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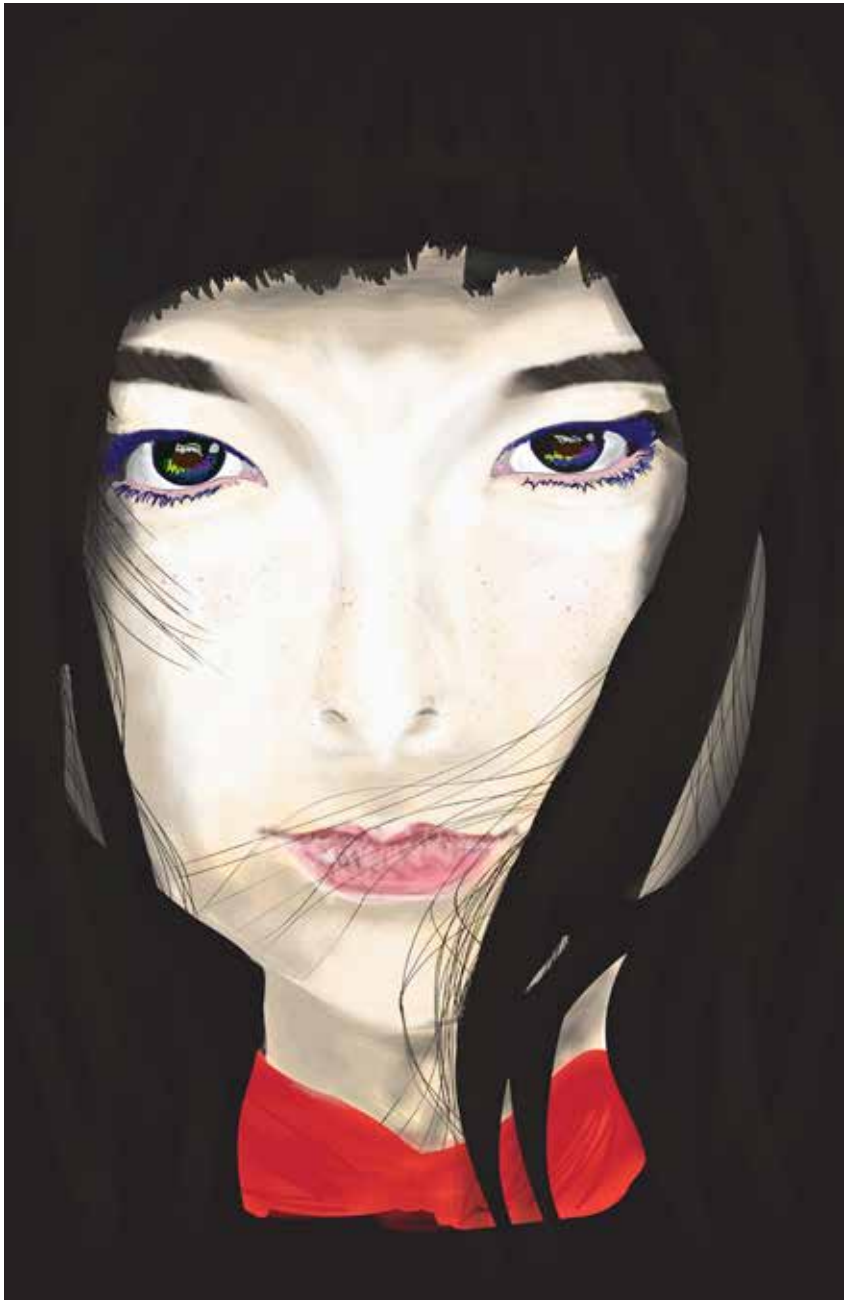

El Hijo

Jonathan Acuna-Lopez
Winner of the 2016 Ventura Valdez Spanish Poetry Award

Mi madre huele a sangre.
Mi padre huele a cenizas.
Hablan palabras que son como humo,
Palabras que tienen sabor dulce
Pero me ahogan.
Hay que morir, para vivir.
Hay que morir, para vivir.

Yo soy el hijo
El hijo del sueño americano.
Ay sí, ay sí.
Pero el verdadero sueño americano,
Es conseguir tiempo para dormir.
De mañana hasta noche trabajando.
Me muero, sudando.
Pero eso es el destino de mi gente
Sí, sí.

El destino de mi gente,
Transparente y azul.
Ya no puedo caminar
Uso mis sueños y memorias
Como bastón.
Porque yo soy el hijo transparente,
Nadie escucha mis gritos
Nadie mira mis lágrimas.
Yo soy el hijo,
Yo no puedo llorar o gritar,
No me puedo escapar.
A veces oigo
Ton, ton
El clavo y martillo
Ton, ton
Están clavando el carpintero.

Yo soy el hijo milagroso
Poderoso y maravilloso,
Un misterio,
Nadie me puede tocar.
Soy el sueño de mis antepasados.
Pero en verdad,
Es una pesadilla.
Sí, sí.

Una pesadilla.
Entre tus manos señor,
Entre tus manos señor.
Hay que seguir la lucha,
Este es el destino de mi gente.
Hasta la victoria siempre.
Hasta la muerte.

Yo soy el hijo de mis padres.
El hombre que
Carga las décadas
En su espalda.
Lo he aceptado.
Me canso.

Esperanza Spalding
Curtis Berry

Reverse Mermaid

Abigail Beckel

I.

The rip tide is the worst part,
the surf, its stink and tumble.
The sea never gives up anything
willingly, armed in suction and sink.
Thank god for the last few feet
of flipper before the pale twinning
of tendon and vein, the feel
of bone and joint. Of skin.

The beach like a canker,
my feet blanche and blister,
sand transforming into shard
under assault of sun and tide.
My gills feather along my neck,
gasping until my mouth complies.

There is no reason to dwell
on past lives, the undulating,
distorted view from below
the surface of a rainstorm,
the ear-clogged silences.
Here it is all noise, smells,
sweat, and tear-sting, thighs
and ankles. Air. A walking
away from all the befores.

II.

My small nephew sits diaper-deep
in the surf with me, smelling
of sand fleas and periwinkles,
building drip castles and planting
puckered fish kisses on my knees,
not knowing skin from scale.

When you weep below the waves
there is no difference between
your grief and the vast cavern
of water reaching from your eyes
to everywhere. My mother believes
the sea heals every tender hurt,
the salt water an endless salve
sucking shut our cuts and gashes.

Does the salt eat everything?
my niece asks as we walk
the shoreline past rusted cans,
rotted wooden staircases,
the water-beaten jetty and pier.
Everything, I say. *Everything.*

Close Connection

Mel Barkin

Providence

Abigail Beckel

Outside Kate's kitchen window there are urban chickens.
It's raining and 65 degrees in December in Rhode Island.
The hens bob and weave around the raindrops in their coop
painted brilliant blue and yellow. Chickens see color
much better than humans so their backyard roost
is the Vegas of coops, overlooking beds of neon arugula
and butter lettuce, wet headlights illuminating them.
The chickens are impatient with rain.
Kate is impatient with her sadness.
On our drive to see extreme Christmas-light displays
the night is so swathed in fog that we squint as though
we are trying to glimpse individual stars in the Milky Way.
The world is a pinhole camera that can't find an image.
Forms loom out our windows, covered in pinpricks of color.
Waving Santas and ice-skating snowmen leave a blurred trail.
A friend of mine always writes "in the mist of it all."
Emotions are tender while she is in the mist of it all.
In the mist of it all during this break-up, she has trouble imagining
how the future will look. It seems more apt somehow,
with the fog stubbornly clinging to our eaves and windows
and exposed faces. The hunkering down is happening, cold
or no cold—hearts bearing winter into the new year.

Infusion: Round I

Nancy Naomi Carlson

You balance from shadow
to shadow, like crossing
an Aztec footbridge—each step
a missing, a veiled undulation, a void.

Your blood has gone mad,
complicit with cells
that have lost all bearings—
a body against itself.

Your lungs—beasts of burden—stagger on.
You are yoked and plowed.

Pools of dusk gather where you've stepped,
entwine with rue and sage.

Don't look down at the purple figs
that cry out from the gorge below—
the ones strapped down by thistle vine.

Keep moving downwind
as the venom's cure cycles through—
hold in your gaze the verdant growth
that proliferates and blooms at the other end—

what you're asked, for now, to sacrifice.

Waveform

Joann Everly Tell

Circadian Rhythms

Nancy Naomi Carlson

Bindweed blooms at five a.m.,
but not in time to hear the wren
rustle through chicory—
closes by noon, unlike hawkweed,
open at six, but graces
the walk until dusk.
Each day the same,
you could almost keep
time, like Linnaeus' flower clock.
My baby was sand spurrey,
smooth cat's ear, day-lily,
shy in coming,
lived ten hours.
He was sown into my dreams.
Reseeding each birthday year,
thirty-five years gone,
he is bristly ox-tongue,
Iceland poppy, blue sow-thistle,
perennial

Lagniappe

Nancy Naomi Carlson

You buy a dozen beignets and the baker throws an extra fritter in your box. You wipe the powdered sugar from your lips and think *lagniappe*, that word from Creole derived from Quechua—*yapay*—"to give more." You think bus routes on Saturday nights, you and your husband queued up against a brick wall on Canal Street amid smiles capped with gold, as you wait to leave the French Quarter for a room you can afford. You think hikes through swamps teeming with fire ants, years later—your second trip to the Café du Monde, waltzing Cajun-style with your Navy seal, another port of call. You think Peter, the charm of the third, and the suite on Bourbon Street with jazz flooding the stairwells. Beer battered BBQ shrimp with a friend who had lost her foot when a car jumped the curb. Her studio filled with life-sized ceramic hearts and roosters missing heads—signs that your marriage would end before Peter's heart would stop too soon.

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Barbara Pliskin

Mononormative Kaddish

Jonathan Korns

Winner of the 2016 Ventura Valdez English Poetry Award

for Allen Ginsberg and Shawn Christian

Here is one million and one
for every time you will have
fun or every time you wanted
to have fun but instead got pea-
nuts busting into buttered corns
popping off at the slightest sound
of "monotony." Though audibly sin-
gular, this can mean many things like
how we always did the same things or
how you always sounded the same while
doing them. Moreover, monotony rhymes
with monogamy, which sounds like a type
of wood. Would you rather you grow greatly
and tall into celestial heights like a tree or cut
yourself down for what is inside? Primarily we
pride our independence but rely on everyone for
everything. Pride and independence are for princes
and we are animals changing shapes to hide in places
we don't belong. Songs sound more like Kaddish these
days, mourning something Darwin overlooked or Freud
was too afraid to explore. Before you judge me for want-
ing something real something tangible something tradition-
al-ways remember where you come from. Do not get lost in
the twisted backstreets of who you are coming for or who you
are coming because of. Because love comes rarely and when it
does it comes blindly black and blue on a battered phonograph or
instantly with a lossy compression algorithm a beat-up shoes rhythm
and a hue of Ray Charles. Aren't you tired of using heroin, Mr. Charles,
instead of being the hero-in my dreams? Aren't you tired of the quick fix
nickels on your bedside tables and dime bags in your hollow pockets, soup
spoons scooping out chopped liver cirrhosis like sliced apple charoses charred
roses choked Moses in a red wine soaked sea? Aren't you finally ready to be set free?
Haven't you realized yet that everyone out there wants to take a piece of you and leave
nothing in return besides leaving? Hasn't the heavy breathing of being alone outweighed
the faint enchantment of tantric panting in a stranger's panties in the dark?
Aren't you afraid one day there won't be anything left for anyone to take?
Pharaohs, angels of death and first-born souls are passing over my cottage
in the Western night, where I am waiting for you. Don't you want to come
home?

Carried by Whales

Richard Lorr

Remember salt blue green water, churning cold, rough
Hot hides beneath our feet, rising high before the dive.
Standing on the dorsal ridge, your hands hugged a
Supple fluke. In our descent, your desperate squeals,
Our frightened trembling bodies splayed across the fin.
The whales, their moaning songs: pleas for life to start or end.

Whales diving like sinking ships, like knives through sodden bread.
Their bodies cleave the ocean into surging, twisting chasms, into
Storms of froth; in the melee of the water, in the splitting frenzy of
The loudest shaking sounds, I lost my grip. We fell and sinking fell
Too deep below, following the paths of whales beyond our will. Our
Sleek bodies descended until resting spent on sparse azure grass.

In those dark depths, you played and sang, summoning more whales.
I held my breath against the water's weight, fearing I would drown.

Motown
Robert Chanin

Fireworks

Zander Foster Phillips

My mother runs her finger across the side of her head,
Gracefully placing her hair behind one ear.
She smiles at me
Wiping away tears, trying not to sob.
"We're going to be okay now," she tells me.
"We'll be safe now," she says. I believe her.
Only six years old I do not understand
Why we cannot go out and watch the fireworks,
But they come every night.

Not once since we've moved here have we seen the fireworks,
But imagine they resemble the ones from Disneyland that they show on television.
My mother cries when the fireworks come,
And she comes into my room to hold me.
She doesn't hug me like this on the 4th of July.
I think to myself, if we only could go out to see them—just once,
Mother wouldn't be so scared.

I am so lucky.
Most kids get a bedtime story,
I get a concerto.
Bang! Bang! The rushing into my room.
Bang! Bang! The hugs and the holding.

The fireworks sound as if they were composed just for me.
Mother says they are for her.
I wish my room had a window, so that I could see them.
I want to sneak a peek,
Go out and show mother that fireworks are not to be feared.
Yeah, they were scary at first.
But now the sound of them resonates just as a steady drum would.

Mother is always apologizing—although she has done nothing wrong.
She says we will soon move somewhere.
Wherever we go,
I hope there are fireworks.

G-d

Zander Foster Phillips

I
Am
The man
That cries.
At night when they all are resting, I am
Awake with my G-d, clutching Him
As if to say that I have to give up.
And in the morning, when all
Are rising with the sun, I find
Myself with puffy eyes. And it's
Not that I do not love Him, but the
People in the temple told me I need
To earn His love. And all I can see
now in the
morning
is my
self.

Fiction

Memento

Nicholas Fosta

The sun beat down from on high on this unusually warm autumn afternoon, causing only additional undue discomfort to us, the ill-fated men who marched towards our demise. I was fifth in line for the gallows, convicted of a petty crime that had apparently been altogether less petty in the eyes of my accuser. Do not be fooled by my nonchalance however, I was by no stretch ready to die. I was barely holding myself together, keeping my mind occupied with a trinket that now draped from my wrist. It had been the one thing I could grab from my home before they apprehended and shackled me. I had done so without thinking, perhaps it was just a doomed man's final attempt to cling to this world and his belongings. Perhaps it was a desperate effort to find something with which to fight back. But in either case, the effort was squandered. I had only managed to retrieve a dull, smooth stone hung from a faded leather cord.

As I recall it was the remnants of an art collaboration with my estranged mother, something we must have made together in my youth. It hadn't had much significance to me before now, just another reminder that she was gone. Something I hadn't thought about for the majority of my adult life. Funny how the memories come flowing back so freely at the slightest prompting from petty trinkets.

I did my best to keep my mind on positive memories, a task which usually proves difficult for a pessimist such as myself, but one I was managing surprisingly well in this very moment. My mother used to have a saying, sort of a catch-all go-to answer for whenever I had felt hurt or blue in my youth. I was having trouble recollecting exactly what those words were, but what mattered more were the associated memories. Memories of comfort and love, a reminder that even if she had left she had at one point cared about me. Memories of the way she used to hold me when I skinned my knee and quiet my cries with a soft voice and something cool to relieve the pain. I felt a weak smile tug at the corners of my mouth.

I was next in line now, and the guards had begun to usher me up onto the platform. I passed the trinket between my fingers more urgently, trying to dispel my nerves. I wish I could remember her words; they may have been of some small comfort in my darkest hour. Something to cling to amidst all of this death. Amidst the inevitability of my own looming demise.

I felt the indifferent caress of the coarse noose being tightened around my neck. There was a preacher rattling off scripture somewhere on

Earth Colors

Sunni Morgan

the platform. My mind was far too occupied to care at the moment. I'm sure he and his god would understand. I could feel my pulse against the tightened rope, and as my breathing grew quicker, and my hopes began to fade, I suddenly remembered. I tried to stifle a laugh at the cruel irony of it all, and could feel the hot wash of tears rolling over my cheek. The executioner shot me a glare as he moved over to condemn me. I struggled to push the words to my lips, wanting to hear them one more time even if it meant saying them myself.

"Hang in there, baby." I whispered with a twisted grin, just as the floor fell out beneath me.

The Triad

Antonio Luis Mendez

Their walk is a ritual. The man, bald and middle aged, the dog, a German Shepard, and the infant, hooded and motionless in its light blue carrier, walk past my house every day at seven in the evening. On days when I'm not home, I still picture them. They move like they're on a track. I've never seen the infant's face.

It's late September when green yields to brown. Elderly men and women wander, too frail to walk regularly and yet so old that 58-Degrees-and-Cloudless is enough to lift them from their big-ticket recliners and prop them into austere air for what might be their last September. Unfinished cigarettes wrestle with rotten leaves on cracked concrete. Other leaves steep in piles flanking the road and reek of earth. Premature Halloween decor sags from the gutters of ramblers and empty trashcans abscond from side yards, always ending up, somehow, in a pile at the end of the street.

I'm inside one of those cans now, hidden, checking the time on my phone. The plastic can is oviform from my weight and ripe with the sour smell of trash: that curiously uniform smell that's ubiquitous in the back lots of restaurants. The triad will be here soon. I peer over the can's lip and spot them half a football field away. I'm not wearing my glasses but the shape is unmistakable, signature: a right triangle of ground, man, and leash. My breathing fills the cylinder with resonant brown noise that joins audible pumps of blood.

"What're you doing in there," a voice says with the treble of an in-ear whisper. The can trembles violently before overturning. Sideways on asphalt, I find that the voice belongs to Gregory Sack, a retired mailman living comfortably off his pension and the peace afforded by living at the end of a cul-de-sac. "That's my can," Sack points out. He's bearded and barely alive.

"True," I reply. I'm still half in the can.

"These damn cans," he says, nursing a forearm covered in sunspots. I can't leave so I stay still, supine and stiffer than Sack's spine. The triad's six legs are barely audible now: sand on concrete. "Some can, isn't she. I'd love her back when you're finished," Sack flashes 32 porcelain teeth the color of butternut squash. This is supposed to be a friendly gesture.

"Finished," I reply, tilting my head like a triangulating dog and peering under his grundle. I've lost sight of the triad.

"Well, enjoy." Sack has part of a dead bird stuck to the heel of his ancient Reebok trainers.

"Thanks, I will." I watch him walk away until he vanishes behind brick veneer.

The triad doesn't have any alternate routes that I'm aware of. It's possible they turned around, repelled by Sack's seedy aura. I lie there for a few minutes before humoring the old man and returning his can. I hoist the receptacle above my head and struggle over a bed of weeds into a side yard barely the width of the plastic cylinders it houses. Hundreds of cave crickets squirm at my feet as I slide one can into another. I'm acutely aware of the scraping sound produced by the marriage of plastic. It's quiet.

The wind has slowed and even the frailest leaves are motionless, rooted to their branches like the elderly to their recliners. I unlatch the termite bitten gate with one hand and wipe the other on acrid denim. "I need to wash my hands--no--everything. God knows what Sack deems trash. The pants I can throw out. I was gonna buy some new ones anyway--this week. Look at the holes…" I trail off, catching myself. I sound insane.

I'm halfway through the gate when I hear the sandy walking sound, louder than before. I recoil into the side yard. I squint through a thin slat in the chewed gate and scan as much of the street as the narrow aperture allows. The bald man stands at the mouth of Sack's driveway, cockeyed and infant-clad. It's impossible to tell if he can see me. His eyes are fishlike and protrude from a head like a punctured volleyball. Hirsute flesh pooches over the elastic of his grey sweatpants and sags toward nondescript running shoes. The dog looks stuffed from this distance, false. I bend my knees, affording another foot of cover from the gate. I can hear the crickets ricocheting off the cans' plastic like tiny fingers on a djembe behind me. A single braid choked with puerile beads erupts from the infant's head, which is still buried deep in blue cotton. The child has been the same size for years. Why doesn't it grow? The man sniffs meatily before disappearing behind Sack's Volvo station wagon. A minute passes before I open the gate again. I shut it behind me, slowly, and edge down Sack's front lawn with my neck craned and fixed on the spot where they left.

After following them for what seems like a mile we arrive at a Victorian house coated in cracked green paint. It's been over an hour and the number of pedestrians has waned to nothing. We're alone in this neighborhood. I stand on the curb in grey light and watch my breath collect on the passenger window of a brown camper van. The Triad's house has too many windows and looks like a mouth crowded with teeth. I can see the triad through the camper's window. Their six legs pass under a peeling Tympanum with a rain-stained American flag poorly lampooned from its center. The man opens the door and drifts through. It was unlocked. I never hear him turn the bolt on the other side. Eclipsed by the van, I wait for minutes until the door opens again. Still carrying the infant, the man emerges and crawls into a Honda Civic the color of dust, starting the engine. I cross the street once the noisy engine ebbs to a

A Bird's Eye View of My Hometown

Fritz Mirand

low hum, distant, and lift myself onto the stoop to coax the old door open.

The inside is crowded with polished wood and brass. Red velvet curtains hang from ceiling to floor and eviscerate natural light. A large reproduction of Francis Bacon's 'Three Studies' covers most of the east wall and looms over a violent orange divan resting on oak herringbone. There are no photographs of family, no bills pinned as reminders to pay, no housemates. The floor plan is open with a narrow kitchen in the back left and a set of glass-paneled double doors of knotted alder leading to a deck at the rear. The living room is lit by a single chandelier made of interlocking deer antlers, but three of the four bulbs are missing. The only other source of light is an oval of fluorescence blinking from a manhole-sized gap in the floor. I walk to the hole and descend ten worn, wooden steps.

The basement has been fashioned into a painting studio. Six oak buttresses support concrete walls—four across the broad sides of the room. Antique tubes of paint writhe in pig bladders on cold cement and cheap wooden tables; the ones on the floor lie curled and capless. The walls bleed with different colors of paint; most are startling shades of red and orange. I approach a canvas and turn to face an abstract portrait of a man staring back with blackened sockets. His body is round and composed of thick chunks of flesh-colored acrylic. Paint piles high on his bloated cheeks and limbs, limbs that protrude at impossible angles. An attenuated torso sprouts from the man's belly and supports a tiny head that's mostly mouth. There are no sockets for eyes and the ears are little nubs, unrecognizable as human ears. An incomplete leg hangs from the man's navel—or at least where his navel should be. My spirit fades quicker than the light outside. I can't stay here.

But I'll never leave. The dog bites. My body joins the other empty tubes on the floor, capless and no longer writhing.

Native Dream

Valerie Gormley

The high sun bursts bright fiery rays that hit the icy white crystals coating the large expansive field. Twenty-seven tipis topped with snow stand in a scattered oval formation next to a frosted, frozen river. Icicles hang from three half-buried, wooden wagons that are parked behind one side of the tipis. The hilly plains surrounding the settlement are covered with heavy snow.

A single small family occupies each tipi. Each family sits together in front of their tipis sharing a single meal amongst themselves. Before they are finished, a Lakota elder stands up and approaches the center of the settlement.

He forms his hands in a circle around his mouth and yells out "Hi-ye-ye! Hi-ye-ye!"

The adults of the families immediately direct their attention towards him, but the children continue picking at the food. Without saying a word, the elder raises his right arm high and points towards the south.

"Hoyay!" everyone replies in cheerful unison, expressing their agreement with the wise elder's suggestion.

The families quickly finish their meals and clean up as the sun begins to pass below the horizon. Most return to their tipis to prepare for the arduous journey ahead of them, except for a few of the stronger, younger men, who reemerge holding ropes and tomahawks. These men trudge off into the distance, following the frozen river north through the snow. Along with the Lakota people, the sun now sleeps and the sky quickly turns dark, speckled with bright stars.

* * *

Early the next morning, the sun awakens once more, waking the Lakota along with it. Light comes back to the sky and casts luminous yellow hues on the snowy surface. The Lakota families emerge from their tipis with heavily packed baskets. The women and children work to disassemble their tipis and finish packing. The men dig out the wagons from the snow and begin packing them full.

The group of men that left the previous night are now marching proudly back towards the settlement, accompanied by three horses. When the

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Barbara Pliskin

wagons are finally filled, the men attach the horses to the wagons. The few things that didn't fit are carried in ornately beaded leather satchels or woven baskets. The only baby of the tribe is bundled in small patterned blankets before being strapped snugly to a cradleboard and carried on his mother's back. The tribe marches off through the snowy fields, their heads full of worry but their hearts overflowing with hope. The wagons move at a slow but steady pace as they struggle to push through the snow.

* * *

After travelling for ten nights, they discover the perfect settlement area near a rapidly-flowing river in South Dakota that would suit all of their needs. The sun shines bright here, and there is no snow on the ground, only tall blades of grass that tickle their legs as they walk. Amidst the tall grass, they happen upon a large patch of fertile soil that had sprouted purple and yellow wildflowers around the edges. A long row of ponderosa pine trees towers above the plain it borders on the side opposite the river.

For the Lakota, it was as if they had discovered heaven. Immediately, the women and children begin unpacking and setting up their tipis to establish the settlement. All of the men leave to go out hunting.

* * *

The men return from their hunt with many lifeless animals. Some of them are dragging a buffalo using the ropes tied to its feet. Another group is dragging an elk in a similar fashion. A few others are carrying rabbits and squirrels. The women watch excitedly at the arrival of the hunters with all of this food. One of the Lakota hunters raises both arms with rabbits hanging from one hand and squirrels from the other and calls out, "Yuwinyeya pay-ta!" ("Prepare a fire!").

Excited by the bounty that will provide them with plenty of surplus, they were eager to prepare the feast, an experience they have not had since before the long winter. The women rush to retrieve dry wood from one of the wagons and bring it to the center of the settlement. The hunters leave the animals in a pile near the center where the fire would be.

* * *

The bustle slows and now a large bonfire sits in the center of the camp. The women all stand around cooking the slabs of buffalo meat that hang limp on a long branch over the fire, flipping them occasionally. The children help by rolling logs over and placing them around the perimeter of the bonfire for seating. One of them stops and looks off in the distance.

"Uzeblikblik!" screams a young child in excitement. ("Firefly!")

This gets the attention of the other children, and they run off to chase the fireflies. Yutokeca tries to stand patiently next to her mother Eyota, but she attentively watches the other children, eager to join in the fun.

"Ina—," mumbles Yutokeca hesitantly. ("Mother").

"Inaji. Kikta niyate ki. Oyake is woyute tka iyuhpa," interrupts Eyota before Yutokeca can finish her question. ("Stop. Wake up your father. Tell him the food is almost finished.") Eyota already knows what she wants, but there is no time for that now.

Lowering her head and frowning in disappointment, Yutokeca reluctantly replies, "Ha, ina," as she stomps off towards the tipi. ("Yes, mother.") Poking her head through the door flap of the tipi, Yutokeca glances around for her father. As she steps inside, she calls out, "Ahte...ahte!" ("Father…father!").

Looking down, she sees her father Akacheta asleep on a pile of buffalo hides. She bends down next to him and shakes him awake.

"Ahte, kikta! Woyute tka iyuhpa. Slolwaye loyacin!" ("Father, wake up. The food is almost finished. I know you are hungry!").

Akacheta rolls over and slowly opens his eyes as he smiles at Yutokeca. Trying to be pleasant with her despite the unexpected disturbance, he calmly replies, "Wau, micinca. Olepi mawatuka." ("I'm coming, my child. The hunt tired me.").

Yutokeca grabs Akacheta's hands and helps him up. With no time to gain his balance, he stumbles as Yutokeca playfully pulls him along behind her towards the bonfire. They approach Eyota, who prepares a plate for each of the three of them and they all sit down to eat together on a log opposite the drummers.

The musicians play their music with passion and the dancers revolve wildly around the fire as they move in sync with one another. The moon moves across the sky with bright stars surrounding it, but the darkness of the sky does not discourage the Lakota. They feed light into the air, adding wood to the fire until there is no more. As the bonfire weakens, the celebration gradually dies down. When the fire is almost completely gone, the Lakota quickly clean up. Everyone finally returns to their tipis. There is no more light in the

air; it is pitch black all around them.

* * *

Akacheta rests atop a heap of buffalo hides with his arm wrapped around his sleeping wife. He faces Yutokeca, who is asleep in another pile of buffalo hides on the opposite side of the tipi. Akacheta stares at her as she sleeps and a big smile grows on his face. He brushes Eyota's hair to the side and lays his head back down. Nothing is greater than the sense of safety, security, and satisfaction Akacheta feels at that moment. Now, he thinks, he can finally give his family the life they deserve.

Akacheta is peacefully drifting off once more, when he is interrupted by the sound of footsteps crunching in the grass, followed by low whispers not in their tongue, which he recognizes as the voices of wasicu men. The footsteps stop and he hears the metallic click of a flintlock rifle being cocked, causing him to suddenly jump to his feet. He reaches down and grabs Eyota's upper arms, pulling her up beside him. Still half-asleep, Eyota almost crashes back down, but Akacheta quickly throws his arms around her waist to support her.

"Tak—" Eyota mutters through a yawn. ("Wha—").

Akacheta promptly covers her mouth with his hand to silence her. Pulling her closer, he leans into her ear and whispers, "Wasicu, henaupi. Wicawanah-on takal. Kikta Yuto na iyayki ye. Waiwaktaye taniyohi la." ("The white people, they are coming. I heard them outside. Wake up Yuto and flee. I will warn everybody.").

Eyota shuts her eyes tight and shakes her head in disbelief, hoping she is still dreaming. When she can't awaken herself from this nightmare, she looks Akacheta in his eyes and her eyes begin to well with tears. He removes his hand from her mouth and pulls her in for what is meant to be a comforting hug, but it only upsets her more. Her lungs heave and her eyes start to rain as she attempts to muffle her whimpers, pulling herself away from the hug. She stretches out her arms in front of her and she grips Akacheta by the shoulders. She cannot look at him anymore, but she nods heavily to show she understands.

Eyota jumps down beside Yutokeca and shakes her awake. Eyota's eyes dart around the tipi searching for anything they might need as she paces around. She reaches inside a woven basket, pulls out a small tomahawk, and hands it to Yutokeca. Seeing the concerned look growing on Yutokeca's face, she interjects, "Lecela ehatas yacin." ("Only if you need it.").

Yutokeca looks down at the sharp, curved edge of the tomahawk, and

back up again at Eyota. She frowns and furrows her brow in worry, but gives Eyota a single nod of comprehension. Eyota rushes to grab some arrows from inside the basket, followed by the bow and quiver that lay beside it. She fills the quiver with arrows and tosses it over her shoulder. Gripping the bow firmly in her left hand and Yutokeca's hand with her right, she leads her toward the back of the tipi and raises the flap of buffalo hide for Yutokeca to crawl through. Yutokeca gets on her hands and knees and proceeds through the opening, and stands awaiting her mother on the other side.

"Ina! Wayaka!" Yutokeca exclaims through a loud whisper as she raises her right arm and points up in the sky above the tipis. ("Mama! Look!").

Eyota tries to see what has caught Yutokeca's attention, but so far only her head has made its way under the flap. As she continues to pull herself through, she sees smoke rapidly filling the air. Yutokeca runs toward the smoke to investigate, disappearing between the tipis.

Yutokeca's nose cringes at the scent of burning hides, and as she gets closer, she sees that a tipi is on fire.

Yutokeca bursts out in tears of fear and sorrow and cries out, "INAAA!" as she sobs uncontrollably. ("MAMAAA!").

Eyota comes running through the tipis, shouting out in response, "Yuto—"

She is interrupted by the sudden presence of a strange wasicu, a pale ghost-like man who is wearing all black shoes, pants, coat, and hat, making him difficult to see at this time of night. He emerges out of nowhere and grabs Yutokeca, now carrying her horizontally against his hip. He quickly raises his pistol and aims it in Eyota's direction, then fires off his shiny silver gun. Eyota instinctively ducks behind a nearby tipi and manages to miss the bullet.

Eyota gathers herself quickly and pokes her head up from behind the tipi. After rapidly surveying the area, she comes out to look for them, but both the man and Yutokeca are gone. Eyota bursts out in tears. She is unable to move and collapses onto the ground.

"Yuto...Micinca, Yutokeca!" Eyota howls in misery. ("Yuto…my child, Yutokeca!").

Akacheta comes running from the center of the settlement and crouches next to Eyota. Akacheta shakes her to get her attention, and tries lifting her head, but it stays firmly planted in her folded hands resting on her knees.

"Toka? Tuktel Yuto?" inquires Akacheta impatiently. ("What's wrong? Where is Yuto?").

Eyota raises her head slightly, revealing her reddened eyes, tears streaking down her cheeks. She attempts to gather herself, but after a second she bursts out crying even more.

"I...I...Icu...pi!" stutters Eyota as she struggles to get her words out.

Transform

Tery Honeyghan

("The…they…took…her!").

Akacheta immediately jolts up and runs off to look for Yutokeca.

* * *

Yutokeca sits in the back of a wagon that appears mostly like a giant wooden box. It has benches for seating on each side, but they cannot hold everyone. She is squished in between other children on the bench, and those that do not fit on the bench are forced to sit on the floor of the wagon. Their feet are tied together and their hands are bound behind their backs by thick, scratchy rope.

It is just turning to morning and the children have not slept all night. Their eyes are droopy and they struggle to stay awake. With the sun rising outside now, beams of light shine through the cracks in the wood paneling. This draws the attention of the children and everyone perks up to gather around and take a look outside. The children push through one another trying to get a closer look.

Yutokeca is fortunate as she already sits next to the crack. She keeps her eye up against the wood except to reposition here and there to see from different angles. She sees one of the wasicu riding next to the wagon on his horse, as another wasicu man on horseback comes up from behind and passes quickly to the front.

Yutokeca removes her eye from the crack and turns her head to place her ear up against it. She hears all of the wasicu talking, but it is difficult to hear over the sound of the hooves hitting the ground and the wagon shaking through pebbles.

After listening attentively for a while, Yutokeca removes her head from the side of the wagon and turns to face the other children to inform them of what she has heard.

Breaking the silence, she announces, "Slolwaye unhihunni pi sece." ("I think we're almost there.").

Startled, the children all turn and stare at Yutokeca with looks of confusion on their faces. A young boy who Yutokeca recognizes as Wicaka, pokes his head up above the others.

"Ahpe...yaslolye he?" Wicaka questions assertively. ("Wait…how do you know?").

Avoiding the question, Yutokeca admits her uncertainty, "Slolwaye sni ehatas he hecetu. Oh tehi ya wicawanah-on." ("I don't know if it's true. It's hard for me to hear them.").

"Yaslolye iyapi sica wasicu he?" barks Wicaka, as he glares at her with

a scrutinizing gaze. ("How do you know the evil language of the white people?").

All of the children straighten up and watch Yutokeca with wide eyes, anticipating an answer that will justify her knowledge. She anxiously looks around at everyone and hesitates to respond, as she is fearful of how they will react to her answer.

When she finally musters up enough courage, she replies, "Sni hani, ahte ma'aya tohuntu keyas is glusniyaya kici iwatokiyasni. Watohanl wicataku kicic u, cona la wasicu…Wicawanaho woglake, hoheo wa'iyukca ospewakiye." ("Before, papa took me along for business. Sometimes he would trade with white people…I would hear them talking, so I decided to learn.").

Some of the children continued to sit in silence, a few let out a small gasp. They all look at her with shock.

This wasn't enough for Wicaka, so he inquired further, "Ya'awayake slolye wasicu iyape he?" ("Why did you care to know the language of the white people?").

Yutokeca lowers her head in embarrassment, but does not say anything. She turns back to the side of the wagon and presses her eye back against the crack in the wood. Tears fall from her eyes, dripping down her cheek and soaking into the porous wood.

Everyone remains quiet and still for the rest of the ride.

Yutokeca continues to look out the crack, and suddenly she sees all of the wasicu on horses come to a stop. At that moment, the wagon jerks to a halt as well, and all of the children go sliding out of position, bumping into one another.

The children struggle to get back up due to the ties on their hands and feet, but eventually they reposition and Yutokeca is finally able to slide her ear back against the crack. She hears a high-pitched metal squeak, and then suddenly everything jerks back into motion, now much slower than before. Moments later they come to a stop again. Yutokeca hears the metal squeak once more followed by a loud clang of the metal. She hears the men jump down from their horses. She quickly switches to look outside and sees them approaching the rear door of the wagon.

They unlatch the door, letting in the bright beams of the sun the wagon had once concealed from the children. They all squint at the bright light, and raise their arms in front of their eyes to block it. After a moment of adjusting to the light, their vision clears to reveal six wasicu standing outside the door.

The men pull out the children one by one and place them in two straight lines, one of boys and the other of girls. Once everyone is in their lines, they face the wasicu as they speak. Looks of confusion spread on their faces, but Yutokeca understands what they are saying and listens attentively.

Autumn

Charles Deutsch

As he paces back and forth along the lines of children, the speaking wasicu informs the children of what is going on, "I know you are all wondering why you are here...You are all here to learn of the proper ways of our society...We will rid you of your current barbaric ways and mold you to become normal, productive American citizens. You will follow the true American way of life."

The children all look around at one another and whisper about what he could be saying. Yutokeca ignores them and continues facing forward with a firm look as a tear falls from her eye. She quickly wipes it away.

All of the wasicu motion with their hands for the Lakota children to follow them. For the first time, the children see the large, five-story, red brick building that stands behind them. The wasicu lead them through the white double doors, guiding the children to keep them in line.

* * *

Once inside, the boys and girls are lead in separate directions, each to a small room containing nothing more than a chair and a rectangular wood table with a large trunk underneath. They all wait in the same line formation, anticipating the occurrence of the unknown.

Visibly upset, the girls are crying uncontrollably, clinging to each other for support. They are interrupted by the arrival of a wasicu woman wearing a full white apron over her black dress. She carries with her a bowl of water, which she sets down on the table.

She approaches Yutokeca, who stands at the front of the line and crouches down to be level with her. A wide, sly grin grows on the woman's face as she peers into Yutokeca's eyes.

"Looks like you're first, little girl."

The woman grips Yutokeca's wrist and pulls her along behind her towards the table.

While the woman prepares herself, she says, "That reminds me, we're going to need to name you something. Hmm…"

Yutokeca recognizes the word "name" as one she has heard many times before while her father was doing business with new wasicu, prompting her response, "Yutokeca."

Immediately, Yutokeca can tell the wasicu woman is surprised, but that quickly turns to anger.

"What was that you said?!"

Yutokeca struggles to come up with a response. She can understand the wasicu language, but she has not spoken it herself.

"Nnn...nehh...name…Yutokeca."

"Well aren't you ahead of the game here," the wasicu woman declares as she plants her hands against her hips and approaches Yutokeca, then shouts directly in her face, "But that's not how this works, little girl. I make the rules, not you!"

The wasicu woman straightens up and paces around, tapping her index finger on her chin as she thought, until she finally decides. "Rebecca. That's what your name is now. Rebecca."

She grabs Yutokeca's arm and forces her to sit in the chair. She wets Yutokeca's hair, causing her to jump. The woman pushes down on both of Yutokeca's shoulders to get her to sit still. She removes a comb and a pair of scissors from her pocket, and then starts chopping away at Yutokeca's long and straight jet-black hair. Yutokeca watches as it falls to the floor.

When she finishes, the woman takes a step back and examines Yutokeca's hair from behind. She smiles to herself, proud of her own work. The smile quickly fades and she pushes Yutokeca out of the chair. Then, she reaches under the table to pull out the trunk.

After digging through, the woman picks out a blue dress and pair of black buckled flats similar in style to her own. The woman grabs Yutokeca's beaded buffalo hide dress and yanks it off of her by pulling it over her head. Standing there naked, Yutokeca begins to cry. The other girls watch what is happening with wide, glossy, fearful eyes.

Unfolding the blue dress, the woman grips it in the proper position and slings it over Yutokeca's head. Yutokeca struggles to adjust it herself, but the woman forcefully fixes it. Next, the woman kneels down and slides off Yutokeca's matching moccasins, then replaces them with the flats.

Finished with Yutokeca, the woman demands, "Now go wait in the corner over there while I tend to the others. Yutokeca reaches for her dress and moccasins, but the woman jerks them away and tosses them towards the opposite corner of the room.

Yutokeca does not argue, she already feels defeated. She turns to face the corner, but stumbles in her new, heeled shoes, causing her to trip. Standing back up, she tries to adjust to the shoes. She manages to stumble her way over to the corner without another fall. After successfully reaching her destination, Yutokeca stands with her back against the wall and watches the other girls endure the same procedure, with the pile of clothes and shoes growing as they go. When she can no longer recognize any one of her friends, the wasicu woman leads them out of the room and up the stairs to a room at the end of the hallway.

The door opens to a large rectangular room with small beds lining each side. There are already a few other girls asleep in the room that Yutokeca does not know. The wasicu woman points towards the empty beds and pushes

the girls toward them. They continue into the room on their own as the wasicu woman shuts the door and leaves.

As the other girls arrange to be close to their friends and search for groups of beds they can occupy, Yutokeca ignores them and walks straight toward the far end of the room. At the very end is a large window that reveals the back of the property and lets in the luminescent glow of the moon and stars against the dark sky. Enamored by the beauty of the sky, Yutokeca takes the bed nearest the window.

* * *

Seven years pass, and now the Lakota children have grown, and they all are now considered civilized members of American society. They all know English fluently. They were taught not only to speak it, but also to read and write it. They went to church, and they had even read the Bible so many times that they could quote the passages. They learned about science and mathematics, which included some lessons on how to label the passage of time. Otherwise, Rebecca wouldn't have known it has been seven years, and that she was now sixteen years old.

After all the other girls are already fast asleep, Rebecca begins to prepare herself for bed, but the stars distract her. Although so much was different, over the years the stars have stayed the same. When her gaze shifts to focus on the moon, she notices it is a full moon, an occurrence that marks an important celebration for the Lakota. She thinks back on their previous celebrations, how fun they were, how they made everyone happy. She imagines her parents celebrating tonight's full moon, if they are even still alive.
She backs away from the window and hesitates for a moment before she begins dancing as well as she could remember from the celebrations. She moves slowly and stays on her toes so no one will hear her.

The door creaks open but she does not hear it; she is lost in a trance. As she spins slowly around, the woman called Emily appears suddenly in front of her, standing in the doorway. She doesn't look pleased.

* * *

Early the next morning, the sunlight awakens Rebecca while the others are still sleeping. She didn't slept much and she feels very sore. Emily punished her for a long time last night. She hit her with the large, black book

with gold-edged pages and a gold cross on the cover, which Rebecca immediately recognized as the Bible. After hitting her, Emily read the verses to her, and then went back to hitting her. It went on like this for hours. It was miserable, but she doesn't want to think about it anymore.

Rebecca slowly lifts herself out of bed as she struggles to handle the pain. As she stretches, she stumbles toward the window. She rubs her eyes and glances outside, immediately stunned by what she sees. She rubs her eyes more, unsure that what she is seeing is real. It won't go away, it is real. She can't believe it.

Beyond the tall metal gate, Rebecca can see a few tipis standing. Her mother, Eyota, has her back turned as she starts a small fire. Rebecca presses her face up against the window to get a better look, but there is no doubt about it. Right past the gate, her parents are waiting for her.

For the first time, Rebecca draws the curtains shut. She doesn't want anyone to know. She won't let them ruin this. While getting ready for the day, she plots her escape.

* * *

During dinner, Rebecca excuses herself to use the new indoor toilet. Instead, she makes her way out the front door, and after confirming that no one is around, she darts toward the gate, her dress flapping in the wind. She unlatches the gate and pushes it open slowly to avoid the loud screeching sound it is known to make. When it is just wide enough, she squeezes herself through, not bothering to shut it behind her.

She is free. No longer is she trapped in hell, but she still needs to make it home. Rebecca runs along the perimeter of the gate until she reaches the rear of the property. Making her way through the tipis, she interrupts her parents and the other Lakota as they are eating dinner. Eyota immediately drops her food and runs over to hug her daughter, closely followed by Akacheta. The others quickly gather around in fascination, wondering if their children will be appearing soon too.

"Yuto…" her mother says softly as she embraces her in a tight hug. Rebecca forgot that was her name before, but it doesn't feel like it now. Everyone is speaking to her, most are asking questions, but she cannot understand them. It has been such a long time that she forgot her own language. Unsure of what to say, or how to say it, she nods repeatedly as she smiles, hoping they would soon back off.

Her arrival called for a celebration. Just as when she was little, they start a large bonfire, cook some food, and play music as they dance around

Ships
Shannon Ewing

together. Rebecca watches the celebration from a distance as she sits with her family. They continue trying to talk to her, but she gives up on trying to understand them.

Rebecca tries to eat her food, but she finds it extremely unappetizing. There is no sauce for the meat! And what kind of meat is it anyway? She sets her food down and instead examines the dancers. They are dressed in odd patterns and bright colors, which is against the fashion. How can they not know? The music being played is not music at all, only noise. Had they not heard of classical music? Even Sousa's newest march "El Capitan" was nicer than this—

Her parents interrupt her train of thought by holding up a colorfully beaded buffalo hide dress in front of her. A look of disgust spreads on Rebecca's face and she shakes her head. Despite her reaction, they hold it out for her to take.

Rebecca doesn't feel comfortable. She no longer feels connected to her own culture, to her own tribe, to her family. She doesn't even remember the language. How on earth will this work? This isn't the life she planned for herself, and it also isn't the reunion she had hoped for all these years. Things will never be the same.

Rebecca looks around her once more, at her old family, flashing back to her old life, trying to appreciate them like she did when she was little. This is not her life, not anymore. She has no identity, not fully Lakota nor fully wasicu. She doubts she can change her lifestyle once again. As much as she hates it, the wasicu have already instilled their values in her. She needs a chance at her own life, to feel like she fits in somewhere, and she could not feel trapped again with the wasicu reigning over her, nor could she feel it with her estranged family. Overwhelmed with her future passing in front of her eyes, she decides to flee. Off she runs through the tall grass that tickles her legs. The wasicu taught her the world is her oyster. She will find her place in the world some day, and maybe even find home.

The Bell Tower, Zhong Lou

Esther Schwartz-McKinzie

The Bell Tower, Zhong Lou, is a symbol of the city of Xian. Built during the early Ming Dynasty in 1384 by Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang, it was erected as a watch tower to warn the city of impending attackers as well as to house a gigantic copper bell, named Jingyun. This massive 4,000-pound bell was rung every morning and, along with The Drum Tower, which sounded at dusk, helped to keep time for 400 years. At 40 meters high, built of brick and timbre, the Bell Tower sits in the city center of Xian and is considered one of the best-preserved and grandest structures of its kind. The Bell Tower is associated with many legends: in one, it was used to imprison a restless dragon, and thus protected the city from earthquakes.

Contributors

Jonathan Acuna-Lopez won the 2016 Ventura Valdez Spanish Poetry Award sponsored by Gival Press specifically for Montgomery College students.

Amendiana Adamo is studying art at MC.

Mel Barkin built a shed in his backyard a month after he retired from the federal government. Because he completely enjoyed the creative and constructive process involved, he looked for an avenue to continue this creative interest. He found that outlet at Montgomery College's art department, specifically the sculpture courses.

Abigail Beckel is a poet and the publisher of Rose Metal Press, an independent, nonprofit publishing house for books in hybrid genres that she co-founded in 2006. Her poems have been featured in *Delaware Poetry Review, Open Letters Monthly,* and *The Fourth River*, among other publications. She lives in Takoma Park, Maryland.

Curtis Berry, who recently passed, was a retired Marine Corps veteran and a graduate of Pratt Institute. He was the first African American in the CBS News Design Department and he also worked for *U.S. News & World Report* and other government agencies.

Robert Chanin took art classes during high school and college, but essentially abandoned that interest in 1956 when he entered Yale Law School. For over fifty years he practiced law in New York City and Washington, D.C., and finally retired in 2010. After retirement, he returned to art, and since 2011 has been taking art classes—primarily in painting—at Montgomery College-Takoma Park/Silver Spring.

Nancy Naomi Carlson has received grants from the NEA, MD Arts Council, and Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County. Author of the critically acclaimed *Stone Lyre: Poems of René Char*, she is an associate editor for Tupelo Press. She also translated *The Nomads, My Brothers Go Out to Drink from The Big Dipper* by Abdourahman Waberi, a finalist for The Best Translated Book Award.

Charles Deutsch is a retired periodontist who practiced in Falls Church, VA for 40 years and who taught at Georgetown University part time for 25 years. He has taken several art courses at the TP/SS campus.

Shannon Ewing has been studying art at the TP/SS campus.

Nicholas Fosta recently took a fiction writing course at the TP/SS campus.

Valerie Gormley recently took a fiction writing course at the TP/SS campus.

Tery Honeyghan holds a BFA from Parsons School of Design and is currently a graduate students at University of Maryland, with a focus in K-12 art education. She loves creating works of art that convey visual words of hope.

Jonathan Korns took a poetry writing course at the Rockville campus and recently won the 2016 Ventura Valdez English Poetry Award.

Richard Lorr worked as an attorney for the U.S. government for 31 years. Since retirement, he has studied art, poetry, and languages at TP/SS and recently has taken classes at the Writer's Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

Antonio Luis Mendez recently took a fiction writing course at the TP/SS campus.

Fritz Mirand, who is from Petion-ville, near Port-au-Prince, Haiti, has studied Spanish and French and was once a teacher of Latin and classic Greek in Haiti. He now works for Montgomery College and is the proud father of three sons and three daughters.

Sunni Morgan is a student at MC majoring in Studio Art and Art History. She is a painter, printmaker, and collagist. She had a year-long internship at the Freer/Sackler Art Museums, working with the curator of American art. She also had an internship at Pyramid Atlantic Art Center.

Zander Foster Phillips recently took a poetry writing course at the TP/SS campus and won an Honorable Mention in the Ventura Valdez Poetry Contest.

Barbara Pliskin is studying art at the TP/SS campus.

Esther Schwartz-McKinzie teaches English and literature courses at MC-Takoma Park/Silver Spring. She recently traveled to China with MC's Global

Humanities Institute, where she took several photographs.

Joann Everly Tell has been taking art classes at MC since 2014 after many years of being inactive in art. She holds a BA in history from the University of Pennsylvania and resides in Silver Spring with her family.