and dry.

We own this fault of basalt rock where roots
split cracks, where trees grow straight across the high

green waterfall. We climb its foamed cascade
until ascent is blocked by teasing top,

a misted wall, a pool high in the shade
of taller peaks we cannot reach. We stop

below the real grotto. Just at the edge
we see the soaked and crumpled shape of fear –

dropped by an eagle, slipped from sunny ledge, or flung
by hidden nymphs: a baby deer.

We own nothing. That corpse was half eroded.
Puckered like a brain, all pale and folded.

Please Return to Ed Skoog

Christine Bailey Claringbold

Please return to Ed Skoog,
Advanced Poetry instructor, Portland State University
re: Run the Red Lights book release, Nov. 12, 2016
c/o Copper Canyon Press, Port Townsend, WA 98368

I don't say mic, I say mike. I don't say, "Go Viks." I say "Go Vikes." Am I right? Some guy named Mike at Rolling Stone couldn't abide diminutive lower-casing, so enshrined an editorial law defying all sense. I refuse to go along with it. I say mike. I spell mike. With that understood, my note can begin, for I can't address a writing teacher with a non-phonetic non-English word like mic. I simply can't write: sorry about your mic, but I was, I am, sorry about your mike and how you had to plant the base of your mike stand atop a stack of books (appropriate, though, in that bookstore called Mother Foucault's with stacks spilling everywhere, there were three huge stacks on the counter right in front of me where I stood in the corner in front of the door, books blocking most of my view as I tried not to block people going in and out – Jessica Johnson spilled her drink and Why are you standing in front of the door? demanded Jack, well it was packed and, as you should know, Ed, being so tall, so tall you had to put your mike stand on some books, that with a tall husband in tow I couldn't exactly move to the front although that's what we do at rock shows, short people be damned, but short I am, so it went: door, Chuck, me, tall stack of books an inch from my nose, wild gray curls of proprietor's head perched behind counter, and far down the room there was you, Ed, on stage) but I think the mike stand might have extended. You didn't really try. I know that feeling. Or maybe you had it planned – the mike stand too short, your feeble attempt to adjust it, giving up without even a good counter-crank on the tightening mechanism, a handy stack of books ready to lend a boost, a metaphor for the foundation of any good poet deserving to get up and read. Maybe you planned for the mike to die halfway through your final poem, so you could finish a capella, analog, acoustic, just your nice tenor voice, forcing a greater hush in the silent room, your arm shoving the mike stand aside, off the books. The same thing happened to Grace when singing at our party, her music went out – she wasn't using a mike at all because she's an opera singer with a phone plugged into the PA playing

karaoke Schubert, Verdi, Mozart which stopped halfway through her last number and with a light wave she carried on behind Colombina half-mask, Ah! Chi mi dice mai, bringing down the basement. I ate some pineapple chunks and left my paper plate on the floor, the old guys gathered on the sidewalk and said I had to accuse you of sentimentality in class on Tuesday. Which I didn't do, because in fact your poems aren't sentimental, aren't advertisements for emotion, and I didn't think the joke would go over. I didn't think you'd be giving out copies of your books after saying you no longer do that, so thank you for the book. I wanted the new one but didn't know how to ask. I wanted to tell you how Chuck and I gaped at each other that other time, the first time we heard you read – you read “Run the Red Lights” in the spring, and our jaws dropped when you read about buying cigarettes for your mom, it's the story I've heard so many times from Chuck, but exactly, though not the Alex Chiton part. I want to know why Marvin Gaye is suddenly appearing in everything I read. We are trying to stick to a plan – we each read a poem aloud every time we go downstairs, to keep us from completely wasting our time, and I flipped to a Marvin Gaye tribute by Terrance Hayes, then later read about the wedding march, “Sexual Healing” in C.D. Wright's book, which we didn't discuss in your class on Tuesday. My English professor has an English accent and says “sexual healing” is the basic premise of Kafka's “A Country Doctor.” I made a Marvin Gaye record-cuff-bracelet which Jaden Smith as graffiti-artist Dizzee wears on the Netflix show *The Get Down*. It's a show about the birth of hip-hop in the '70s. Turns out, those Bronx poets are also the guys who gave us mic. Not old insecure Mike at Rolling Stone. My English professor has mentioned Mick Jagger at least five times this term. I contend that mic and Mick are pronounced the same, and mike is proper short for microphone. My mother-in-law just turned 70. She still smokes. I couldn't fit this on the little ivory postcard from Copper Canyon Press, postage paid, headed for the recycling bin, with a little checkbox asking, “Can we quote you on that?” I want to know how many of those cards are returned, how many mother-foucaults trust themselves to fit the perfect poetic response onto five neat lines.

Yes, you can quote me on that. ◇

america

Vincenzo Milione

welcome to america! here are your
 chains:
 heavy, rough, and strong
 around your neck and
 ankles.

welcome to america! look at our great
 walls:
 ominous, paramount, and cold,
 holding the wretched refuse back by their
 throats.

welcome to america! look at our inalienable
 freedoms,
 tarnished, beaten, and neglected
 framed by *oppression*, from the bottom to the
 top.

here! is what america was, and
 is:
 ugly, angry, and alone.

yet there is an america that can be.

an america! from sea to shining
 sea,
 radiant, loving, and caring,
 a nation of exiles, drinking the milk of Mother
 Liberty,
 nourishing, strengthening, and pure.
 she gives and expects little in
 return.
 compassion, empathy, and forgiveness
 are all she asks of her children,
 valor, gratitude, and humility
 are all she demands to be
 instilled.

but we are failing our mother, and ourselves.

if we listen to Mother Liberty, and truly
 listen,
 and listen, and listen, and *listen*,
 we can hear her cries of
 pain,
 pain from her children, they who
 scratch, slash, and stab
 her beautiful brazen dress into
 tatters,
 like a child in the fever of an american
 nightmare,
 screaming, kicking, and biting.

but she forgave us before we
 transgressed,
 forsook, deceived, and betrayed,
 all of us a Judas, destined for divine
 failure.

for she is no fool, and knows of our nature.

but if we could learn,

if we learn to give when we don't
 receive,
 to comfort strangers who
 grieve,
 to support all, for all must
 achieve
 life, happiness, and liberty:

america can truly
 be.

A Call to Collect

Kira Brooke Smith

Available empty surface are beginning to dwindle among the endless smooth river stones, craggy black basalt rocks, and rough sandy pebbles. I have taken to stringing my collection together with sparkling golden twine and hanging them from my walls. A few crystalline minerals, my most prized exhibits, sit upon my windowsill where the morning sun can illuminate the deep purples of geodes and rich ochre of agate. The odd seashell, pearly white and perfectly formed is nestled in a bowl of rocks, or occupies a dark corner of inferiority. This is a rock collection, of sorts.

My knowledge of geology and geologic formations are paltry, and my interest in such topics is not particularly poignant. My collection has little meaning to me outside of its assemblage as such. I am likely to burn in my house saving 100 rocks rather than leave a single one behind, because without it the totality of my collection is moot.

I select the rocks as I move through space and expand my geographic range. The rocks are a composite of personal experiences, as much as a composite of minerals and geologic time. In this way I perceive myself as the newest, and perhaps shortest, epoch of their development.

I pick them up as I restlessly wander.

Along rainy, grey beaches, the shores of rivers with icy water licking my toes numb. They are the crumbs from mountain ranges and the grains of deep valleys.

The compulsion to select a rock, the itching in my fingers and the frantic searching begins with the anxiety of my own finiteness. An angsty outburst of agency.

I begin by staring at the ground as I walk, pausing on occasion. My companion may be speaking to me, but my shifty body language conveys that I am distracted.

I am trying to memorialize a moment, a place, and my presence in it before it slips away and the urgency is all encompassing.

In theory any old rock would subdue the anxiety, but in practice that is boring. I often choose two rocks, one that is special, different than the others, and one that is typical of the landscape and the space.

I choose one so that I can carry a place in my pocket as it has carried me.

In the *Untimely Meditations*, Friedrich Nietzsche writes that history pertains to man in three ways:

“..It pertains to him as a being who acts and strives, as a being who preserves and reveres, as a being who suffers and seeks deliverance.” (1997)

And while Nietzsche turns his eyes to the striving, to the *ubermensch* and high German culture. I am seeking deliverance through rocks, and a meek violence of collecting .

Dream for Beads

Jocelyn White

Last night I dreamed that I was lying in my bed but it was drifting away from shore.

There were no stars above, just this giant blue moon and the farther I floated away from land the quieter it became till it was too much to take. So I started shouting for help but there was only a light in the distance. I thought it was the rising sun though as I drifted closer I discovered it was another bed on fire. Someone sat on the edge of the bed looking into the dark water and I tried to call out to them;

"Here, jump onto my bed!" but my voice only came out in whispers. I don't think he even saw me. As we passed my heart beat faster and faster until all I heard were drums in my ears. Eventually I was alone again in the dark silence with the blue moon that was getting bigger and bigger as if the waves were bringing me to it. Though I was afraid that we were going to crash - the moon and I - so I held my breath and jumped into the water. I kept sinking lower.

And lower.

And lower.

Until I became the depth of the sea. Or at least that's what I remembered once I woke up. It must've been the end because my body was heavy, even my eyelids had to be pushed open like mahogany doors. My skin was drenched in sweat salty enough to be sea water. So I knew that had to be the end.

I don't talk much about my dreams, at least not to anyone other than Dakota. She was into that stuff. Dreams and crystals and playing the guitar on her roof before dawn. The first time I told her about my dreams was the first time I met her. It was years ago, back when I could wear ripped jeans and band shirts without looking like a bum, the glory days of being sixteen in Stumptown. I was on the bus, the one that goes down Lombard, when she got on from Interstate.

I'm not a pervert, nor am I all that nosy. Though there was something electric about that moment when she boarded. She dressed like any Portland high school junior - floral dress paired oddly with a jean jacket and brown combat boots - though in the ten seconds it took her to walk to my seat I felt the pull of her enticing gravity.

I tried to not make it obvious that I was staring from her green-dyed hair to her sparrow wrist tattoo, though that might have been why she sat beside me that Friday morning in September. She could've sat anywhere by anyone, though I won the lottery.

"Nice bracelet," she smiled while putting her faded satchel on her lap.

I twisted my wrist left to right to left as if to showcase it, "it's just a strip of leather from my grandpa's vest. Nothing fancy."

"He must be flattered," she pushed a lock of hair out of her face.

I shrugged, "he's dead. He died from a heart attack in the shower four months ago. The vest was what he wanted to wear to church that Sunday." I mentally kicked myself for that overshare.

"Oh, I'm so sorry. I bet he was a cool grandpa, cool grandpas wear leather vests to church." There was something sincere about her voice that I found to be soothing. My grandparents Jacob and Iris raised me after my parents split and decided that neither wanted a four-year-old. So losing him was losing a parent all over again. I held that in though, I didn't want her sympathy.

"I'm Dakota," she said coolly while holding out her right hand. "Dakota Mabel Washington."

I took her hand and shook it firmly, "Oliver Bustos. Of course kids at school call me 'All Over Bust Nuts'. Real original."

She rolled her brown eyes, "kids these days, no respect."

I had nothing else to say to that, years of exclusion can do that to a person. Though as we neared Saint Johns I feared we were getting closer and closer to our goodbye, so I said something. It should've been anything, but it was about the night before.

I cleared my throat, "sometimes I have these dreams that are so vivid and vibrant it's like going to bed as Oliver just to get up as someone else."

"I never dream," she admitted. "Or maybe I just don't remember."

"Last night I dreamed I was trapped in a lighthouse on the cliff of an island. I had a dilemma, I could save myself by turning out the light and drawing attention to

the lighthouse or I could keep sailors alive while I wasted away. It was really stressful, was saving my life worth the sailors who would crash into the rocks and drown? Days turned into weeks as I grew hungrier and thirstier, I was also falling into insanity from the loneliness. Seagulls screeched at me to make up my mind. Then a stormy night came when I decided to choose."

She waited, then she smiled. "What did you choose? You can't leave me hanging on that."

I held up my hands, "I don't really know. I would like to think that I chose to keep the light while being saved eventually, though who knows?"

She thought to herself for a moment, "I like your dreams, you should tell me more. Maybe even call me after you wake up so they're fresh."

My heart palpitated as I registered her request, "are, are you giving me your number?"

"As long as you tell me more dreams," she reached into her tan satchel and pulled out a pack of gum. She unwrapped a piece, popped the gum into her mouth and then wrote her number in tiny print as she chewed. She slid it into my palm.

"Thanks," I smiled. "I mean, yeah, I'll call you."

"Oh, one more thing before I get off at this stop. I have something for your bracelet," she reached into the depths of her bag and then placed something small onto the gum wrapper.

"Cool," was all I managed as she stood, gave one last smile and then got off by the Annex. I took the little yellow bead between my thumb and index, I held it closer to my eye. It was simple, insignificant, yet as I later strung it onto my grandfather's leather I could feel my heart drum louder than any orchestra.

I thought about her all night, I almost didn't even get time to sleep. There was so much pressure, so much excitement raising every hair along my arms. I was stressed when five AM rolled around and I was yet to dream, would I even be able to call her if I did dream? I'll never know when I knocked out that night, but at some point I did, because I woke to the banging of my grandma on my bedroom door.

"Ollie? Get up and get ready for church."

"That's tomorrow, grandma Iris. Saturdays I don't do anything," I rolled onto my side.

She was relentless, perhaps even lonely. "Ollie, come down and have breakfast with me."

"Okay," I called back. I pulled a pair of jeans from a pile on a chair over my boxers. To make it less obvious I sprayed myself with Axe, something musky to cover the chair musk. When I opened the door she was still there, though she was still in her night gown. "Jesus, grandma. What time is it? Should you even be wearing that around me?"

She waved me off, "without Jacob I don't even know what to wear."

I sighed, "okay, grandma. Let's go get you dressed."

She laughed, "well aren't you a gentleman?" she hooked her arm around mine, hugging me close as I escorted her down the hall to her bedroom. She sat in her rocking chair by the window as I snooped through her drawers.

"How's this?" I held up a green turtleneck and black capris.

She shrugged with raised brows, "didn't realize we were going window shopping today."

"Are we?"

"We are now," she announced while standing. "That's my window shopping sweater."

"I guess it's a date," I left the outfit on the bed and closed the door behind me as I waited for her to dress. I talked to her through the door, "school starts next week. Maybe we can get some school supplies since we haven't done that yet."

She opened the door, "let's walk around the plaza at Jantzen Beach, they have everything."

I take her arm again, "breakfast first?"

"Aye, aye captain Ollie." I escorted her down the stairs and into the kitchen.

"Oh shit, what's burning?" I let go of her arm and rushed to the stove. I grabbed the pot's handle and pushed it off the burner onto the counter. The oatmeal was dry, thicker than cement at this point, with a horrible aroma.

"Oopsies, Ollie. I'm sorry," she put her elbows on the table and burrowed her face into her hands.

"It's okay, gram." I turned off the stove and started

Philadelphia

Caitlin Rethwish

running water into the pot. I sat across from her, “it’s going to be okay. I can make more.”

It took us the rest of the morning to get ready and go. My grandparents owned a manufactured home on Hayden Island, only renting the land, and had been there for my whole life. And even though it was only a fifteen minute walk to the Jantzen Beach strip mall, she still insisted that I packed her almonds for a snack. Just in case her appetite kicked in along the wall despite the amount of oatmeal I got her to eat. Though what actually extended our walk was her stopping every so often for every stray or wandering cat she saw.

“Oh Ollie, we shoulda brought home that tabby.” Her voice was so sad as we entered the Target. “He was so lonely sitting in that patch of sun on the sidewalk.”

I grabbed a cart, “no, I’m pretty certain we don’t need any pets right now.”

She jabbed my shoulder, “yet I’m allowed to keep you?”
“Thanks, gram. Thanks.”

We made our way around the clothes passed the electronics and towards the school supply section they had put up. Soccer moms in athletic wear were flanked by midget versions of themselves, while confused looking teens picked up one brand of pens just to put down for another. I sighed, “do I really need to go to school?”

Grandma Iris tapped her chin thoughtfully, “you could go to school or you could stay home and watch my soaps with me.”

I grabbed the last blue composition book while smiling wholeheartedly, “maybe we’ll leave learning to the professionals.”

The smirk on her face reminded me, like a flash of light across the night sky, that I did dream last night. I dug my phone out of my back pocket, “do you mind if I make a quick phone call?”

She looked at me sideways, “what’s so important that you have to make a call now?”

“Don’t worry, grandma Iris,” I gave her a quick peck on the cheek before turning away. “It’s just a dream.”

Philadelphia was the type of girl who loved her own smile so much she would gnaw off her lips to give folks a better view. She learned early on that her mouth was a graveyard where it was best to let her weedy thoughts rest behind her tombstone teeth – and so they were the last defense, made strong by clenching them together to keep the thorns inside. With the soft stretching of her lips around them, her grin could melt a man’s defense quicker than her jagged tongue ever could. As far as she was concerned, her mouth was the second-best thing her mother ever gave her. The best gift from her mother was her name. She wore it like a heavy crown that let her move her head like a priceless figurine. She knew she was a mighty city that housed presidents and the haughty elite. She had no reservations about her own regality, and so pushed out others doubts about it until she was their king. She had many subjects, and all were just like you and me. She learned the alphabet as we did, reciting first the O and then the P, but she learned to string together letters as a computer can be taught to write a symphony. Her words were fashioned into rhyming poetry, and no wonder, with the heavy weight of wonder at her speech we would go weak at the knees. And though she never considered us more than weak-kneed jokers in her court, we were happy to do as she pleased. The words that left her cemetery jaw were but nicely-dressed dead things. She knew that people cried at funerals and so wrapped her words in suits and pearls and set them out for viewing. She put high prices on what she considered worthless things, and so fools flew to the auction and threw themselves from cliffs to see her smile. She learned the price of access and bartered it well. We learned the price of denial and buried it in ourselves. Heartbreak breaks through dry dirt and grows roots deep to drink. But we have no water for our broken heart roots; we knew the rules. We thought ourselves above the game. When a jester forgets his place and tries to negotiate gold plated nickel for jewels, he may think he’s a king; but a queen knows the price of a fool. After all, she only said she loved you.

What Counts?

Allison Brooke Taylor

One. I am small and I am always outside. I like running fast. I ski down the mountain without taking turns and I don't like eating vegetables. I have a tree fort and I help my dad with hammering.

Two. I begin to notice my parents call me she, her, and daughter. My favorite things are Balto, The Lion King, and the movie Tombstone. I want to be a protagonist.

Three. I won't wear dresses. My mother begs. We are Catholic and I have to go to church. We compromise; I wear shorts underneath and frown for 5 hours.

Four. I am wearing my ski helmet and paying for my father's gas at a station on the way to the small mountain, the cashier calls me son.

Five. My dad shaves. I try to use his razor and cut my face, badly. The blood runs in the sink and I try to hide the cuts.

Six. I have a birthday party on the same day as a boy named Paul. I give him a monster truck and he gives me a soft stuffed dog. I want to keep that monster truck.

Seven. I try to pee standing up like a boy. My father walks in and hits me and calls me an animal. My mother's face looks grim, she doesn't say anything.

Eight. I play co-ed soccer. I am the only girl on the team. They call me "the girl". I am the smallest and I play goalie. I am good because I am determined.

Nine. I get a handwriting coach in school. I have to work with the coach every day for an hour. His name is Mr. Rocky, we become friends. I am a good writer, but my handwriting looks like a boys.

Ten. My friends begin to turn nasty. They make a rule at lunch that girls are not allowed to talk at lunch. I am the only girl.

Eleven. When I am funny, charismatic, or good at sports I am called a boy

Twelve. I start wearing feminine clothes. I trade metal for pop music. I don't like it but I want to fit in.

Thirteen. I take a trip to the beach and am wearing a red bikini made out of bandana patterned fabric for the first time. I play in the surf and drink virgin Pina Coloadas with my parents. A man whistles at me while I am running for a soccer ball.

Fourteen. I am starting to date boys and I like the attention. Having a boyfriend is important to me.

Fifteen. I have sex for the first time, I don't like it, but I keep doing it any way

Sixteen. I do drugs for the first time. I do like it and keep doing it

Seventeen. My mom finds a boy in my room. I sit on the edge of my bed and she slaps me in face and calls me a slut. I barely felt the slap.

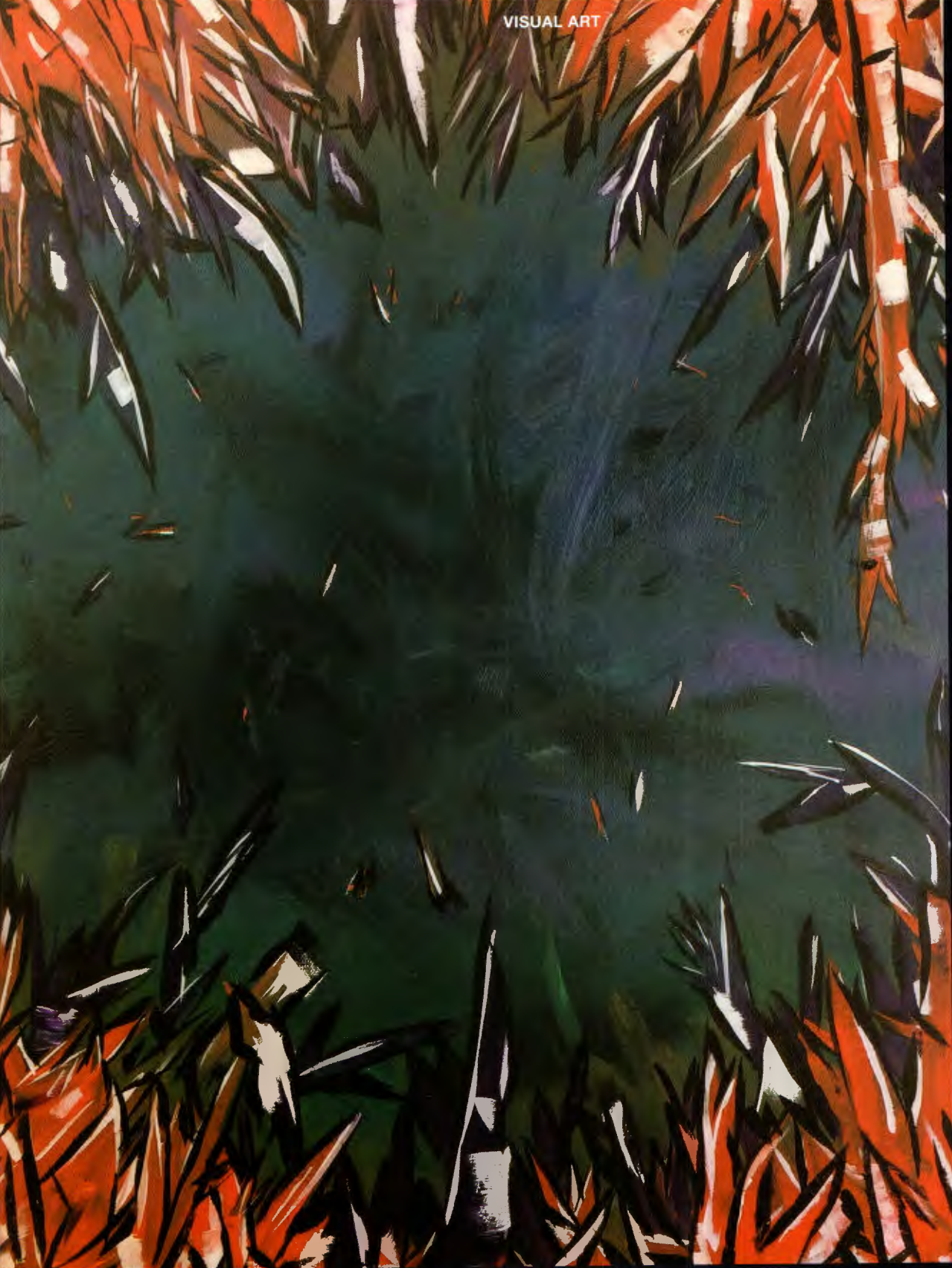
Eighteen. I am working at a restaurant and men leave tips for me even when I am not their waiter. My boss gets mad and the male employees begin to talk about me.

Nineteen. I start sleeping with an older coworker, It makes me feel mature and interesting, like a girl in a movie. I still don't like sex.

Twenty. I meet an older boy at a party, he has red hair and smokes Marlboro cigarettes, drinks whiskey, has a car and an apartment.

Twenty One. I have my first orgasm while lying on my back on the bed. My eyes are closed and tears run down my cheeks. I don't know what is happening to me.

Twenty Two. I'm gay.



Abyss
Riley Dillard



A Good Gift?
Christian Orellana Bauer



No Need 4 Eyez,
Metamorphosis
Juliana Tattoli



This Page

Peeled Paint

Facing Page

The Nightstand
Patricia Kalidonis



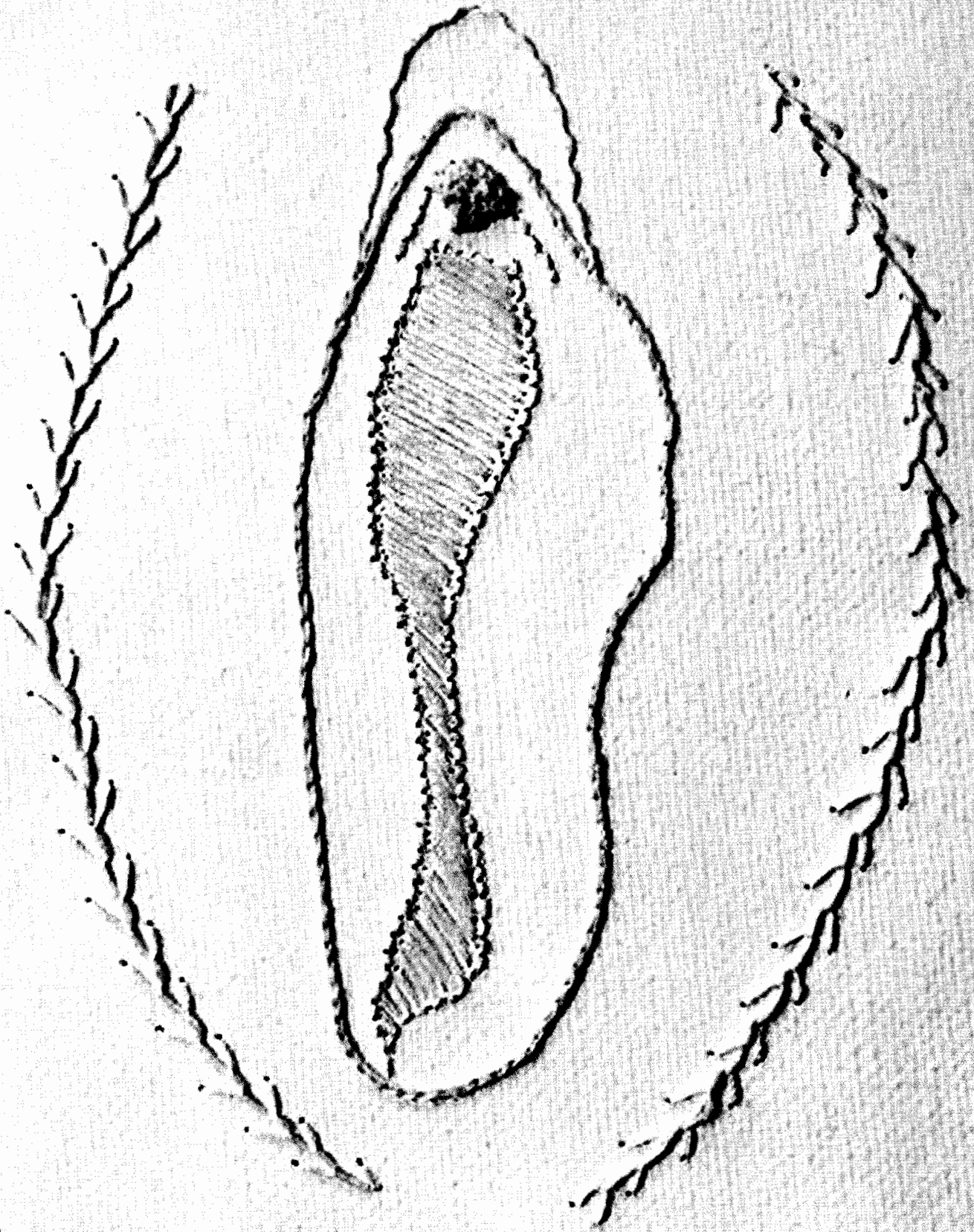


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please/35 mm
Alexandra Gomez

Facing Page

Purity Pussy
Riley Dillard





Through The Bathtub,
Patricia Kalidonis

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